

War Crimes Suit Filed in Switzerland against Former Israeli Minister

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The Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland has confirmed that it is examining a criminal complaint against former Israeli foreign minister Tzipi Livni, accused of war crimes by a Geneva-based pro-Palestinian group. Livni recently traveled to Lugano in southern Switzerland for a celebration organised by the Swiss-Israel Association.

According to the Le Temps newspaper, Livni has been named in a legal suit filed on Monday by the [Geneva-based Urgence Palestine activist groupexternal link](#) in relation to her role in the Israeli military's "Operation Cast Lead" in the Gaza Strip between December 2008 – January 2009. She was foreign minister and acting prime minister at the time.

The [Attorney General's Officeexternal link](#) confirmed to swissinfo.ch that this '[legal] request is presently being studied'.

Operation Cast Lead began with a week of air attacks and shelling, followed by a land invasion of the blockaded coastal strip, sealed off at sea by the Israeli navy. Some 1,400 Palestinians were killed and 13 Israelis died.

On May 28, Livni attended an event in the Italian-speaking city of Lugano in southern Switzerland organised by the [Swiss-Israel Associationexternal link](#) to celebrate the 69th anniversary of the creation of the state of Israel. She left Switzerland on Monday via Italy.

It is unclear what action the Attorney General's office will take action in the future, especially if Livni plans to return to Switzerland.

Pursued overseas

A representative from the Swiss NGO Trial International, which fights impunity against war crimes, told swissinfo.ch that Switzerland has a duty to act:

"Switzerland has an obligation to work on cases of alleged war crimes if the suspect steps on Swiss territory. If Switzerland opens an investigation, it is in line with Swiss law, especially given the alleged crimes committed during Operation Cast Lead."

In January 2017, Livni cancelled a visit to Belgium over fears she may be arrested on her arrival in Brussels over war crime allegations. The Brussels prosecutor's office said Livni was

the subject of a 2010 complaint to the federal prosecutor, and the authorities could detain or question her on arrival “to try and advance the investigation.”

Livni, who is still a Zionist Union party member of the Knesset, told Israel Radio at the time that she had pulled out of the Brussels trip for “personal reasons.”

In December 2009, she cancelled a trip to London after being informed that she was the subject of an arrest warrant issued by a British court over her role in the same war.

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