

'Thuggish': Trump Imposes Visa Bans on ICC Staff Probing US War Crimes in Afghanistan

"We're prepared to take additional steps, including economic sanctions if the ICC does not change its course," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Friday.

By [Telesur](#)

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*The United States will impose visa restrictions on people responsible for any International Criminal Court (ICC) probe, a move aimed at preventing the court from pursuing the United States and its allies regarding their actions during and after the invasion in Afghanistan, **Secretary of State Mike Pompeo** said Friday.*

In September, the Trump administration said that if the court launched a probe of war crimes in Afghanistan, it would consider banning ICC judges and prosecutors from entering the United States, sanctioning funds they have there and prosecuting them in U.S. courts. Washington took the first step on Friday with Pompeo's announcement.

"I'm announcing a policy of U.S. visa restrictions on those individuals directly responsible for any ICC investigation of U.S. personnel," Pompeo told a news conference in Washington. "These visa restrictions may also be used to deter ICC efforts to pursue allied personnel, including [Israelis](#), without allies' consent."

Pompeo said the policy was already being implemented but would not elaborate, citing visa privacy laws.

"These visa restrictions will not be the end of our efforts," he said. "We're prepared to take additional steps, including economic sanctions, if the ICC does not change its course."

A director at Human Rights Watch, **Andrea Prasow**, described the announcement as a "thuggish attempt to penalize investigators" at the court.

"Taking action against those who work for the ICC sends a clear message to torturers and murderers alike: their crimes may continue unchecked," she said and calling on U.S. lawmakers to rescind the move and express support for the international court.

In November 2017, the ICC prosecutor requested authorization from judges to initiate an investigation into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Afghanistan since May

1, 2003, including in states where the CIA held prisoners.

More than one million statements from Afghan people and organizations had been submitted to the ICC alleging war crimes committed by several actors, including the U.S. military, the CIA, Afghan forces and the Taliban, local groups working with the Hague-based tribunal said last year.

Katherine Gallagher, a senior staff attorney with the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights, argued that the Afghanistan case could be a test for proving the effectiveness of the young court and hoped the ICC judges would decide to approve the probe.

“To date, no high-level U.S. official from the civilian leadership, military, CIA, or private contractor has been prosecuted for war crimes and crimes against humanity. An ICC investigation could finally change that – bringing an end to the impunity US officials have enjoyed and, critically, some measure of redress to victims of the U.S. torture program,” Gallagher stressed.

Judges are reviewing all material submitted by the prosecutor and will need to decide whether or not to authorize an investigation.

With 123 member states, including the entire European Union, the ICC is a court of last resort. It was established in 2002 to prosecute war crimes, genocide or crimes against humanity when a country is unable or unwilling to prosecute perpetrators itself. [Major powers](#), including the United States, China and Russia, are not members.

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