

Reference: **TIGO IOR 10/2026.7803**

To the attn. of:

Ms Ursula von der Leyen

President of the European Commission

24 July 2026

Dear President von der Leyen,

THE EU MUST DEFEND INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE AMID ESCALATING ATTACKS ON THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

We are writing to urge the European Union (EU) and its member states to stand unequivocally in defence of international law and justice in response to the US State Department's intensifying [campaign](#) against the International Criminal Court (ICC). Rather than appeasing or accommodating escalating assaults on the international legal order, EU leaders should take robust and long-overdue action to defend the ICC, civil society organisations and all those working to deliver justice from the unprecedented attacks and threats they face. Crucially, this requires the immediate activation of the EU Blocking Statute and similar national mechanisms to block and mitigate the effects of US sanctions. Alongside these steps, other legal and practical measures must be taken to ensure that the ICC, its officials, and all those supporting the Court's activities retain full and unimpeded access to financial, information technology (IT) and other essential services. These actions should further be coupled with concerted diplomatic efforts to reinvigorate international support for the ICC and build resilience against external pressure among ICC States Parties.

On 13 July 2026, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio launched a **sweeping campaign against the ICC**, vowing to "systematically disable" the Court's ability to operate. Among other things, the State Department has [threatened](#) to increase sanctions against the ICC and affiliated organisations, impose visa revocations and travel bans for ICC personnel and ramp up diplomatic pressure on states to oppose and withdraw from the Court, including by signalling intent to withdraw foreign and security assistance to states that continue to support the Court. On 15 July, during the UN Security Council briefing on the International Criminal Court's investigation in Sudan, the US administration [explicitly encouraged](#) States Parties to the Rome Statute to withdraw from the ICC.

Coming on top of previously imposed sanctions and coercive measures, this campaign is the latest in a series of escalating attacks on the international justice system. Since signing [Executive Order 14203](#) in February 2025, US President Donald Trump has authorized sanctions against the ICC Prosecutor, two Deputy Prosecutors, eight ICC judges, three renowned [Palestinian human rights organisations](#) and the UN Special Rapporteur (UNSR) on the Occupied Palestinian Territories. These measures form part of a **deliberate strategy to dismantle the institutions of international justice** and to hollow out the multilateral legal framework that has been painstakingly built to safeguard humanity against the worst atrocities.

The harm these measures inflict is not hypothetical. Even before the State Department's latest campaign, existing US sanctions were having **far-reaching consequences for the functioning of the Court, the individuals targeted and the core mandates of those supporting the ICC's work**. Owing to structural dependencies on the US financial system and its digital infrastructure, designated judges, Court officials, the UNSR, and civil society organisations have been cut off from a wide

range of essential services, including banking, payment systems and IT services. Those targeted – including judges and Court officials living in the EU – have been unable to make or receive payments and have lost access to IT and cloud systems containing vast amounts of data.

For **civil society organisations**, these measures have had particularly severe consequences on their ability to carry out their core human rights work. As documented in a [report](#) by the Coalition for the International Criminal Court, NGOs have reported losing access to years of human rights documentation, being unable to pay staff salaries or operating costs, and seeing funding and projects with other NGOs terminated. At the same time, legal uncertainty has encouraged **overcompliance by commercial actors** seeking to avoid legal or economic risk. This has led banks, commercial operators, and other service providers to disrupt payments, terminate contracts, and halt activities – even when those activities lack a US nexus or fall outside the scope of the sanctions.

Beyond the effect on those sanctioned, these measures have a profound impact on the international rule of law and the Rome Statute system. They represent a brazen affront to all victims and survivors who rely on the ICC for truth, justice and reparations. Acting as a court of last resort, the ICC is the only permanent international court with a mandate to investigate and prosecute individuals for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, where other avenues to justice are closed. Current measures, and especially the prospect of potential institution-wide sanctions against the ICC, **affect the interests of all victims and undermine all ongoing investigations on the Court's docket**. This includes the ICC's ongoing investigations into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Palestine, gender-based crimes committed by the Taliban in Afghanistan, the War on Drugs in The Philippines, ongoing crimes committed in Darfur, crimes against humanity committed in Venezuela or the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Ukraine, among others.

Since the Court's establishment, the **EU and its member states have committed to defend the independence of the ICC** as a [cornerstone](#) of the international criminal justice system and to [uphold](#) the universality and integrity of the Rome Statute. Despite these commitments and recent [expressions of support](#), the EU and its member states have so far declined to put words in action and use the tools at their disposal, such as the [EU Blocking Statute](#), to shield the ICC, its staff, EU operators under its jurisdiction and all actors cooperating with the Court from the effects of these sanctions. Moreover, the EU and its member states have failed to adopt a holistic and coordinated approach to ensure that all justice actors targeted by these sanctions maintain access to financial, IT and other essential services, crucial to carrying out their work. Instead, [ad hoc approaches](#) have been pursued, with each organisation, institution and individual left to find their own solutions to ensuring the continuity of their work. As a result, civil society organisations, in particular, have largely been left to their own devices, even though their contribution to the work of the Court is indispensable.

