

Public appearance gap grows for first lady

Kinsey Crowley
USA TODAY

First lady Melania Trump has not made an official public appearance for a month as of Aug. 19.

Unlike President Donald Trump, the first lady has often limited her public appearances and stayed out of the spotlight. After their son, Barron Trump, who has only joined his parents and half-siblings at a few events since his father returned to the White House, Melania Trump, 56, is one of the more private people of the sprawling, famous family.

An analysis of her schedule by NBC News published Aug. 17 shows she has made even fewer appearances in this term compared to her husband's first term.

Her last public appearance was at the 2026 World Cup final on July 19. Since then, she has opted out of joining the president at events like the Patriot Games and the funeral for South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham. Last summer, she also went under the radar for several weeks between July and September.

Still, between her limited appearances, she has focused her policy work on access to artificial intelligence for kids, improving the foster care system, combating nonconsensual intimate imagery and helping to reunite children separated from their families in the Russia-Ukraine war. Outside of her official duties, she has helped produce and promote a documentary about herself.

Early in 2025, Melania Trump championed the Take it Down Act, which was signed into law on May 19. Over the summer of 2025, she took a nearly two-month-long hiatus from public life before appearing at an AI event in September.

In 2026, she promoted her documentary "Melania" heavily when it came out in January. In March, she made history as the only first lady to sit in for the Security Council presidency at the United Nations. She also convened an international summit for her



First lady Melania Trump is one of the more private people President Donald Trump's family.
ODD ANDERSEN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES FILE

Fostering the Future initiative, where she debuted a humanoid robot that she says could help teach students.

She shocked the world in April when she called a news conference to make an announcement denying she had a friendship with Epstein and calling on Congress to have a public hearing for survivors.

Melania Trump also met with lawmakers recently to discuss legislation to improve the foster system, as highlighted in the April 23 First Lady's Luncheon.

Her last public remarks occurred on June 11 with the Treasury Department to launch Fostering the Future Accounts. Since then, she has made some appearances for America's 250th anniversary, including the Freedom 250 UFC fight night at the White House and the Fourth of July fireworks.

Her senior advisor recently announced that a docuseries extension of the "Melania" movie would be coming to Amazon Prime in the fall.

The first lady's office declined to comment on what she has been doing during her monthlong hiatus. But senior adviser Marc Beckman told NBC News in a statement the first lady "prioritizes results over appearances."

Contributing: Brendan Morrow, USA TODAY

U.S. imposes sanctions on ICC president, lawyer

Simon Lewis, Ryan Patrick Jones and Ismail Shakil
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – The United States imposed sanctions on Aug. 18 on the International Criminal Court's president and a senior trial lawyer at the court, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said.

The move is the latest escalation in the Trump administration's campaign against The Hague-based court, which was established in 2002 by the international community to prosecute war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. The United States is not a member of the court.

Rubio said in a statement that he was imposing sanctions on Tomoko Akane, a Japanese judge who is president of the ICC, and Abdoulaye Seye, a senior trial lawyer and a Senegalese national, under a Trump executive order last year authorizing sanctions against the court.

"These individuals have directly engaged in efforts by the ICC to investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute officials whose government has not consented to ICC jurisdiction," Rubio said.

The ICC condemned the move, saying in a statement that the measures undermine the rule of law.

"When judicial actors are threatened for applying the law, it is the international legal order itself that is placed at risk," the ICC said.

Seye is a senior trial lawyer on the prosecution team that sought an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and has been nominated for election as an ICC judge.

The U.S. effort has put it at odds with allies in Europe. Dutch Foreign Minister Tom Berendsen said on X that the Netherlands, which hosts the court, disapproved of the latest U.S. sanctions, and he had invited Akane to "discuss our continued support."

"International courts and tribunals must be able to freely carry out their mandates," Berendsen wrote.

Top ICC judge Akane warned in December that the U.S. sanctions would "rapidly undermine the court's opera-



The International Criminal Court was established in 2002 by the international community to prosecute war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.
JOHN THYS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES FILE

tions in all situations and cases, and jeopardize its very existence."

The United States imposed targeted sanctions last year on several ICC officials, including prosecutors and judges, citing the ICC's arrest warrants for Netanyahu and former Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, as well as a past probe into U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

The sanctions freeze any U.S. assets the individuals may have and essentially cut them off from the U.S. financial system, with which almost all internationally operating banks have close ties. The Treasury Department also issued a general license on Aug. 18 authorizing the wind-down of transactions involving Akane and Seye.

Three ICC judges sued Trump and his administration in June over the sanctions, arguing the measures were unlawful. Advocacy groups, in two separate lawsuits, have said that the U.S. campaign infringes on the constitutional rights of organizations working with the court to seek justice for atrocities around the world.

Rubio said in July that the administration would step up efforts to undermine the ICC, including a diplomatic campaign aimed at persuading other countries to quit the institution, a call at least five countries have heeded.

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