Israeli lawmakers respond to ICC: Diplomatic terror, political decision

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Israel's ambassador to the United Nations Danny Dannon responded to International Criminal Court prosecutor Fatou Bensouda's statement accusing Israel of war crimes against the Palestinians, saying the statement is "diplomatic terror," in an interview with Ynet on Sunday.

"We will act in the coming weeks to activate pressure so that the issue doesn't develop into a suit. This is an additional attempt to put out a libel and harm the State of Israel. This doesn't progress anything, not the Palestinians and not the negotiations," said Danon.

In light of the statement, Likud MK Gideon Sa'ar stated on Sunday that "a few days ago, I stated in [the Bedouin village of] Khan Al Ahmar that no reason was given for why the evacuation of the village was delayed. Today we revealed the reason: the Israeli government is afraid of the Hague," according to Maariv.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has repeatedly promised voters that he would demolish the village that is home to 180 members of the Jahalin Bedouin tribe, originally said that Khan al-Ahmar would be evacuated by June 2018.

The Jahalin Bedouin have resided in Khan al-Ahmar illegally since they were forced to move out of Tel Arad by the IDF in 1952. They consider themselves to be Palestinian Bedouins.

As far back as 2009, the Supreme Court ruled that there is no reason to prevent the demolition of homes in Khan al-Ahmar.

Sa'ar added that the failure to evacuate the village "also shows the helplessness before the Palestinian takeover of Area C in recent years. A change is needed and we will make this change in four days in order to fight for the future of Judea and Samaria with actions and not just words." The change Sa'ar was referring to was the upcoming primaries for the Likud leadership that will be held on December 26.

Israeli Transportation Minister MK Bezalel Smotrich responded to the statement on Saturday evening, calling to "dismantle the Palestinian Authority" if it does not pull its petition within 48 hours.

The ICC prosecutor's statement, claiming that "war crimes have been or are being committed in the West Bank, including east Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip" sparked national outrage, with Israeli lawmakers from across the political spectrum responding to the allegations.

"Everyone knows that the ICC is a political, antisemitic institution," said Transportation Minister MK Bezalel Smotrich. Smotrich called upon Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to "give the Palestinian Authority a 48-hour ultimatum, and [if it does not] pull the charges – dismantle it immediately."

"The advantages of the PA's existence are not, [and have not been for a long time,] worth the diplomatic damage it causes us," Smotrich said. "Destroy Khan el-Ahmar tomorrow morning; destroy an illegal Arab [or] European outpost every day."

"Just like in war, which it is, make all sides pay a heavy price. The following year you will be backed by the United States, and that would be just enough."

"IDF soldiers carry with them the Spirit of the IDF, a code of ethics upholding the sanctity of weapons and of human dignity – in accordance with which we have always acted and will always act," said Blue and White leader, former IDF chief of staff Benny Gantz. "The IDF and the State of Israel do not commit war crimes."

"There is no basis for the demand to initiate an investigation against Israel at The Hague," Gantz wrote on Twitter Saturday evening. "It is clear that this is a political decision, not a legal one."

"I once again emphasize that when it comes to the international legitimacy and [the] right of the State of Israel to defend itself, there is no coalition and opposition," he said. "We will all fight for justice and for our basic right to protect the State of Israel and our citizens."

"We welcome the statement of the chief prosecutor of the International [Criminal] Court in The Hague that said it was necessary to open an investigation into the war crimes that the Israeli occupation commits in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip," said MK Mtanes Shihadeh of Balad, Joint List.

"There is no struggle as righteous as the Palestinian struggle, and peace will not be achieved without a just solution that will ensure of the realization of the full rights of our Palestinian people."

MK Offer Cassif of Hadash (the Communist Party), Joint List, said on Facebook that "[Public Security Minister] Gilad Erdan spends millions of taxpayer shekels through the 'Strategic Affairs Ministry' to convince the world that resistance to the occupation and the policies of the Israeli government is antisemitic."

"In the time of false right-wing propaganda, the [statement] of the International Criminal Court in The Hague is important because it says—Israel can be investigated for crimes against the Palestinian people that lives under its military rule," he said.

"Instead of squealing at international criticism, we Israelis have to look straight at the crimes committed in our name and [funded by] our tax money, and resist them."