Despite statements of condemnation, **EU leaders have repeatedly chosen to delay and not match their words with meaningful actions**, while also [prioritizing diplomatic](#) outreach toward the US administration. This approach, along with other efforts [to appease or accommodate](#) the Trump administration's harmful and impossible demands on the Court and its Assembly of States Parties, has undermined the EU's dissuasive capacity while only further emboldening the US administration to expand its sanctions and coercive measures against more judges, ICC officials and NGOs. Indeed, the State Department's current campaign represents the next step in an escalating offensive on the international legal order.

Beyond external threats, the repeated **inconsistencies and selectivity** of certain EU leaders have also contributed to undermining the independence and integrity of the ICC. In recent years, some EU member states have flouted their obligations to [execute ICC arrest warrants](#) and [surrender suspects](#). Certain leaders of EU member states have issued [statements](#) signalling their intention not to cooperate with the Court, [called into question](#) the validity of ICC decisions, and [engaged](#) in high-level meetings with individuals subject to ICC arrest warrants. Overcoming today's threats to the ICC, international justice, and the international rules-based order requires EU member states to demonstrate that they remain steadfast in their own obligations under international law and the Rome Statute.

Today, the international community and the European Union stand at a critical juncture. The very institutions founded to safeguard human rights and uphold international law, including the International Criminal Court, are grappling with unprecedented existential threats. Rather than opting for appeasement or acquiescence, EU leaders should firmly resist – both collectively and unilaterally – all efforts to normalize impunity and take decisive action to defend the ICC, civil society organisations, UN experts and all those working to deliver justice.

Amnesty International therefore calls on the European Commission to:

- 1) Publicly condemn the US administration's campaign and consistently denounce all threats and sanctions against the ICC, its elected officials, civil society organisations and all those cooperating with the Court:** Beginning with an explicit condemnation of the US sanctions, the EU and its member states should use official statements to consistently denounce all threats and sanctions against the different layers of the international justice ecosystem. Building on previous Council conclusions, EU positions should commit to effectively protect the ICC, its staff, civil society organisations and all those cooperating with the Court from threats or sanctions, including through steps to guarantee their unimpeded access to financial and other services. Statements should also underline the crucial role civil society and human rights defenders play in promoting justice and accountability and commit to protecting the independence, impartiality and effective functioning of the ICC.
- 2) Immediately activate the EU Blocking Statute, by amending the annex of Council Regulation (EC) No 2271/96.** This is a key tool already at the European Commission's disposal, that would allow the EU to shield the ICC and EU operators under its jurisdiction from the effects of extraterritorial sanctions. While not a silver bullet, the Blocking Statute would send a strong political signal of support to the ICC, it would offer legal certainty to EU operators and would act as a deterrent to the patterns of over-compliance being observed across sectors. Moreover, it would help counter the chilling effect the sanctions have on designated individuals and organisations. The European Commission has the prerogative to activate this mechanism on its own initiative, via a delegated act. It should do so immediately, while exploring complementary action to strengthen the effectiveness of this mechanism and other steps to ensure those targeted maintain access to essential services.
- 3) Develop alternative banking, payment and IT solutions and adopt a holistic approach to supporting all layers of the international justice ecosystem:** Efforts to support the ICC and ensure individuals maintain unimpeded access to financial and other services, should be comprehensive, effectively coordinated between the EU, its member states and relevant services, and be extended to all layers of the international justice ecosystem, including civil society. Civil society should be meaningfully consulted to ensure their needs and priorities are fully taken into account. In that regard, the EU should ensure the current Payment Accounts Directive extends the right to a bank account and access to related payments services to legal persons with a non-profit purpose. The EU and its member states should also provide an increase in resources to address growing security risks and threats faced by the Court and guarantee continued funding to civil society organisations targeted by these sanctions.
- 4) Issue EU wide guidance to EU operators and proactively engage with service providers to prevent (over)compliance with extraterritorial sanctions against the ICC under EU jurisdiction.** Engagement with private operators should be targeted to ensure designated individuals and organisations maintain access to essential services.
- 5) Step up diplomatic efforts at bilateral and multilateral level to reinvigorate international support and protection for the ICC and the broader international justice architecture:** The EU and its member states should engage in coordinated diplomatic outreach and demarches towards ICC States Parties and other strategic partners to reaffirm support for international justice and help build resilience against external pressure. Concurrently, they should lead joint statements and side events at multilateral fora aimed at galvanizing international action to protect the ICC and the international justice architecture from threats and coercive measures, including sanctions.
- 6) Reaffirm the EU and its member states' commitment to uphold the Rome Statute and preserve the independence and integrity of the ICC, including by:**
 - Guaranteeing full cooperation with the Court across all situations, including by ensuring EU member states uphold their obligations to execute arrest warrants and surrender suspects.

- Refraining from any messaging that undermines the Court's integrity, mandate or jurisdiction.
- Ensuring all EU member states ratify the Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Criminal Court;
- Providing full and timely financial contributions to the Court's annual budget, advocating for a budget which reflects the needs of the Court.

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Eve Geddie', is positioned above the printed name.

Eve Geddie
Director
Amnesty International – European Institutions Office