

STATEMENT

Immediate Withdrawal of Unjustified Pressure on the International Criminal Court

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued arrest warrants for Russian President Vladimir Putin and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in connection with alleged international crimes, including war crimes. These actions demonstrate the principle that no one—not even a head of state—is above the law or immune from accountability for the gravest international crimes. As such, they represent an important affirmation of the rule of law and deserve strong recognition and support.

Russia, however, retaliated by placing ICC President Judge Tomoko Akane on its wanted list. The Trump administration has likewise designated President Akane and other ICC officials for sanctions pursuant to a presidential Executive Order and has even considered encouraging States Parties to withdraw from the ICC. Such actions constitute blatant interference with the independence of the Court and a serious assault on the rule of law. They are wholly unacceptable.

The World Federalist Movement of Japan has long advocated “World Peace Through World Law” and has worked toward a world in which disputes are resolved through law rather than force. To that end, we have consistently promoted the development of international law and the rule of law, as well as the reform and strengthening of international institutions.

The establishment of the ICC in 2002 represented an important realization of precisely these principles. When Japan moved toward accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, we played a leading role, in cooperation with many other NGOs, in supporting Japan’s participation in the Court. We therefore have a particularly strong commitment to the ICC and are deeply outraged by the sanctions and other forms of pressure directed against President Tomoko Akane and other ICC officials.

When President Akane became the target of retaliatory measures by Russia, she made clear her determination to defend the rule of law even at personal risk, stating in substance that judges are replaceable even if one of them should lose their life. In response to the sanctions imposed by the Trump administration, she has also warned, in substance, that we must not allow this to become the beginning of the end of the rule of law.

When the Trump administration issued its Executive Order authorizing sanctions against ICC personnel, 79 countries issued a joint statement condemning the measure. Japan did not join that statement.

This was presumably due, at least in part, to considerations surrounding Japan's relationship with the United States. Friendship between nations, however, cannot mean accepting every action taken by a friend or ally. A true friend must be prepared to say clearly when a friend is wrong.

Nor should it be forgotten that U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who is now among the strongest critics of the ICC within the Trump administration, was himself a co-sponsor in 2022 of a U.S. Senate resolution supporting accountability for war crimes committed in Ukraine and encouraging international action, including through the ICC, to investigate such crimes. At that time, he supported the role of international justice and the rule of law in holding those responsible for grave international crimes accountable.

It is not too late.

The Government of Japan should call for the immediate withdrawal of these unjustified retaliatory measures, sanctions, and other forms of pressure directed against the ICC and its officials, and should make clear its full and unequivocal support for the Court.

Japan nominated Tomoko Akane for election as an ICC judge, and she now serves as President of the Court. Japan has also long been one of the Court's foremost financial supporters and has made the rule of law a central principle of its foreign policy. For these reasons, defending the independence and integrity of the ICC at this critical moment is not merely an option for Japan—it is a responsibility consistent with the principles Japan itself has long upheld.

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**World Federalist Movement of Japan
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General Incorporated Association