

# Trump sanctions International Criminal Court, calls it 'illegitimate'



| Trump previously sanctioned ICC officials during his first term in office in 2020.

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**President Donald Trump has signed an executive order sanctioning the International Criminal Court, accusing it of "illegitimate and baseless actions targeting America and our close ally Israel".**

The measure places financial and visa restrictions on individuals and their families who assist in ICC investigations of American citizens or allies.

Trump signed the measure as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was visiting Washington.

Last November, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Netanyahu over alleged war crimes in Gaza, which Israel denies. The ICC also issued a warrant for a Hamas commander.

The Netherlands, which hosts the court, said it "regrets" Trump's order.

"The court's work is essential in the fight against impunity," Dutch Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp said on X.

A White House memo circulated on Thursday accused the Hague-based ICC of creating a "shameful moral equivalency" between Hamas and Israel by issuing the warrants at the same time.

Trump's executive order said the ICC's recent actions "set a dangerous precedent" that endangered Americans by exposing them to "harassment, abuse and possible arrest".

"This malign conduct in turn threatens to infringe upon the sovereignty of the United States and undermines the critical national security and foreign policy

work of the United States government and our allies, including Israel," the order said.

### **International Criminal Court: What is the ICC and what does it do?**

The US is not a member of the ICC and has repeatedly rejected any jurisdiction by the body over American officials or citizens.

The White House accused the ICC of placing constraints on Israel's right to self-defence, while ignoring Iran and anti-Israel groups.

In his first term in office, Trump imposed sanctions on ICC officials who were investigating whether US forces had committed war crimes in Afghanistan. Those sanctions were lifted by President Joe Biden's administration.

Last month, the US House of Representatives voted to sanction the ICC, but the bill foundered in the Senate.

More than 120 countries are members of the court, including many European nations, but the US nor Israel are not.

The ICC is a court of last resort and is meant to intervene only when national authorities cannot or will not prosecute.

Trump's executive order said that "both nations [the US and Israel] are thriving democracies with militaries that strictly adhere to the laws of war".

During his last weeks in office, President Biden also criticised the ICC's warrant for Netanyahu, calling the move "outrageous" and saying there was no equivalence between Israel and Hamas.

Trump's signing of his latest executive order follows his announcement during a joint press conference with the Israeli prime minister on Tuesday about a plan for the US to "take over" Gaza, resettle its Palestinian population and turn the territory into the "Riviera of the Middle East".

After Arab leaders and the UN condemned the idea, the US president restated it on his Truth Social social media platform on Thursday.

"The Gaza Strip would be turned over to the United States by Israel at the conclusion of fighting," Trump wrote, referring to the war between Israel and Hamas that is currently under a ceasefire.

He repeated that the plan would involve resettling Palestinians, and that no American soldiers would be deployed.

His post did not make clear whether the two million residents of the Palestinian territory would be invited to return, leaving officials scrambling to explain.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said on Wednesday any displacement would be temporary.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Gazans would leave for an "interim" period while reconstruction took place.

Netanyahu has praised Trump's "remarkable" plan to re-make Gaza. On Thursday, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz ordered the military to prepare for "voluntary departure" of Gaza's residents.

He said the plan would include departures via land, sea and air.

Trump signed the order as Netanyahu continued his visit to Washington, meeting lawmakers from both the Republican and Democratic parties on Capitol Hill.

The Israeli prime minister also presented a golden pager to Trump.

The gift was a reference to Israel's deadly operation against Hezbollah in September last year, using booby-trapped communications devices.

Dozens were killed and thousands injured in the attacks, including some civilians, according to Lebanese officials.