AMICC became aware in recent months that local press coverage of the International Criminal Court (ICC, Court) seemed to be increasing. This coverage, from whatever source, would show that editors believed that their readers were interested in at least some aspect of the activities of the Court and that the ICC was not a subject too toxic to touch. We decided to research and analyze local newspaper articles about the Court. We collected U.S. local news articles regarding the International Criminal Court from a news archives database, pulling only articles published from January to June 2018. This newly created database shows the number of local news articles reporting on or mentioning the ICC depending on the occurrence of human rights abuses or related events around the world in a given month. The database also details the extent to which each article merely refers to the ICC, or makes it the central story. Additionally, the database shows the number of times a story was re-published from a news agency like the Associated Press, or individually published by a local newspaper.

The graph above indicates the number of articles that were published each month. The number of news articles tend to increase as certain situations moved forward towards consideration by the ICC, especially situations that interest the American public. For example, the
number of articles spiked in May in response to the violence in Gaza and Palestine’s referral of the situation in Israel and Palestine to the ICC.

January
- Events related to the Court
  - Not much notable activity.
- Mostly minor stories, passing references on activities that have already happened at the Court (Certain fugitives are wanted by the ICC etc.).

February
- Events at the Court
  - The Office of the Prosecutor opens a preliminary examination in the situation in the Philippines. This specific action was the central story for most articles.

March
- Events related to the Court
  - Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte plans to withdraw from the ICC were the central story for most articles.
- A large number of pieces mentioning the ICC were republications of an article by the Southern California news group of 11 daily newspapers posing a “question of the week for readers” on how President Trump should address the opioid crisis and whether he cited the Philippines as a model.
- Overviews of John Bolton’s record following President Trump’s naming him as national security adviser led to passing references to his opposition to U.S. participation in the ICC.

April
- Events at the Court
  - Prosecutor Bensouda issues a statement raising concern about the recent violence in Gaza. This was the central story for most articles.
- In addition, a campus newspaper criticized the ICC for ignoring the atrocities of the Ugandan armed forces while pursuing the crimes of the Lord’s Resistance Army...

May
- Events at the Court
  - Palestine refers its situation to the Court for Israeli crimes in Gaza and settlements.
- Events related to the Court
  - U.S. embassy opens in Jerusalem; protests and violence erupt in Gaza.
A majority of the articles were about the U.S. embassy and protests by Palestinians, as well as Palestine’s possibility of referral and actual referral to the Court. There were many more articles related to the possibility of a referral than articles about Palestine’s official referral to the Court. A vast majority of all of these articles were by the AP and re-published in local newspapers.

June

- Events at the Court:
  - An ICC appeal decision acquits, Congolese politician, Jean Pierre Bemba, accused of crimes against humanity and war crimes in the Central African Republic (CAR). Extensive comment appears, mostly negative. This specific activity is the central story for most articles.

- Events related to the Court:
  - Many autocratic/authoritative regimes appear on the news for human rights abuses, including Venezuela, China, and Burundi and thus many NGOs and human rights organizations call for the ICC to investigate these different situations.
  - The Trump-Kim summit prompted discussions on the human rights abuses in North Korea. Most of these discussions noted that these abuses included crimes under ICC jurisdiction.
  - Accusations of abuses by the Mexican army prompts call for the ICC to investigate.
  - In most of these mentions, the ICC is referred to as an authority on international law and human rights.

Information about the Court as an institution appears in most of this coverage through descriptions of what it does in specific cases or actions. Readers get a sense of the Court’s judicial authority in international law through bringing those who commit gross atrocities to justice. The articles convey information on the Court’s functions through its actions on genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes in situations such as Palestine, Myanmar, and the Philippines. The articles that address specific activity at the Court such as Bemba’s acquittal or the Prosecutor’s opening a preliminary examination into a situation, give the readers more information on how the Court is structured and how it works. For example, the readers can learn how a case reaches the court (through a referral or OTP own initiative) and its jurisdictional restrictions. Generally, these articles refer to the ICC in a neutral tone and are seldom negative about it.

We can expect an explosion in the number of stories when and if the ICC proceeds on the situations in Palestine and Afghanistan. Many of these stories will almost certainly express the commitment of many Americans to Israel and their hostility to ICC charges against American senior military officers and civilian officials.