GOP Lawmakers Eye Expansion of ICC Sanctions as Court's Top Officials Turn to Europe for Relief

March 31, 2025

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The Washington Free Beacon

<https://freebeacon.com/national-security/gop-lawmakers-eye-expansion-of-icc-sanctions-as-courts-top-officials-turn-to-europe-for-relief/>

The Trump administration and its Republican allies in Congress say they will fully enforce sanctions on the International Criminal Court (ICC) and are prepared to expand them in response to recent efforts from top ICC officials to evade the measures.

Earlier this month, Judge Tomoko Akane, the ICC’s president, [petitioned](https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/video/exchange-of-views-with-judge-tomoko-akane-president-of-the-international-criminal-court-extracts-and-statement-by-judge-tomoko-akane-president-of-the-international-criminal-court_I269178) the European Union to invoke what is known as the blocking statute, a legal maneuver that shields EU members from sanctions issued by third-party countries such as the United States. Akane told the EU’s parliament ‘it is obvious the court cannot survive alone,’ warning them that ‘the time to act is now’ by invoking the blocking statute, which would allow European companies to provide services to the ICC without fear of penalties.

President Donald Trump slapped sanctions on the ICC in February, making good on his promise to hold the court accountable for efforts to prosecute U.S. military members and close allies like Israel. The court issued an arrest warrant for Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu last year, making it difficult for him and other officials to travel throughout Europe.

The U.S. sanctions on the court are now causing similar headaches for the ICC’s top judges, including chief prosecutor Karim Khan, according to Akane.

‘When more persons are designated, when all the judges are designated, or when the court itself is designated, it will then be too late,’ the ICC president griped this month. Akane’s remarks drew immediate support from prominent members of the European Parliament, which said in a subsequent [statement](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20250317IPR27390/meps-support-for-the-icc-and-call-on-the-eu-to-enact-the-blocking-statute) that Trump’s ‘sanctions complicate and damage the practical work of the ICC in various areas such as banking, insurance and IT.’ The measures, the parliament added, ‘make it impossible for U.S. companies to provide services to the court and complicate these companies’ cooperation with their European partners.’

The Trump administration, in comments to the *Washington Free Beacon*, said this is exactly the intent—and that pressure will not ease until the ICC is fully ‘held accountable’ for targeting U.S. allies. With both sides showing no sign of backing down, a wider diplomatic confrontation between the Trump administration and EU could erupt in the coming months.

‘The ICC’s corruption knows no bounds,’ White House National Security Council spokesman Brian Hughes said in response to Akane’s comments. ‘The Trump Administration will enforce our sanctions to ensure perpetrators are held accountable.’

In Congress, GOP leaders expressed a willingness to further refine and expand the ICC sanctions in response to Akane’s bid to invoke the EU’s blocking statute.

‘The Trump administration and Senate Republicans have made clear that the International Kangaroo Court has no business targeting Americans or our allies, and that anyone who assists in efforts to do so will be punished and sanctioned,’ Sen. Tom Cotton (R., Ark.), a lead backer of recent legislation targeting the ICC, told the *Free Beacon*. ‘Any attempt to circumvent these clear guidelines will be dealt with swiftly in line with the president’s executive order.’

Sen. Ted Cruz (R., Texas), another key legislative ally for the Trump administration, said that any European who helps the ICC evade U.S. sanctions could find themselves included in future designations.

‘The U.S. should treat anyone who helps the ICC or its officials evade those sanctions accordingly,’ Cruz, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told the *Free Beacon*. ‘Sanctions against the Court were long overdue, and it is vital that they be enforced.’

For Sen. Jim Banks (R., Ind.), a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, the ICC’s fear of further sanctions is warranted. ‘Until the ICC drops their illegitimate investigations,’ he said, ‘we should oppose any attempt to let them off the hook of well-deserved sanctions.’

The European Parliament is already laying the groundwork to oppose such efforts. It adopted a [resolution](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2025-0033_EN.html) on March 12 expressing the ‘utmost concern about the U.S. sanctions against the ICC, its prosecutors, judges and staff.’

The sanctions, the parliament said, ‘constitute a serious attack on the international justice system’ and require the EU to ‘urgently activate the Blocking Statute.’

With ICC president Akane’s backing, the EU ‘is blatantly trying to circumvent [U.S.] sanctions and undermine President Trump’s executive order’ authorizing sanctions on the court, said Arsen Ostrovsky, an international human rights lawyer and CEO of the International Legal Forum, a pro-Israel advocacy group.

In response, Ostrovsky said, the Trump administration should ‘immediately sanctions Judge Akane’ and any other member of the European Parliament ‘found to be materially assisting’ the ICC in its prosecution of Israel. ‘This only underscores that President Trump was absolutely correct to unleash sanctions against the Court and Prosecutor Khan himself.’