



Reference: **TIGO IOR 10/2025.6534**

Ms Kaja Kallas

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/ Vice-President European Commission

Foreign Affairs Ministers of European Union (EU) member states

Brussels, 24 February 2025

Dear High Representative / Vice-President Kallas,

Dear Foreign Ministers of European Union (EU) member states,

JUSTICE AND VICTIMS' RIGHTS MUST BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF ANY STEPS TO END THE WAR IN UKRAINE

We are writing to you as we mark three years since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and amid the recently accelerated discussions on ending the war. In view of these developments, we urge the EU to take concerted action to influence and shape the terms of any proposed 'peace negotiations' and to ensure that they are firmly grounded in respect for international human rights and humanitarian law. This must include putting an end to all ongoing human rights violations, upholding the right to truth, justice and reparations for victims of crimes under international law and guaranteeing that those most impacted by Russia's war of aggression have their voices heard and needs met. As history has shown, the failure to hold perpetrators of crimes under international law accountable will only embolden aggressors and fuel further cycles of violence and destruction in the future.

Russia's war of aggression and more than eleven-year occupation have been characterized by a flagrant disregard for human life and international law. Amnesty International has documented widespread violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Ukraine, including acts that amount to war crimes and likely crimes against humanity. This has included the [deliberate targeting of civilians](#) and critical civilian infrastructure which has exacted an excruciating human toll, particularly on [children](#) and [older people](#), [the use of indiscriminate weapons](#), enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, torture, the forcible transfer and detention of civilians and the abuse of prisoners of war. Even as the Russian authorities claim to talk of peace, its military continues to target population centres with missiles and drones.

In response to this litany of violations, the EU and its member states have taken crucial and unprecedented steps to hold perpetrators of international crimes to account. This has included unified and robust EU support for the International Criminal Court (ICC)'s investigations in Ukraine. Yet today these efforts risk being jeopardized by the U.S. administration's blatant disregard for international law and President Trump's recent executive order [imposing sanctions on the ICC](#). The executive order imposes sanctions on the ICC Prosecutor and threatens sanctions against other persons working for or engaging with the Court. This reckless attack on the Court is an affront to Ukrainian victims and survivors of international crimes and risks to undermine its operations and independent investigations across all situations in the Court's docket. Despite the EU's [obligations](#) to preserve the ICC's independence and integrity and recent [commitments](#) that it would condemn threats against the Court, the EU and its members have so far failed to take concerted action to mitigate and block the effect of President Trump's sanctions or to protect the Court and its staff, for example by activating the [EU blocking statute](#).

US President Donald Trump's attacks on the ICC together with the fact that his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin is subject to an ICC arrest warrant for war crimes, increases the risk that justice and the rights of victims will be sidelined in any proposed 'peace negotiations'. Without guaranteeing the human rights of victims, a lasting and just peace cannot be achieved. This would deny scores of victims and survivors their right to truth, justice and reparations, while potentially prolonging the agony of all Ukrainians, including those subject to violations under Russian occupation. This includes, the

Ukrainian civilians abducted by Russian security services, prisoners of war tortured and [unlawfully convicted](#), children [threatened for studying Ukrainian](#) online, [teachers in Russian-occupied Ukraine subjected to forced labour in schools reopened under a Russian curriculum](#), and Crimean Tatars and other minorities who [face brutal suppression](#) as Russia seeks to alter the demographics in occupied territories. What is more, any negotiations that sideline justice and human rights and leave perpetrators unaccountable for their crimes, risk to perpetuate a pervasive sense of impunity that breeds further atrocities in the future.

In addition to ensuring accountability, it will also be crucial to guarantee the participation of victims and survivors in any talks over the future of the people of Ukraine. In this regard, Ukrainian civil society plays a critical role in ensuring that the voices of victims and survivors are heard and that their needs are met. Yet, the U.S. Executive Order imposing a 90-day freeze on all U.S. foreign aid has left institutions and NGOs across the country facing severe funding shortfalls while plunging these organizations and the communities they support into deep uncertainty. This decision [jeopardizes crucial programmes](#) including those supporting victims of crimes under international law, facilitating the reintegration of veterans, and promoting health, relief, recovery and reconstruction assistance. Meanwhile, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine continues to have far-reaching impacts on Ukraine's land, infrastructure and economy, leaving large swathes of the population in need of humanitarian aid and economic assistance.

In the face of the US administration's retreat from its international commitments and obligations, the EU and its member states must step in to fill the void. EU leaders should reaffirm their unwavering commitment to upholding international human rights and humanitarian law and take determined action to shape ongoing discussions on ending the war in Ukraine. More specifically they should:

- **Take steps to ensure that any proposed 'peace negotiations' include a clear and uncompromising roadmap for justice.** Impunity cannot be an aspect of any 'peace negotiations', which should seek to put an end to all ongoing violations and provide guarantees of non-recurrence, they should prioritize justice for all crimes under international law committed since Russia's military intervention in 2014 and uphold the right to truth, justice and reparations for all victims of crimes under international law.
- **Promote the participation of victims and survivors of crimes under international law** in any talks over the future of the people of Ukraine.
- **Take strong and decisive action to defend the independence of the ICC, and to preserve the Court and its staff from political interference.** This includes by:
 - **Publicly condemning the use of sanctions to undermine the ICC** and expressing strong, unconditional commitment to the Court and its critical global mandate via official statements at EU and EU member state level;
 - **Urgently activating the EU blocking statute and adopting similar instruments at national and regional level**, that aim to shield European operators from the effects of extraterritorial sanctions. Blocking statutes and similar instruments can provide the Court and its partners with essential protection and send a powerful message that the EU and its member states will not tolerate efforts to undermine the Court;
 - **Engaging with domestic and regional service providers to ensure that they will continue working with the Court** and adopting any other protective measures at national, regional or international level to ensure they do;
 - **Protecting those cooperating with and supporting the Court, including civil society organisations and human rights defenders** by adopting and implementing protective measures and national frameworks;
 - **Fully cooperating with the ICC and consistently supporting the Court's work across all situations in the Court's docket** and calling on all other relevant actors to do the same. This should include the execution of all of the Court's decisions and requests, in particular pending arrest warrants;
- **Initiate and further strengthen domestic investigations into core crimes under the principle of universal jurisdiction in EU member states.** This would entail ensuring that adequate resources and political support is provided to domestic investigative and prosecutorial bodies investigating and prosecuting crimes under international law.
- **Continue to cooperate with and provide full political and practical support to the [UN-established](#) Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Russia's invasion of Ukraine.**

- Further strengthen Ukraine's justice architecture and its capabilities to investigate and prosecute international crimes.
- **Guarantee the long-term sustainability of relief, recovery and reconstruction assistance to the people of Ukraine.** This must be done through the effective implementation of the EU's Ukraine Facility, ambitious pledges at the forthcoming Ukraine Recovery Conference hosted by Italy in July 2025 and by allocating sufficient funds during the negotiation of the EU's Multi-Annual Financial Framework.
- **Take urgent steps to fill the void left by the U.S. funding withdrawal and increase funding to areas most likely to be impacted by US reductions.**

Many thanks in advance for your continued action on human rights.

Yours sincerely,



Eve Geddie

Director

Amnesty International – European Institutions Office