

14 July 2025

Statement on United States Sanctions on Francesca Albanese, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967

The Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC) unequivocally condemns the decision of the United States to impose sanctions on Francesca Albanese, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.ⁱ These sanctions prohibit Special Rapporteur (SR) Albanese from travelling to the United States and block US persons from dealing with any property or property interests of SR Albanese including freezing assets held in bank accounts. These wide-ranging measures effectively prevent entities based in the US collaborating with her and are often also implemented by non-US entities for fear of themselves being targeted and shut out of the US financial system. The [reasons](#) given for the imposition of sanctions are that SR Albanese has engaged with the ICC in efforts to investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute nationals of the United States or Israel, neither of which is party to the ICC. The US Government also accuses SR Albanese of making biased, extreme and unfounded accusations, antisemitism, support for terrorism, and “open contempt for the United States, Israel, and the West”.

This decision follows SR Albanese’s expressions of deep concern at the escalating situation in Gaza since October 2023, endorsement of the ICC indictments of Israeli officials including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for war crimes; and her campaign urging states to put pressure on Israel to cease its 21-month bombardment of Gaza. She also published a [report](#) in July 2025 that names certain corporate entities as profiting from Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territories.ⁱⁱ

This unprecedented action against a mandate-holder appointed by the Human Rights Council undermines the independence of UN human rights mechanisms, sets a dangerous precedent for reprisals against officials upholding international human rights and humanitarian law, and constitutes a flagrant attack on the principles of international cooperation, independence and respect for human rights enshrined in the very foundation of the United Nations.

Special Rapporteurs and other Special Procedure mandate-holders of the Human Rights Council operate under the strict code of conduct adopted in [Human Rights Council Resolution 5/2](#), and should carry out their functions free from undue influence or intimidation. The credibility of the international human rights system depends on the ability of independent experts to operate without fear of retaliation. The Human Rights Council, in [Resolution 36/21 \(2017\)](#), explicitly condemns all acts of intimidation or reprisal, both online and offline, by State and non-State actors against individuals and groups who seek to cooperate, or have cooperated with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights.

A UN Special Rapporteur, by definition, cooperates with and serves as a representative of the UN's human rights mechanisms. Special procedures mandate-holders contribute to legislative and policy reform; improve access to mechanisms of redress; human rights mainstreaming, standard setting and awareness; facilitating dialogue/coalition setting; and the prevention or cessation of violations ([OHCHR](#)). Sanctioning SR Albanese for her reports and advocacy, which form a core part of her official UN mandate, constitutes precisely the intimidation and reprisal that the Human Rights Council has categorically declared unacceptable.

The United States has for centuries advocated for free speech. The attempt to intimidate and silence critical voices by such measures is a grave misuse of the sanctions regime and of freedom of speech under international law. Such sanctions also run contrary to the obligation of all UN Member States, under [Article 2\(5\) of the Charter](#), to “give the United Nations every assistance in any action it takes in accordance with the present Charter”.

The US sanctions against SR Albanese have been condemned around the world, including by the [UN Human Rights Council](#), the [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), the [European Union](#), and numerous international human rights organisations including [Amnesty International](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#), among many others.

The sanctions against SR Albanese are made pursuant to US Executive Order 14203 (instituting a general sanctions licence concerning the International Criminal Court) which also sanctioned the ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan KC and four ICC judges.ⁱⁱⁱ BHRC has previously condemned the sanctions listed against members of the ICC.^{iv} Such endeavours contribute to undermining the rule of law and the international rules-based legal order.

The Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales calls upon the United States to immediately revoke the sanctions imposed on SR Francesca Albanese.

Michael Ivers KC, Chair of BHRC, said: “We urge the US Government to reaffirm its commitment to and cooperation with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, including support for the UN's human rights mandate. We further call on all Member States to stand in solidarity against any form of intimidation, threats, attacks or reprisal directed at UN human rights mechanisms and mandate-holders.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

ⁱ The Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC) is the independent, international human rights arm of the Bar of England and Wales, working to protect the rights of advocates, judges, and human rights defenders around the world. BHRC is concerned with defending the rule of law and internationally recognised legal standards relating to human rights and the right to a fair trial. It is autonomous of the Bar Council. Our vision is for a world in which human rights are universally protected, through every government and state actor's adherence to international law obligations and internationally agreed norms. Our mission is to protect and promote international human rights through the rule of law, by using the international human rights law expertise of some of the UK's most experienced human rights barristers. Our Executive Committee and members predominantly offer their services pro bono, alongside their independent legal practices, teaching commitments and legal studies. BHRC members are primarily barristers called to the Bar of England and Wales, as well as pupil barristers, legal academics, and law students. Our members include some of the UK's foremost human rights barristers, legal practitioners, and academics. For further information, please visit <https://barhumanrights.org.uk>.

ⁱⁱ The report summary reads as follows: "In the present report, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 investigates the corporate machinery sustaining the Israeli settler-colonial project of displacement and replacement of the Palestinians in the occupied territory. While political leaders and Governments shirk their obligations, far too many corporate entities have profited from the Israeli economy of illegal occupation, apartheid and now genocide. The complicity exposed by the report is just the tip of the iceberg; ending it will not happen without holding the private sector accountable, including its executives. International law recognizes varying degrees of responsibility – each requiring scrutiny and accountability, particularly in this case, where a people's self-determination and very existence are at stake. This is a necessary step to end the genocide and dismantle the global system that has allowed it."

ⁱⁱⁱ This sanction license was created through an Executive Order and carried out by the US Treasury Department Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) using the framework of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) and the National Emergencies Act (NEA) both under 50 U.S.C. <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/07/sanctioning-lawfare-that-targets-u-s-and-israeli-persons/>; https://ofac.treasury.gov/recent-actions/20250709_33; <https://ofac.treasury.gov/recent-actions/20250605>; <https://ofac.treasury.gov/sanctions-programs-and-country-information/international-criminal-court-related-sanctions>

^{iv} See previous statements by BHRC: <https://barhumanrights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/BHRC-Statement-addressing-attacks-on-ICJ-and-ICC-concerning-Israel-and-OPT.pdf>