



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JUDGES
UNION INTERNATIONALE DES MAGISTRATS
UNIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE MAGISTRADOS
INTERNATIONALE VEREINIGUNG DER RICHTER
UNIONE INTERNAZIONALE DEI MAGISTRATI

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STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JUDGES ON MEASURES ADOPTED AGAINST THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

The International Association of Judges (IAJ) expresses its profound concern at the recent escalation of measures adopted by the Government of the United States against judges and officials of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The decision to impose personal sanctions on the President of the Court, Judge Tomoko Akane, and on Senior Trial Lawyer Abdoulaye Seye, represents a deeply troubling development that threatens the independence of the judiciary at the international level.

These sanctions—freezing assets, restricting access to the U.S. financial system, and limiting international transactions—now affect thirteen ICC officials, including nine of the Court’s eighteen judges, both Deputy Prosecutors, the former Prosecutor, and other staff members. Such measures constitute a direct attempt to exert pressure on judicial actors for decisions taken in the lawful exercise of their mandate under the Rome Statute.

Judicial independence does not shield judicial decisions from criticism. It does, however, require that judges be free from personal retaliation, coercion or intimidation. When a judge must consider whether a lawful decision may expose him or her to punitive measures imposed by a government displeased with the outcome, independence ceases to be a safeguard and becomes a mere formality.

The IAJ recalls that the ICC has been mandated by its States Parties to prosecute genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression. Attempts to sanction judges for pursuing investigations or issuing warrants in accordance with this mandate—regardless of the political sensitivities involved—constitute an attack not only on the Court, but on the international legal order itself.

This is not a matter of agreeing or disagreeing with any particular decision of the ICC. It is a matter of defending a universal principle: no judge, national or international, must ever face personal retaliation for independently interpreting and applying the law.

The precedent created by such measures is extraordinarily dangerous. Today, sanctions target judges of an international tribunal. Tomorrow, similar tactics could be used against any judge, in any jurisdiction, who is called upon to decide cases involving powerful political, military or economic interests.

The independence of international judges constitutes a fundamental and universal guarantee of a fair trial—not only for those individuals currently under investigation or prosecution, but also for those who may one day be held accountable for violations of international criminal law and who may now be interested in undermining or sabotaging the ICC.

The international judicial community therefore bears a special responsibility. Our solidarity with judges who face threats or sanctions does not depend on the substance of their decisions, but on our shared commitment to the rule of law. Judicial independence is not a privilege of the judiciary; it is a guarantee for every person, for democratic governance, and for peace within and among nations.

For these reasons, the International Association of Judges (IAJ)—the largest international association of judges, bringing together 93 national judges' organisations from all continents and promoting, since 1953, the independence of the judiciary and of every national or international judge—

- reiterates that without independent judges there can be no democracy and no State governed by the rule of law;
- recalls its previous statements issued on 18 February 2025 and 23 December 2025, together with the declaration issued on 12 August 2026 with the European Network of Councils for the Judiciary, ACA-Europe and the Network of Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of the European Union;
- states unequivocally that to defend the independence of the judges of the International Criminal Court today is to defend the independence of all judges throughout the world. Any attempt to intimidate or punish judges for carrying out their judicial duties is an attack not merely on those individuals, but on Justice itself.

Rome, 20 August 2026