

UN Experts Slam US Bill Sanctioning ICC: “Blatant Violation of Human Rights”

Sharon Zhang : 7-9 minutes : 1/10/2025

The experts said the bill would set a “dangerous precedent” in eroding international law enforcement.

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories Francesca Albanese holds a press conference in Geneva on December 11, 2024.
FABRICE COFFRINI / AFP via Getty Images

A group of UN human rights experts is urging the U.S. Senate to block a bill that seeks to punish the International Criminal Court (ICC) and people affiliated with it after the body [issued arrest warrants for Israeli leaders](#), condemning the bill as “dangerous” and against international law.

“It is shocking to see a country that considers itself a champion of the rule of law trying to stymie the actions of an independent and impartial tribunal set up by the international community, to thwart accountability,” the four experts said in a [statement](#) on Friday.

The statement was put out by Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers Margaret Satterthwaite; Special Rapporteur for the occupied Palestinian territories Francesca Albanese; Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order George Katrougalos; and Special Rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights Ben Saul.

On Thursday, the House [overwhelmingly voted](#) to pass the bill, entitled the Illegitimate Court Counteraction Act, garnering the support of nearly all Republicans in the chamber and 45 Democrats. Opponents of the bill have pointed out that the bill is seemingly purpose-built to ensure that Israeli leaders enjoy impunity at a time when there is an increasing consensus among human rights experts that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza.

The bill compels the president to issue sanctions for ICC officials and people who assist in ICC proceedings against a U.S. ally. It also targets the families of these individuals with sanctions, which include barring them from entering the United States.

Many civil and human rights organizations have warned that the bill is overly sweeping and would even further erode the fabric of international humanitarian law and could help engineers of war crimes evade accountability.

It’s unclear if the Senate will take up the bill. The last time the House passed the bill, in June, the Senate declined to take it up, as President Joe Biden vowed to veto the legislation. However, the Senate is now under Republican control, and Donald Trump is slated to take office in less than two weeks.

The UN experts said imposing sanctions on the ICC is, in itself, a violation of international law. Experts have [previously written to](#) U.S. officials expressing concern over lawmakers’ threats against the ICC.

“Imposing sanctions on justice personnel for fulfilling their professional responsibilities is a blatant violation of human rights, striking at the core of judicial independence and the rule of law,” the experts said. “Such actions erode public trust in the impartiality and integrity of justice and set a dangerous precedent, politicising judicial functions and weakening the global commitment to accountability and fairness.”

Other groups have also condemned the House’s passage of the bill. Amnesty International U.S.A. called the passage “deeply disappointing.”

“The ICC is part of a global system of international justice of which the U.S. was a chief architect at Nuremberg and beyond,” the group [said](#). “If the Senate follows suit, it will do grave harm to the interests of all victims globally and to the U.S. government’s ability to champion human rights and the cause of justice.”

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) said that the bill is a direct attempt to shield Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from facing consequences for his actions in Gaza.

Lawmakers voting for the bill are “violating their oath to faithfully uphold our own nation’s laws,” [said](#) CAIR Director of Government Affairs Department Robert S. McCaw. “It seems the far-right Israeli government’s supporters in Congress are increasingly desperate to stop the inevitable from happening: war criminals like Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other Israeli leaders being held accountable for their abhorrent genocidal crimes against Palestinians.”

The U.S. is one of only a handful of states, including Israel, not party to the Rome Statute; the U.S. [has long been](#) hostile to the ICC, potentially in part due to [some U.S. officials’ implication in alleged war crimes](#), as [some commentators](#) have pointed out.

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Trump is busy getting ready for Day One of his presidency – but so is *Truthout*.

Trump has made it no secret that he is planning a demolition-style attack on both specific communities and democracy as a whole, beginning on his first day in office. With over 25 executive orders and directives queued up for January 20, he’s promised to “launch the largest deportation program in American history,” roll back anti-discrimination protections for transgender students, and implement a “drill, drill, drill” approach to ramp up oil and gas extraction.

Organizations like *Truthout* are also being threatened by legislation like HR 9495, the “nonprofit killer bill” that would allow the Treasury Secretary to declare any nonprofit a “terrorist-supporting organization” and strip its tax-exempt status without due process. Progressive media like *Truthout* that has courageously focused on reporting on Israel’s genocide in Gaza are in the bill’s crosshairs.

As journalists, we have a responsibility to look at hard realities and communicate them to you. We hope that you, like us, can use this information to prepare for what’s to come.

And if you feel uncertain about what to do in the face of a second Trump administration, we invite you to be an indispensable part of *Truthout*’s preparations.

In addition to covering the widespread onslaught of draconian policy, we’re shoring up our resources for what might come next for progressive media: bad-faith lawsuits from far-right ghouls, legislation that seeks to strip us of our ability to receive tax-deductible donations, and further throttling of our reach on social media platforms owned by Trump’s sycophants.

We’re preparing right now for Trump’s Day One: building a brave coalition of movement media; reaching out to the activists, academics, and thinkers we trust to shine a light on the inner workings of authoritarianism; and planning to use journalism as a tool to equip movements to protect the people, lands, and principles most vulnerable to Trump’s destruction.

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With gratitude and resolve,

Maya, Negin, Saima, and Ziggy