

Trump's ICC Order Violates Free Speech, Advocacy Groups Say



WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Two U.S.-based advocacy groups sued the Trump administration on Wednesday, arguing that sanctions imposed on the International Criminal Court (ICC) violate constitutional free speech protections after U.S. officials launched a diplomatic campaign this week aimed at dismantling the court.

President Donald Trump and other U.S. politicians have long said that the ICC should not have the authority to investigate or prosecute Americans, particularly members of the military. On Monday, the administration said the court posed a threat to U.S. sovereignty and pledged to expand sanctions, including travel bans for ICC staff, while in-

creasing diplomatic pressure on the Hague-based court, drawing criticism from European allies.

In a lawsuit filed at a federal court in New York, Democracy for the Arab World Now and the Taxpayer Alliance Against Genocide sought to block Trump's February 2025 executive order, under which sanctions have been imposed on ICC judges and prosecutors and Palestinian human rights groups who called for the court to investigate allegations that the U.S. and Israel have committed war crimes during the war in Gaza. The groups say they have refrained from filing submissions with the ICC and coordinating advocacy with those hit by the sanctions, including Francesca Albanese, the United Nations special rapporteur for Palestine, for fear of fines and potential prison terms, according to a copy of their complaint seen by Reuters.

"The Trump administration is using the blunt instrument of economic sanctions not only to punish human rights defenders but to police the political expression of millions of Americans," Omar Shakir, executive director of Democracy for the Arab World Now, said in a statement. Trump's opposition toward the ICC goes back to his first term. A similar executive order Trump issued in 2020 was blocked by a judge, who said it likely violated the First Amendment, before being rescinded by President Joe Biden's administration in 2021.

EU, Netherlands back court Trump officials last year launched a new effort to penalize ICC officials after the ICC issued an arrest warrant for his ally, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. Three ICC judges have separately sued the Trump administration over the sanctions. In March 2020, ICC prosecutors opened an investigation in Afghanistan that included looking into possible crimes by U.S. troops, but since 2021, it has deprioritized the role of the U.S. and focused on alleged crimes committed by the Afghan government and Taliban forces.

The court, which is based in the Netherlands, has taken no steps to investigate U.S. personnel in recent years. The EU on Tuesday reiterated its support for the ICC and said it was committed to the fight against impunity.

ICE Misused Crowd Control Weapons Against Protesters, New Report Finds



Smoke fills the air as protesters face off with California highway patrol officers in Los Angeles, California, on 8 June 2025.

WASHINGTON (The Hill) - A new report shows Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers engaged in a misuse of force against individuals at immigration protests 412 times over the span of a year.

The report was authored by the Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) and the Human Rights Center at the University of California, Berkeley (HRC), which said they used legal proceedings and news articles on incidents occurring between June 1, 2025, and May 31 to determine their findings.

ICE did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the matter.

A majority of the cases occurred in Los Angeles, with 174 reports of misuse of force at public demonstrations.

The city of Minneapolis in Minnesota saw the second highest number of reports with 94 incidents followed by Chicago, which saw 56 incidents.

"The data show that, on aggregate,

crowd-control weapon misuse was not uniform in time and space but rather occurred in discrete "waves" that moved from city to city," the report says.

"The initial wave of misuse occurred almost exclusively in Los Angeles, followed by a spike in the greater Chicago area in September-November 2025, and subsequently, in the Minneapolis area in January 2026. Portland bucked this trend, as incidents occurred at a lower level throughout our study period," it adds.

In total, incidents of misuse of force from ICE officers occurred in across 16 cities in 13 states.

The top three states mentioned face an increase in immigration operations as the second Trump administration zeroes in on removing undocumented immigrants causing an uproar from the public community.

Mass protests in opposition to removals were sparked in places across the country last year and early this year as the No Kings movement and 50501 group capitalized on

shock by organizing events through a network online.

"States with high levels of immigration enforcement, such as Arizona, Texas, Georgia, and Florida, have almost no incidents (3 total)," the report says.

"While there were other immigration enforcement operations within this timeframe, they did not result in widespread misuse of crowd-control weapons. The vast majority (more than 90%) of incidents occurred in five cities," it continues.

