

BIDEN LIFTS TRUMP'S SANCTIONS ON INTERNATIONAL COURT OFFICIALS

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Joe Biden

President Joe Biden on Friday lifted sanctions that Donald Trump had imposed on two top officials of the International Criminal Court (ICC), undoing one of the past administration's more aggressive moves targeting international institutions and officials.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a statement stressed that the U.S. still strongly disagreed with some actions by the court. "We believe, however, that our concerns about these cases would be better addressed" through diplomacy "rather than through the imposition of sanctions," Mr. Blinken wrote.

The U.S. sanctions had targeted ICC chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda and the court's head of jurisdiction, Phakiso Mochochoko, for pressing ahead with investigations into the U.S. and its allies, notably Israel, for alleged war crimes. Two sets of sanctions were imposed, the first being a travel ban on Ms. Bensouda in March 2019, and then 18 months later a freeze on any assets she and Mr. Mochochoko may have in the U.S. or U.S. jurisdictions. The second round also made giving the pair "material support" a potentially sanctionable offence.

The Trump administration was openly hostile to the tribunal for pursuing prosecutions of Americans for actions in Afghanistan and Israelis for actions against the Palestinians.

Both sets of sanctions had been roundly denounced by the ICC. The removal of the sanctions was the latest signal that the Biden administration is intent on returning to the multilateral fold.

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