



CANADIAN  
CIVIL LIBERTIES  
ASSOCIATION



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CANADIENNE DES  
LIBERTES CIVILES



21 September 2018

**RE: Intimidation and Reprisals – U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton Remarks re: Cooperation with the International Criminal Court**

To:

Mr. Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Mr. Diego García-Sayán, Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers

Mr. Fabian Salvioli, Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence

We are writing to you regarding a clear case of intimidation and threat of reprisal that merits your urgent attention.

We urge you to consider taking urgent action in response to explicit and concrete threats made by the U.S. President’s National Security Advisor, John Bolton, against 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.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Bolton made the remarks at the Federalist Society on 10 September 2018  
<https://fedsoc.org/events/national-security-advisor-john-r-bolton-address>.

As stated in the Secretary-General's recent report on reprisals, '[W]hile recognizing the independent judicial nature of the International Criminal Court, the Court is regarded as a related organization in the United Nations System.'<sup>2</sup>

We consider Bolton's dangerous remarks part and parcel of a concerning attack on multilateralism, international rule of law, and global and regional bodies mandated to monitor and investigate human rights violations and fight impunity.

We are very concerned that, by threatening the ICC, its judges, its prosecutors, and personnel, as well as any state or party that is supposed to or willing to assist the ICC in its investigation, virtually anyone who would be in a position to assist the Court could be targeted, including individuals, organizations, and victims' representatives. We are concerned about the threatened actions—prosecutions, travel bans, and asset freezes—noting that the U.S. has no legal authority to carry out these threats. We are equally concerned about the potential chilling effect that may ensue from such intimidation, as well as the effect on the ICC's ability to fulfil its mandate.

Human Rights Council Resolution 36/21 and the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders reaffirm the right of everyone, individually and in association with others, to unhindered access to and communication with international bodies. Actions that 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.

We urge you, in keeping with your mandates to:

- Send a joint communication to the concerned State's representatives urging the State's representatives to refrain from adopting any legislation, policy or practice that has the effect of undermining unhindered access to and communication and cooperation with the ICC; and
- Make a joint public statement denouncing the comments;

Yours sincerely,

Agora International Human Rights Group  
American Civil Liberties Union  
Canadian Civil Liberties Association  
Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales  
Egyptian Initiative on Personal Rights  
International Commission of Jurists

International Service for Human Rights  
Irish Council for Civil Liberties  
Human Rights Law Network (India)  
Kenya Human Rights Commission  
Legal Resources Center (South Africa)

CC:

Mr. António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations  
Mr. Andrew Gilmour, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights  
Mr. O-Gon Kwon, President of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute  
Judge Chile Eboe-Osuji, President of the International Criminal Court  
Ms. Fatou Bensouda, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court

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<sup>2</sup> [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/39/41](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/39/41) at para 29.