Incidents occurred more frequently at ICE detention facilities, federal courthouses and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) offices, "where agents may have chosen to use force with higher frequency," per the report.

Most of the weapons used were chemical irritants. Thirty-six percent of the incidents in the report involved chemical irritants, 26 percent used hybrid weapons, 22 percent used kinetic projectiles and 11 percent used discretionary devices.

The report says there were 23 incidents involving vulnerable individuals, with 12 including children, 8 pregnant or elderly persons and 3 against those with a visible disability.

More than half of weapons misuse was against demonstrators at 50.7 percent. Forty-three percent of cases involving weapons misuse were against journalists, 2.9 against minors, 1.7 against bystanders and less than one percent against legal observers and healthcare workers.

It also noted that the presence of leaders in charge of Trump's surge in immigration enforcement also impacted violent events.

The report said former border patrol commander Greg Bovino's documented presence in each metropolitan area "closely tracked the surge in misuse of force incidents in Los Angeles and Minneapolis."

DRC Ebola Cases Surpass 2,000 as More Health Workers Begin Strike

BUNIA (AP) - The number of confirmed Ebola cases in the Democratic Republic of the Congo outbreak has reached 2,011, including 754 deaths, as healthcare workers in the epicenter of the outbreak start a strike over unpaid wages and inadequate working conditions.

Healthcare workers began a strike at Bunia General Hospital in the northeastern Ituri province on Wednesday, obstructing the entrance to the hospital. They said they have not received any compensation for their work since the outbreak began,

despite working under extremely difficult conditions.

The protests in Bunia come after other strikes in the region, which is the epicenter of the outbreak. Dozens of healthcare workers, including epidemiologists and grave diggers at the Rwampara General Hospital, walked off their jobs on Monday claiming they hadn't been paid for months.

Medical charity Doctors Without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontieres, or MSF) says this current outbreak is the third largest and fastest growing Ebola outbreak on record.

The World Health Organization

warned on Tuesday that the official death toll might be two to four times higher than the officially recorded numbers.

The current Ebola outbreak started on May 15 and has been caused by the Bundibugyo strain of the virus, for which there is no vaccine or treatment.

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the first clinical trial to test whether an antiviral drug can prevent infection in those exposed to the Bundibugyo virus launched on Tuesday.

Europe Seals 'Drone Deal' With Ukraine to Profit From War It Helped Prolong



The European Union and Ukraine have signed a deal to set up joint projects and scale up drone production, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Wednesday.

KYIV (Dispatches) — Ukraine and the European Union have sealed a "drone deal" aimed at combining Kyiv's battlefield expertise with European industrial capacity to establish joint projects and scale up production, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced Wednesday.

"We need to combine our strengths," von der Leyen said in a speech in Kyiv at a ceremony marking Ukraine's Statehood Day. "This deal will bring together Ukrainian ingenuity and Europe's industrial scale."

Von der Leyen said the EU could offer Ukraine "huge technological and industrial capacity" and "safe and secure production sites."

But behind the rhetoric of partnership lies a more cynical reality: European defense contractors are positioning to profit handsomely from a war Europe helped prolong, while Ukrainian blood continues to be spilled on the battlefields of Donbas.

Ukraine has signed a series of such drone deals with individual countries. At last week's NATO summit in Ankara, President Volodymyr Zelensky signed three more, bringing the total to nine. Wednesday's deal, however, is the first intended to cover countries and companies across the EU, part of a new EU-Ukraine defense industrial partnership that the Commission said would expand to include anti-ballistic missiles by 2028.

"We will do everything necessary to build Europe's anti-ballistic system by integrating all European anti-ballistic capabilities," Zelensky said.

The partnership reflects a growing desire among European politicians and companies to tap into Ukrainian expertise gained from the war that began after war with Russia. But critics note that Europe, which encouraged Ukraine to resist Russian pressure and dismissed successive peace overtures, is now aggressively moving to commercialize the conflict's technological innovations.

European defense companies, including Spain's Indra Group, Italy's Fincantieri, and Germany's Quantum Systems, have been named as founding partners of the drone deal, alongside Ukrainian firms such as LLC Skyfall Industries. The arrangement ensures that European firms gain access to battlefield-tested technology and combat data that would otherwise take years and billions in research to replicate.

