

Trump Warns ICC Against Followup on American and Israeli War Crimes

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US President Donald Trump has warned the International Criminal Court (ICC) of “swift and vigorous response” if the Hague-based tribunal investigates Americans and Israelis for war crimes.

Trump issued the warning on Friday, after ICC judges rejected a request by the court’s prosecutor to probe atrocities committed by US forces in Afghanistan.

Trump hailed the unusual ruling as a “major international victory,” claiming that the Americans and Israelis should be immune from ICC prosecution.

“Since the creation of the ICC, the United States has consistently declined to join the court because of its broad, unaccountable prosecutorial powers; the threat it poses to American national sovereignty; and other deficiencies that render it illegitimate,” he said.

“Any attempt to target American, Israeli, or allied personnel for prosecution will be met with a swift and vigorous response,” he added.

Amnesty International denounced the ICC’s decision as a “shocking abandonment of victims” that would “weaken the court’s already questionable credibility.”

Biraj Patnaik, South Asia Director at Amnesty International, stressed that the ruling would be seen as a “craven capitulation to Washington’s bullying.”

Last month, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the US would withdraw or revoke visas for ICC staff who prosecute American troops in Afghanistan, as well as their allied personnel, including Israelis.

He also warned about potential economic sanctions “if the ICC does not change its course.”

US National Security Adviser John Bolton had also threatened to revoke the visas of ICC personnel if the court pursued charges against members of the US military over crimes in Afghanistan.

Earlier this month, the US revoked ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda’s visa as part of a crackdown on the ICC.

The ICC has been examining abuses committed by all parties in the Afghan war for more than a decade.

In November 2017, Bensouda sought authorization to open an inquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Afghanistan, including in states where the CIA held prisoners.

The ICC is also investigating Israeli atrocities in the West Bank and Gaza, including the demolition of Palestinian property and eviction of the Palestinians from the West Bank and East Jerusalem al-Quds.

Neither the US nor Israel are ICC members.

The United States has revoked the entry visa of the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Fatou Bensouda, who is looking into the US military's possible war crimes in Afghanistan.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced, last month, that the United States would withdraw or deny visas for the ICC personnel probing the war crimes allegations against American forces.

United Nations human rights experts denounced Washington's "improper interference" in the work of the court, which has the jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of aggression.

The US denial of visa to the ICC prosecutor also drew criticism from within the European Union.

"We can confirm that the U.S. authorities have revoked the prosecutor's visa for entry into the US," Bensouda's office told the Reuters news agency in an e-mail, on Thursday.

Last month, the US secretary of state also declared that Washington was ready to take additional steps, including economic sanctions, if the world body failed to change its course.

The United States has refused to cooperate with international investigators over their probe into possible war crimes of US military personnel in Afghanistan, claiming they violate US sovereignty.

The administration of US President Donald Trump has previously rebuked and questioned the International Criminal Court. One of National Security Adviser John Bolton's first speeches was about the ICC, condemning its investigation into US personnel.

The US invaded Afghanistan, in October of 2001, and overthrew a Taliban regime in power at the time. But, US forces have remained bogged down, there, through the presidencies of George W. Bush, Barack Obama and, now, Donald Trump.

Obama announced, in 2013, that he was pulling out all US troops from the Arab country. However, the US troops returned to Iraq a year later, under the pretext of fighting the Daesh (ISIS) terrorist group.

Trump had also pledged, during his election campaign, to end the US military presence in

Iraq and Afghanistan. But, he has changed his mind, since entering office, and prolonged the US military presence in both countries.

The ICC has repeatedly highlighted alleged abuses of detainees, by American troops between 2003 and 2005, that it believes have not been adequately addressed by the US government.

Washington insists that the ICC does not have jurisdiction over American citizens because the US never ratified the Rome Statute that established the court in the first place, PNN reports.

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