

Netanyahu Drumming Up Opposition to ICC as World Leaders Descend on Israel

Mass public support from allies in face of likely investigation into Israeli war crimes has not been forthcoming

By [Middle East Eye](#)

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is planning to use the influx of foreign leaders to Israel for the 75th anniversary of Auschwitz's liberation to drum up support for efforts to block the International Criminal Court (ICC) from investigating war crimes, local media has reported.

Dozens of dignitaries are descending on Israel this week for the commemoration including Russian President Vladimir Putin, US Vice President Mike Pence and France's Emmanuel Macron.

Sources familiar with Netanyahu's preparations told the Haaretz daily that the prime minister will encourage leaders to oppose the ICC prosecutor's efforts to investigate Israeli war crimes in the occupied West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip.

Last month, Fatou Bensouda, the International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor, said there was a reasonable basis to proceed with an investigation.

"I am satisfied that war crimes have been or are being committed," she said.

Now the ICC is mulling whether or not it has jurisdiction in the territories affected.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) is recognised as a non-member state by the United Nations, which permits it to sign treaties and enjoy the majority of benefits, similar to full member states.

In 2015, the PA signed the Rome Statute that governs the ICC. Some countries, including the United States and Israel, are not signatories and therefore are shielded from prosecution in the Hague over war crimes.

'Full frontal attack'

Since Fatou's announcement, Netanyahu has asked Israel's allies to publicly reject any ICC investigation, which amongst other cases would look into the 2014 Gaza War, which killed 2,251 Palestinians, the majority of them civilians, and 74 Israelis, most of them soldiers.

Any ICC investigation would probe war crimes on both sides. Eventually, an investigation

could see charges against individuals, but not states.

So far, Israel has received public support from only the United States, Hungary, Germany and Canada, which have repeated Israel's official line that Palestinians in the territories in question are not residents of a sovereign state.

In an interview aired on Tuesday with Trinity Broadcasting Network, the world's largest Evangelical Christian TV station, Netanyahu derided the ICC and urged opposition to it.

"I think that everybody should rise up against this," he said.

"They're basically in a full frontal attack on the democracies. Both on the democracies' right to defend themselves and on Israel's right, the Jewish people's right, to live in their ancestral homeland, the land of Israel."

Netanyahu noted that Washington had criticised the ICC for its attempts to investigate Israel, adding that he urged "all your viewers to do the same and ask for concrete actions, sanctions, against the international court. Its officials, its prosecutors, everyone".

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