**White House mulling possible move against Palestinian mission over ICC push**

May 23, 2018

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The Times of Israel

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The White House is considering action against Palestinian diplomats in Washington after Ramallah asked the International Criminal Court on Tuesday to investigate alleged Israeli crimes, The Times of Israel has learned.

According to a US law passed in December 2015, the Palestinian Authority is subject to penalties if it pursues the prosecution of Israelis at the Hague-based ICC. One of those ramifications includes the closing of their diplomatic mission to the United States, run by the Palestine Liberation Organization.

‘We are reviewing this latest development to determine if it requires changes to the operating status of the PLO office in Washington, D.C., which has been limited to activities related to achieving a lasting, comprehensive peace between the Israelis and Palestinians since November 2017,’ a National Security Council spokesperson said.

Last November, then US secretary of state Rex Tillerson refused to certify that the Palestinians were complying with that Congressional mandate, initiating intense speculation over whether the Palestinian facility in the capital’s Georgetown neighborhood would close.

The measure gives the sitting US president 90 days to consider whether the Palestinians are engaging in ‘direct and meaningful negotiations with Israel.’

If US President Donald Trump determines they are, the Palestinians can keep the office. If not, he has the right to shutter it.

The 90 days have since passed, and while direct the Israeli-Palestinian peace process remains moribund, the Palestinian embassy remains open.

The White House on Tuesday urged both sides to re-enter final-status peace talks and derided the ICC move as unhelpful to the ultimate goal of a negotiated settlement.

‘The US continues to believe that direct negotiations between the two parties are the only way to achieve a comprehensive and lasting peace,’ the NSC official said. ‘Involving the ICC does not get us closer to peace.’

In PA Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki’s ‘referral’ to the court during a meeting with the ICC’s chief prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, on Tuesday, he cited Israeli settlement policies along with the recent violence in Gaza as a basis for the investigation, calling it an important ‘test’ of accountability for the ICC.

Israel has dismissed the potential prove as ‘cynical’ and ‘absurd.’ The US, meanwhile, has defended Israel’s military actions in the battered coastal enclave as necessary measures of self-defense.

Since Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital in December, the administration’s peace push hit a stalemate. PA President Mahmoud Abbas has refused to meet with Trump officials and has declared the US forfeited its capacity to act as an honest mediator to resolve the conflict.

Tensions hit a boiling point last week when the US inaugurated its Jerusalem embassy as the Hamas-orchestrated ‘March of Return’ riots were unfolding in Gaza. Israeli forces killed more than 60 Palestinians in those clashes, according to the Hamas-run Gaza health ministry.

Abbas recalled the Palestinian envoy to Washington back to Ramallah last week in wake of the move. It’s not clear if Husam Zomlot has since returned.

Over the last six weeks, tens of thousands of Gazans, with the encouragement of the Hamas terror group that rules Gaza, have been undertaking weekly protests at the border fence with Israel. Some rioters have tried to damage and break the security fence and infiltrate Israel, while others have thrown fire bombs and rocks, and burned tires.

Hamas acknowledged that 50 of the 62 fatalities last week were members of the Islamist organization.