

Could Israel Invade the Hague?

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It has been a long time coming.

Earlier this month, a panel of judges [ruled](#) that the International Criminal Court (ICC) could investigate Israel for war crimes in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

A coalition of [Palestinian human rights lawyers celebrated](#) the “landmark” ruling as “a critically important step towards ensuring the rule of law” and “towards ending impunity”.

As the saying goes, justice delayed is justice denied, and in the case of Israeli war crimes, accountability has been delayed for years – for decades.

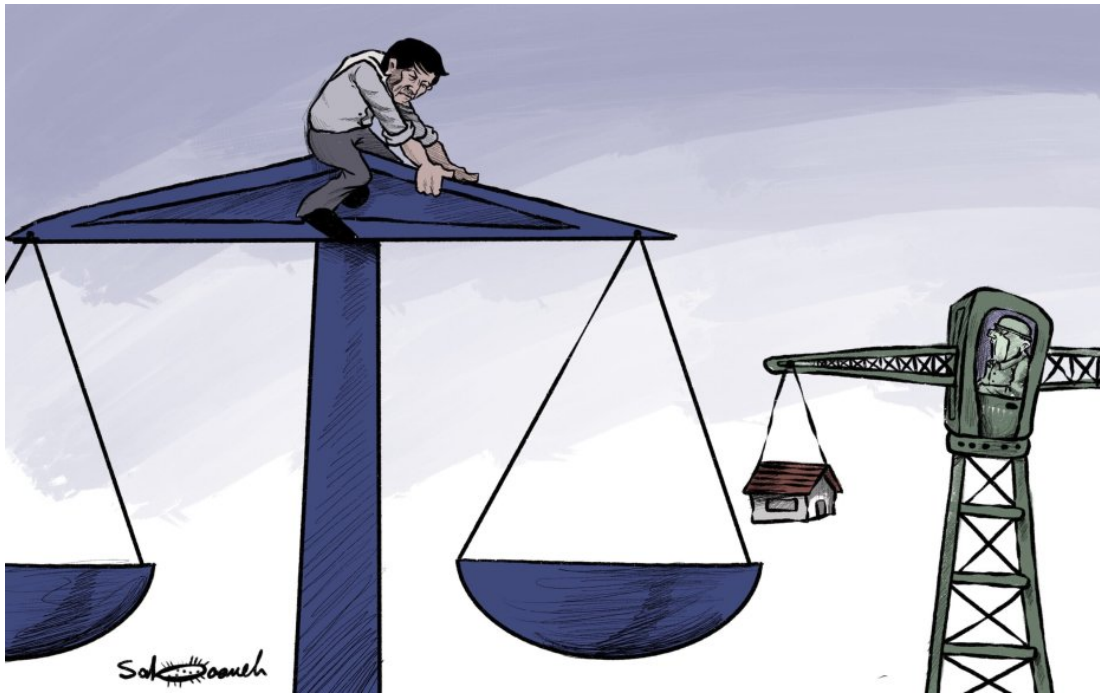
More than a year ago, the ICC’s Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda concluded her preliminary examination of the situation. She [decided that the criteria](#) for war crimes investigations had been met.

But that initial examination in itself had taken no less than five years, with the entire weight of Israel’s network of overseas lobby groups bearing down on Bensouda. Outrageously, she was also sanctioned by the Trump administration.

The ICC ruling this month means that the court in the Hague can now go ahead and investigate Israel for war crimes during events such as Israel’s 2014 war of aggression against the people of the Gaza Strip, and the 2018 protests along the boundary line with Gaza during which Israeli snipers gunned down thousands of unarmed protesters, killing hundreds of them and injuring many, many more.

It is far from clear how long it will take for the ICC to initiate the investigation process. The panel’s ruling on territorial jurisdiction referred to the possibility of “a protracted process” – not exactly an encouraging sign.

Predictably, Israel was not pleased that the ICC has dared to indicate that it will investigate them, even though the panel also ruled it had jurisdiction to investigate alleged war crimes by armed Palestinian resistance groups such as Hamas.



ICC ruling brings hope for Palestine, dismay for Israel – Cartoon [Sabaaneh/MiddleEastMonitor]

Israeli politicians and officials went wild, lashing out with all sorts of outlandish accusations and threats of revenge.

But privately, Israel is clearly worried. [A report in Haaretz](#) revealed that Israel has drawn up a secretive list of top military and political figures likely to be targetted by an ICC prosecution and has even warned them to refrain from travel for fear of arrest.

Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's racist prime minister, ranted in a [bizarre video](#) posted online that the ICC was investigating "fake war crimes" and that the court's actions were "pure anti-Semitism". He threatened that Israel would "fight" the investigation "with all our might".

Gilad Erdan, Israel's ambassador to the US and UN, also [posted](#) a twisted statement baselessly accusing the ICC investigation of being "anti-Semitic". Erdan was, until recently, the Israeli minister responsible for orchestrating Israel's global war against the Palestine solidarity movement.

He was responsible for an international campaign of dirty tricks and harassment against Palestinians and their supporters – a campaign very much still at work. Lawyers of the four Palestinian human rights groups who so warmly welcomed the ICC panel's ruling this month – Al-Haq, Al-Mezan, Addameer and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights – stated that in revenge for their engagement with the court, Israel was subjecting them to collective punishment.

This has been: "A protracted campaign of smears and death threats – all designed to foil, undermine, and deter Palestinian engagement with the court," [they wrote](#) – a covert sabotage campaign reportedly carried out by Erdan's former "Strategic Affairs" ministry.

Erdan himself is another open racist at the highest levels of the Israeli government. He has openly [incited hatred against Israel's](#) Palestinian citizens, and calls for the theft of all

remaining Palestinian land in the West Bank [by formally annexing](#) the occupied territory, based on “our Biblical right to the land,” he said in 2018.

Israeli politics are made up of the right, the far-right and the ultra-right. On the ultra-right, Israel’s Jewish supremacist [Kahanist politicians](#) are even more openly genocidal in their incitement against Palestinians.

Kahanist lawmaker Bezalel Smotrich (who is likely to be part of Israel’s ruling coalition government after next month’s election) called for Netanyahu to expel and destroy an entire Palestinian village in revenge for the ICC’s ruling.

“Prime Minister Netanyahu must order the evacuation of Khan Al-Ahmar tomorrow morning,” he posted on Twitter. “What matters is not what the gentiles will say but what the Jews will do,” [he wrote](#), quoting a phrase attributed to Israel’s first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion.

But the award for the most truly demented reaction goes to fake Israeli “law centre” Shurat HaDin, which in reality was [founded by Kahanists](#) and is a [front group for Mossad](#) and other Israeli spooks.

Some years ago, the group’s [director Nitsana Darshan-Leitner wrote](#) a particularly unhinged op-ed, in which she called for Israel to literally invade the Hague, should it ever investigate Israel for war crimes.

Is this the kind of “fight” Netanyahu has in mind?

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