



Israel, Karim Khan & The ICC: IT'S WORSE Than You Think | Francesca Albanese

Govornik: Francesca Albanese

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UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese examines the removal of ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan, exposing coordinated political pressure, sanctions, and mafia-style intimidation tactics deployed by the US and Israel to prevent investigations into crimes in Gaza and undermine international justice institutions.

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Francesca Albanese provides a detailed analysis of the removal of Karim Khan as ICC chief prosecutor, arguing that while allegations against him warrant investigation, the process lacked due process and amounted to a show trial decided by media spectacle rather than judicial proceedings. She highlights the selective nature of international pressure: Russia faces ICC arrest warrants yet has not mobilized to remove the prosecutor, whereas Israel and its allies orchestrated Khan's removal following his move toward arrest warrants for Prime Minister Netanyahu. Albanese documents intimidation tactics including a April 2024 letter from US Congress members using mafia-style threats against Khan, personal sanctions imposed against her own work on private sector accountability, and the systematic targeting of eleven ICC officials. She frames these actions as part of a broader coordinated dismantlement of the international legal order, driven by fear that international criminal justice might actually function. The transcript situates these developments within wider patterns of repression against human rights defenders, citing the UK's treatment of Palestine Action and the criminalization of protest against arms manufacturers supplying Israel, revealing an inversion of justice where those resisting atrocities face prosecution while those committing them remain allies.

KLJUČNE PORUKE

Khan's removal was decided through exceptional fast-track procedures lacking due process, in a media spectacle rather than a proper judicial proceeding, despite an inconclusive finding by the judicial panel examining the allegations.

The selective international response is highly suspicious: Russia faces identical ICC arrest warrants yet has not mobilized against the prosecutor, whereas Israel and its allies coordinated Khan's removal immediately after his pursuit of Netanyahu arrest warrants.

In April 2024, over a dozen US Congress members sent a threatening letter to Khan using mafia-style language, warning of consequences if investigations into Israel continued—representing a formal use of organized crime tactics by representatives of a major power against an international institution.

Francesca Albanese and eleven ICC officials, including Khan and his deputies, were sanctioned by the United States for pursuing investigations into potential crimes; Albanese was specifically sanctioned for recommending ICC investigations into private sector actors for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

US sanctions against Albanese are comprehensive and severe: she is cut off from the financial system, cannot access earnings or obtain insurance, and any US person engaging with her faces up to twenty years imprisonment and a one-million-dollar fine.

The assault on the ICC has been mounting for years, escalating dramatically since the Gaza genocide, driven by fear that international criminal justice might actually function and hold powerful actors accountable.

This represents a broader coordinated dismantlement of the international rule of law system, evidenced by the criminalisation of human rights defenders, the inversion of justice where protesters against genocide are prosecuted as terrorists while those committing genocide are treated as allies, and systemic interference in judicial independence that risks collapsing the entire institutional framework of global accountability.

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The Removal of Karim Khan and Its Broader Implications

The removal of Karim Khan as chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court marks a turning point in the integrity of international justice institutions. While the allegations of sexual misconduct against Khan must be thoroughly investigated—a claim that demands serious consideration—there are deeper concerns about how this removal has unfolded. A judicial panel appointed to examine the allegations concluded that it could not make a determination based on the evidence presented by both the accuser and the chief prosecutor. Despite this inconclusive finding, the political body

of the Assembly of State parties pushed for Khan's removal through procedures that did not ensure proper due process.

What is particularly troubling is that the case has been decided not in a court of law but through media spectacle and social media. This constitutes a show trial rather than a serious judicial proceeding, conducted in an intoxicating and sensationalist environment. The proceedings have lacked the dignity and discretion necessary for handling such sensitive allegations. It could have been Khan's own decision to step down, allowing member states to engage in proper discussions with him. Instead, exceptional fast-track procedures were employed to remove him from office.

The Selective Nature of International Pressure

What makes this situation exceptionally suspicious is the selective manner in which international actors have responded. Israel is not the only country whose leaders face arrest warrants from the ICC—Russia is in the same position, yet we have not seen Vladimir Putin and his establishment cheering for Khan's removal. The prosecutor who prompted arrest warrants for Putin is the same one who issued warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The fact that only Israel and its allies have engaged in such a coordinated celebration of Khan's removal reveals something far larger at work.

Israeli ministers have established task forces and applied sustained pressure to remove the prosecutor. This pattern of intervention, combined with the overwhelming claims of Israeli pressure, demonstrates that the removal has been weaponized for political purposes. The cheering from Israeli leadership, NGOs like UN Watch, and various commentators signals that something much bigger is happening beneath the surface. This is not a domestic legal matter being handled independently; it is the beginning of a coordinated dismantlement of the International Criminal Court itself.

The Message: "Don't Touch Israel"

The reaction of Israel and the United States following Khan's removal makes their position unmistakably clear. The US State Department described the ICC as corrupt and worthless. The message being sent to the court is unambiguous: don't touch Israel, don't touch the US, and don't touch our close allies. This represents a fundamental assault on the rule of law and on the international justice system that took decades to build.

The attack on the ICC has not begun recently—it has been mounting for years. The US Hague Invasion Act was passed years ago when there was a possibility that the ICC would open investigations into the crimes of US troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. There has been continuous mistrust toward the court, except when it was investigating leaders from Russia, Myanmar, or the global South. But the assault has escalated

dramatically since the beginning of the genocide in Gaza, particularly when it became clear that Khan would pursue arrest warrants for those involved in crimes in Gaza.

