

Senate Leader-Elect Urges ICC to Drop Israel Arrest Warrants or Face Sanctions

Thune said he would make the sanction legislation 'a top priority' in the next Congress should the current Senate majority leader fail to act on it.

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Elect Majority Leader Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) after the Senate Republican leadership election in Washington on Nov. 13, 2024. Madalina Vasiliu/The Epoch Times



By Aldgra Fredly

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Incoming Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-S.D.) on Nov. 17 urged the Senate to impose sanctions against the International Criminal Court (ICC) if it continued to pursue arrest warrants for Israeli officials over the Israel– Hamas war in Gaza.

In June, the House of Representatives [passed](#) a bill aimed at imposing sanctions on those involved in the ICC’s efforts “to investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute a protected person.” Under this bill, those subject to sanctions would be ineligible to enter or remain in the United States.

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Thune said the Senate Republican majority will make the bill, along with other supportive legislation, “a top priority in the next Congress” should there be no action taken by outgoing Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.).

“If the ICC and its prosecutor do not reverse their outrageous and unlawful actions to pursue arrest warrants against Israeli officials, the Senate should immediately pass sanctions legislation, as the House has already done on a bipartisan basis,” Thune [stated](#) on social media platform X.

In May, the ICC’s chief prosecutor Karim Khan requested arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and then-Defense Minister [Yoav Gallant](#) over alleged war crimes in Gaza sparked by the Hamas-led Oct. 7, 2023 attack on southern Israel.

Khan also requested arrest warrants for three Hamas leaders over the killings and kidnappings that Hamas terrorists committed when they entered southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

A bipartisan group of senators released a [statement](#) on May 21, saying: “These actions by the ICC jeopardize efforts to bring about sustainable peace in the Middle East. It puts at risk sensitive negotiations to bring

home hostages, including Americans, and surge humanitarian assistance.”

Not all lawmakers opposed the ICC move.

“The allegations from the prosecutor’s office are significant, and it has long been my belief that the absence of credible processes for justice are a key reason the conflict between Israel and Palestinians continues to escalate,” Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) [said](#) in May.

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) said in May that the ICC prosecutor was right to take these actions. “These arrest warrants may or may not be carried out, but it is imperative that the global community uphold international law,” he [said](#) at the time.

The Biden administration expressed concerns about Khan’s arrest warrant applications for Israeli officials but said that it “strongly opposes” imposing sanctions against the ICC as a response.

In a June [statement](#), the White House warned that the legislation “could require sanctions against court staff, judges, witnesses, and U.S. allies and partners who provide even limited, targeted support to the court in a range of aspects of its work.”

“There are more effective ways to defend Israel, preserve U.S. positions on the ICC, and promote international justice and accountability, and the Administration stands ready to work with the Congress on those options,” it stated.

Some Republican senators said they agreed with Thune’s position of imposing sanctions against the ICC over its arrest warrants for Israeli officials.

“Well done Senator Thune,” Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) [stated](#) on X. “The ICC’s actions against Israel have been outrageous, and an independent review into the prosecutor’s actions is more than called for.”

Sen. Jim Risch (R-Idaho), ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said the Senate should immediately pass the sanction legislation against the ICC.

“We waited for months for the majority to schedule the vote only to have them postpone it before the election. We will not fail to act when Republicans are in the majority,” Risch [stated](#) on X.

Schumer did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Thune’s statement.

State Department spokesman Matthew Miller [said](#) on May 20 that the ICC lacks jurisdiction to bring charges relating to the ongoing war between the Israeli military and the Hamas terror group in Gaza.

Khan said on Aug. 23 that the ICC had jurisdiction over the matter and urged the court to urgently decide on his request for arrest warrants.

“Any unjustified delay in these proceedings detrimentally affects the rights of victims,” the ICC prosecutor stated in a [court filing](#) dated Aug. 23.

Jackson Richman contributed to this report.

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