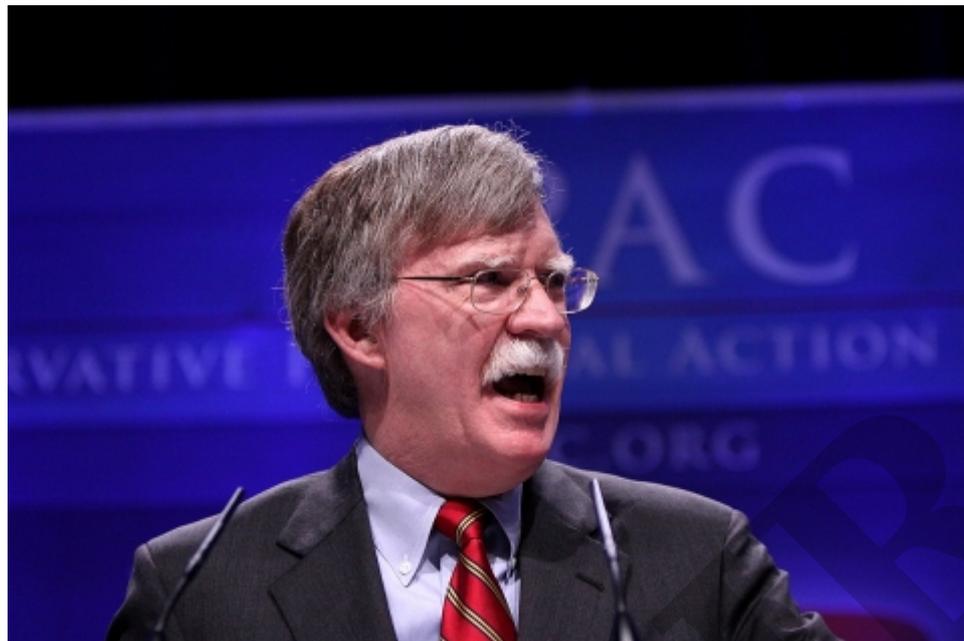


[Reprisals | UN should act on intimidation and threat of reprisal by US National Security Adviser John Bolton](#)

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In a [letter to UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights](#) , Andrew Gilmour, NGOs call on the UN to address a clear case of intimidation and threat of reprisal by U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton.

In a 10 September 2018 [speech to the Federalist Society](#), Bolton explicitly threatened International Criminal Court (the ICC) judges, prosecutors, and personnel if they proceed with an investigation into alleged war crimes committed by U.S. military and intelligence forces in Afghanistan, as well as any company or state that assists the ICC.

The ASG is mandated to lead efforts within the UN system to end all intimidation and reprisals against those cooperating with the UN on human rights. In keeping with this mandate, eight leading human rights groups from different continents call on the ASG to take urgent action, including by publicly denouncing the comments, and urging U.S. representatives to refrain from adopting any legislation, policy or practice that has the effect of undermining unhindered access to and communication with the ICC and other international bodies.

A similar [communication has also been sent to three UN experts](#) - the Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights defenders, on the independence of judges and lawyers, and on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence. The experts are similarly called on to publicly denounce the comments and send a formal communication to the U.S.

'Bolton's dangerous remarks are part and parcel of a concerning attack by the current U.S. administration on multilateralism, international rule of law, and global and regional bodies mandated to monitor and investigate human rights violations and fight impunity', said Sam Zarifi, Secretary General of the International Commission of Jurists.

The U.S. attack on the ICC comes on the heels of its withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council in June 2018, the U.S. being the only country to have left the Human Rights Council voluntarily. 'This latest attack on multilateral institutions puts the US squarely in the company of some of the worst human rights abusers such as Burundi, and provides support to others intent on undermining the court and ignoring its authority', said Jamil Dakwar, Director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Human Rights Program.

While the ICC is far from perfect, it makes a significant contribution to fighting impunity, providing justice to victims, and holding perpetrators accountable especially when countries fail to genuinely investigate and

prosecute crimes within its jurisdiction', said Dakwar

The letter cites Human Rights Council Resolution 36/21 and the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which reaffirm the right of everyone, individually and in association with others, to unhindered access to and communication with international bodies. 'Bolton's threats hinder or restrict the ability of individuals and organizations to cooperate with the ICC violate this right, undermine the ICC's effectiveness and credibility, and amount to an attack on the international system itself', said Madeleine Sinclair, Legal Counsel and New York Director of the International Service for Human Rights.

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Background:

The Assistant Secretary-General primarily fulfills this work through outreach and engagement with victims and those who may be in a position to prevent and address reprisals. He also raises awareness about the need to prevent reprisals more generally during speeches and statements and encourages other UN agencies to adopt a zero tolerance policy against reprisals. When the Assistant Secretary-General receives allegations, he sends confidential letters to, and meets bilaterally with, high-level government officials, and occasionally makes public statements. The letters to, and meetings with, government officials have the objective of engaging the government on an alleged case or patterns, and governments are encouraged to investigate and respond to the allegations. In October 2016, then Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon designated the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Andrew Gilmour, to lead efforts within the UN system to end all intimidation and reprisals against those cooperating with the UN on human rights.

Photo: Wikipedia Commons