



Statement by President von der Leyen on the establishment of the International Centre for the Prosecution of Crimes of Aggression against Ukraine

Brussels, 4 March 2023

"Russia's invasion has brought unspeakable suffering to Ukraine.

Almost one year ago the world discovered the horrors of Bucha.

I was there myself and I have witnessed the atrocities committed by Russian forces.

There is increasing evidence of direct attacks against civilians as well as on energy and other infrastructure.

Torture, ill-treatment, sexual violence, and summary executions are known to have been committed by Russian forces. Not even children are being spared.

Russia must be held accountable for these horrific crimes. Putin must be held accountable.

We must do everything in our power to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The European Union is supportive of the role of the International Criminal Court. We also believe that there needs to be a dedicated tribunal to prosecute Russia's crime of aggression.

And I am proud that, at this conference, as a first step you will sign the agreement to set up the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression in The Hague.

The European Union will continue to work, with our partners, to ensure that Russia pays.

We stand united for justice for Ukraine."

Background

The amended agreement of the existing Joint Investigation Team at Eurojust is being signed at a conference on accountability, which is taking place in Ukraine this weekend in order to facilitate the set up of the ICPA within its structure.

Following the atrocities in Bucha, in Ukraine, President **von der Leyen** tasked Commissioner for Justice, Didier **Reynders**, to follow-up and support the coordination of the EU efforts to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Ukraine.

A lot of work is under way in this respect. A Joint Investigation Team has been set up with the support of Eurojust to collect evidence and investigate core international crimes committed in Ukraine. The Joint Investigation Team consists of the International Criminal Court, Ukraine, and Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia, Romania.

The Eurojust Regulation was amended to give the Agency the legal possibility to securely preserve, store and analyse evidence on core international crimes. The judicial database was launched in February 2023.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) is competent to prosecute the most serious international crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. It is also competent to prosecute the crime of aggression but only in relation to those countries that have accepted its jurisdiction in relation to this crime. The crime of aggression is a crime committed by the highest political and military leadership. Given that Russia does not accept the jurisdiction of the ICC, and therefore the ICC cannot exercise this competency in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine. To close this gap, in November 2022 the European Commission presented [different options to Member States](#) to make sure that Russian individuals are held accountable for the atrocities committed in Ukraine, including through the establishment of a dedicated tribunal backed by the UN and the international community, to effectively prosecute the crime of aggression. The ICPA is a first step in this process to preserve evidence and prepare the prosecution for future trials, whether national or international.

More information

[Video message by President von der Leyen](#)

STATEMENT/23/1363

Press contacts:

[Christian WIGAND](#) (+32 2 296 22 53)

[Katarzyna KOLANKO](#) (+ 32 2 296 34 44)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)