Palestinians file claim against US at UN court over Jerusalem embassy move

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Palestinian foreign minister Riyad al-Maliki said Saturday that the Palestinians have petitioned the UN’s top court, alleging that the May inauguration of the US embassy in Jerusalem was illegal.

The Palestinians have filed a lawsuit at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) “for violating international law by moving its embassy in Israel to the occupied city of Jerusalem,” he said, quoted by the official Palestinian news agency WAFA.

In December, US President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, breaking with longstanding US policy, and despite Palestinian claims on east Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

The status of Jerusalem has long been one of the most sensitive and contentious issues in past peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

Contact between the Palestinians and the Trump administration have since been tense and minimal. The Palestinians have refused to meet with many members of the Trump administration, including the White House officials responsible for the Middle East peace process.

Relations plummeted further in recent weeks after Washington cut off all funding to the UN agency assisting Palestinians, triggering a budget panic, and shuttered the Palestinian mission in Washington.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has also said that the US no longer can be the “sole” mediator of the peace process between the Palestinians and Israelis and called for the establishment of a multilaterally-mediated mechanism to broker it.

During his [speech this week at the UN General Assembly](https://www.timesofisrael.com/rejecting-trump-abbas-at-un-says-us-too-biased-to-mediate-talks-with-israel/), Abbas slammed Trump for his policies toward the Palestinians, calling them an “assault on international law,” and further rejected Washington as a mediator of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

“Jerusalem is not for sale,” Abbas said to applause as he began his speech. “The Palestinian people’s rights are not up for bargaining.”

He added that he rejected anything short of all of east Jerusalem, including the Old City with all its holy places, as the capital of a Palestinian state, and not just a neighborhood, as the Americans reportedly plan on proposing.

WAFA reported that the Palestinians asked the ICJ “to declare that moving the embassy to occupied Jerusalem constituted a violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.”

The court said the Palestinian suit, filed on Friday, called on the body “to order the United States of America to withdraw the diplomatic mission from the Holy City of Jerusalem and to conform to the international obligations flowing from the Vienna Convention”.

An official of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) said it was the first time Palestinians had petitioned the court against the United States.

In November 2012, the UN General Assembly recognized the Palestinian Authority as a “non-member observer state.”

This allowed the Palestinians to join UN bodies such as the ICJ and also the International Criminal Court (ICC), which is a separate institution.

Earlier this month, Palestinian official Saeb Erekat said the Palestinians had filed a petition there against Israel over its pending demolition of the Bedouin village of Khan al-Ahmar in the West Bank.

They have previously filed suit to the ICC claiming Israeli war crimes in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and east Jerusalem.