Von der Leyen said the new initiative would break down bureaucratic barriers and agree common standards that would make it easier for Ukrainian and EU-based companies to undertake joint ventures. In practice, this means European defense contractors will have privileged access to Ukraine's wartime innovations while the country's exhausted military continues to fight with dwindling manpower and resources.

Italy's Meloni Suffers Surprise Setback in Close Vote on Electoral Reform



Prime minister Giorgia Meloni votes in the constitutional referendum

ROME (Reuters) - Italy's Giorgia Meloni coalition government has lost a crucial vote on an amendment to electoral reform - a significant setback ahead of next year's general election.

In a secret ballot in Italy's lower house of parliament on Wednesday evening, MPs rejected a proposal spearheaded by her party, Brothers of Italy (FdiI), by 188 votes to 187 - indicating that several of Meloni's MPs voted against the amendment.

In an angry post on social media after the vote, she said the result had been "a missed opportunity for Italians".

"The opposition celebrating as if they had won the World Cup, for preventing citizens from choosing their parliamentarians says it all," she added, referencing jubilant scenes in parliament by opposition parties.

Meloni did not address calls from the opposition to resign and bring forward the general election, currently planned for autumn 2027.

The proposed reform would see Italy move to a fully proportional system which would award a bonus to the party or coalition with the largest share of the vote, even if they fall short of a majority.

Coalitions would also be required to agree on a common platform and a single prime ministerial candidate - something that many parties, which tend to campaign separately, would find unpalatable.

The amendment that was rejected in Tuesday's vote was a provision on preference voting, allowing voters to choose preferred candidates from a list. Although that element was rejected, the government can continue to press ahead with the rest of the electoral reform.

Meloni has argued the reform would result in less shaky government coalitions and greater stability in Italy.

But opposition parties had criticized it as "authoritarian" and an attempt to secure a majority in next year's general election.

News in Brief

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A man was arrested in Utah for stabbing a Muslim man multiple times and stated that he targeted the victim because of the victim's religion, police said in court records on Tuesday. Police said the suspect told them he "intends to kill Muslims" and that he constituted "a substantial danger to the public if released based on his violent actions ... ideologies and pre-planned mass casualty events." The incident took place inside the Valley Fair Mall in Utah's West Valley City on Monday.

BERLIN (Xinhua) -- German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said on Wednesday that he does not want the United States to interfere in German elections. Merz made the remarks at the government's annual summer press conference when he was asked about a U.S. program reportedly supporting political and civil groups in Europe, amid criticism that it could benefit groups such as those ideologically aligned with Germany's far-right political party Alternative for Germany (AfD). Merz said Germany has always refrained from interfering in U.S. elections. "Conversely, I do not want the U.S. government or institutions close to it to interfere in German elections," he said.

BELGRADE (Reuters) - The European Union has condemned comments from a Serbian government minister who said she would "ethnically cleanse" Kosovo if she had been in power during the 1990s conflict. Speaking to Serbian television station Kurir over the weekend, Public Administration Minister Snezana Pاونovic said she would strip Kosovo of Albanians if she had been in the place of strongman Slobodan Milosevic during the 1998-1999 war.

PARIS (AFP) - France is experiencing a "very worrying" drought that has spurred a record number of water restrictions for the time of year, the country's environment minister said on Wednesday. Swathes of the country are under water-use controls, with the number of local restrictions in place "the highest number recorded since at least 2013", French Ecological Transition Minister Monique Barbut told a crisis meeting at the ministry. "We are experiencing a drought situation that is exceptional in how early it is" - "almost a month earlier" than usual - and "in its intensity", Barbut said. "What makes the situation very worrying is that it is occurring despite spring rainfall having been broadly within the normal range," she said.

SAO PAULO (Reuters) - Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has widened his lead over right-wing Senator Flavio Bolsonaro in the run-up to October's presidential election, a Quaest poll commissioned by brokerage Genial showed on Wednesday. It is the first Quaest survey following a series of political developments including a corruption investigation targeting a senior Lula ally and arguments about accountability over new U.S. tariff threats against Brazil. Leftist Lula is seen with 45% of voting intentions in a potential second-round runoff, compared with 37% for Senator Bolsonaro, currently the main opposition hopeful.