Defend the International Criminal Court or give a green light to atrocity crimes

18 November 2026

The International Criminal Court is a cornerstone of international justice. It embodies the principle that no one is above the law.

US sanctions against the ICC are an unprecedented attack on the international rule of law, and on the rights of victims of mass atrocities everywhere.

We urge all 125 ICC member countries to defend the Court and its mandate at the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute, when they meet in The Hague from 30 November.

The ICC is under attack precisely because it has teeth. It challenges the abuse of power, and impunity for the abusers, at the highest level. As a court of last resort, the ICC acts only when national governments are unwilling or unable to prosecute. From war crimes in Ukraine and Gaza to genocide in Sudan, from crimes against humanity in the Philippines to gender persecution in Afghanistan, the Court offers a path to justice for victims of atrocity crimes around the world. At a time when conflicts are worsening globally, its mission is more important than ever.

If a single, powerful state is allowed to destroy the ICC, it may never be re-built. Its demise would reinforce impunity while mass atrocities are becoming normalised.

Attempts to limit the Court's jurisdiction or interfere with its independence would undermine its legitimacy and deny victims the right to justice.

Protective measures are needed now so the ICC can continue its work. The EU Blocking Statute should be activated without delay, to protect non-US operators providing services to the ICC. States Parties must find practical ways to ensure the Court can function in the event that sanctions come fully into force in April 2027, including access to banking and other essential services.

It is also vital to protect organisations and individuals who co-operate with the ICC's investigations, and provide services such as reparations and victim support.

We regret that some states - Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Venezuela - have recently decided to withdraw from the ICC. We call on political leaders in those states to reverse their decisions, and encourage any other government facing political pressure to stand firm and play its part in ensuring the ICC can continue to take action against impunity.

The ICC serves all humanity. Its survival depends on the will of its members to stand united and defend its work.

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