Intimidation, Threats, and Mafia-Style Tactics

In April 2024, over a dozen US Congress members wrote a threatening letter to Khan in what can only be described as a mafia-style tone and manner. The letter warned him not to continue investigations into Israel. "There would be consequences," they said. "We know you. We will come after you. We will come after your team and your family." This is the language used by organized crime figures, not by institutional representatives of a democratic nation. This moment marked the use of the word "mafia" in a formal capacity to describe the conduct of a major power toward an international institution.

The Personal Cost of International Justice Work

The sanctions imposed by the United States against UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese exemplify the tactics being deployed to silence those working for accountability. Albanese was not sanctioned for documenting genocide or speaking about Palestinian suffering or the crimes of Prime Minister Netanyahu, Minister Smotrich, or Ben-Gvir. She was sanctioned for recommending that the ICC open investigations into the private sector, recognizing that individuals from the private sector can be investigated and prosecuted for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and possibly genocide.

The practical impact of these sanctions is severe and comprehensive. Albanese is cut off from the financial system, meaning she cannot receive payments, make payments, access her earnings, or even obtain health insurance. Any US person who engages in any transactional dealing with her faces up to twenty years in jail and a one-million-dollar fine. This creates a powerful deterrent against cooperation. The situation is particularly difficult because Albanese is the mother of a US citizen and has assets in the United States, where she gave birth and lived. She was planning to return in a few years, but that now appears impossible.

Albanese is not alone. Eleven officials at the International Criminal Court, including Khan and his two deputies, are under similar sanctions. This coordinated assault demonstrates that the attack on the ICC has been carefully articulated and systematized. The United States is behaving as the emissary of Israel, enforcing a predatory elite agenda rooted primarily in the US and Israel but with emissaries distributed worldwide.

The Fear Behind the Attack

There is a fundamental fear driving this assault on international justice: the fear that international criminal justice might actually work. When Khan requested arrest

warrants for Yahya Sinwar and other Hamas leaders—who were subsequently killed by Israel—it demonstrated that the court's pursuit of justice has been extremely conservative. Ben-Gvir and Smotrich should have already been investigated and reached by arrest warrants, as the evidence for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and possibly genocide attributable to these two men is overwhelming. Yet they remain untouched. The selective nature of this restraint, combined with the overwhelming pressure to remove the prosecutor, reveals that powerful actors fear what a functioning International Criminal Court might accomplish.

Broader Implications for Rule of Law

The assault on the ICC is part of a broader attack on the rule of law system itself. This is the beginning of the end of rule of law as an international principle. When powerful nations can use sanctions, threats, and media manipulation to remove a prosecutor and undermine an international court, the foundation of global justice crumbles.

This concern extends beyond the ICC to democratic institutions more broadly. The British government's persecution of Palestine Action, a direct action group, exemplifies how this assault on accountability has spread to individual countries. Under the Starmer government, the UK has embraced repression to silence legitimate calls from hundreds of thousands of responsible citizens to stop complicity with genocide. A precedent has been set where human rights defenders, journalists, and ordinary citizens can be blocked, sanctioned, and punished for using their freedom of expression and assembly to oppose atrocities.

The fact that British courts have begun sentencing people convicted of criminal damage at arms factories producing weapons used to kill children in Gaza as terrorists is a direct blow to the rule of law system. Damage to property can be assessed in civil court, but it is not terrorism. Meanwhile, UK leaders have shaken hands with Israeli officials who commit and authorize acts of terrorism. This inversion of justice—where those resisting genocide are prosecuted as terrorists while those committing genocide are treated as allies—is deeply disconcerting and demands investigation and prosecution.

The situation facing international justice institutions today is critical. The assault on the ICC, the sanctions against those pursuing accountability, the criminalization of human rights defenders, and the selective application of justice represent a coordinated dismantlement of the international legal order. Reversing this trajectory will require recognition of what is actually occurring and commitment from those within the legal profession and civil society to defend the institutions and principles upon which global accountability depends.

The Threat to Global Justice Systems

What we are witnessing raises fundamental questions about the effectiveness of the rule of law system itself—its functioning and its health. The interference in the independence of the justice system is extremely concerning. This kind of pressure, when it becomes systemic rather than isolated, risks collapsing the entire institutional framework we depend on.

Albanese emphasizes the severity of this threat, describing it as both frightening and potentially catastrophic. She notes that despite her deep respect for UK legal scholarship and the institutions she has studied throughout her career, vulnerabilities in justice systems that go unchecked can spread like a pandemic. If these patterns of interference and political pressure on independent judicial bodies are not addressed promptly, she argues, we may be witnessing the beginning of the end of the rule of law system itself.

She therefore calls on observers and legal experts everywhere to scrutinize what is happening and to stand against these encroachments on judicial independence. The stakes, she suggests, extend far beyond any single case or prosecutor—they touch on the viability of international legal accountability itself.

#International Criminal Court (ICC)

#Political pressure and interference in judicial institutions

#Arrest warrants and international justice

#US sanctions and coercive diplomacy

#Human rights defenders and persecution

#Rule of law and accountability

#Gaza and war crimes investigations