**ICC undermines its own legitimacy**

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It is not justice the International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda is after. Are there not enough real war crimes around the world? Hamas has sworn in its treaty to eradicate Israel down to the very last Jew. It launches tens of thousands of missiles at our citizens and uses its citizens as human shields, yet only Israel is barred from defending itself. The Palestinian Authority supports our killers with its budgets, a sort of family insurance for all those who want to harm us, but Israel is the problem. This is a moral disgrace under legal cover.

For months, the Foreign Ministry, including all of its emissaries and ambassadors, as well as the Prime Minister's Office have been working to blunt the outrageous determination by two justices at The Hague against the minority opinion of the head of the tribunal that played into the hands of a prosecutor overly eager to build her reputation at Israel's expense. Even when the court ruled it had the jurisdiction to open a war crimes investigation against Israel, and although we told policymakers in Italy that Bensouda had not yet decided to open an investigation, something that was true at the time, I said in deliberations at the Israeli Embassy in Italy it was clear she would announce the opening of an investigation precisely because Bensouda was nearing the end of her tenure. This was also the reason she chose not to handle other cases pertaining to Nigeria and Ukraine. Bensouda had to think of her next career move, and hatred of Israel has always been a good catalyst for advancing one's career.

The ICC drew its moral authority from the reason for its establishment following the atrocities of World War II and the genuine crimes carried out against our people. This decision harms its legitimacy and the reasons for which it was established because it is a politicization of the court and morality to be used against Israel.

The ICC's crude interference in Israel's affairs when Israel is not a member-state and Palestinian affairs when they do not have a state is an attempt to force the semblance of a solution on a yearslong conflict that has left cultural, religious, and historical scars. The cruel irony is that now, at a time when moderate Arab states have understood they cannot give in to the Palestinian refusal to move forward on the normalization of ties with Middle Eastern states when all that is needed is confidence-building steps, in walks the ICC and gives the warmongers who reject peace a prize.

At this time, every justice-seeking country should stand with Israel and condemn the decision, and that's exactly what we said in talks with the heads of state in Italy and central public and media figures. This – the use of the court as a tool to harm the Jewish state - is not what the founders of the ICC had in mind.

Around 3,000 years ago, a foreign prophet, who perhaps today would be called an intellectual or chief prosecutor, appeared to bless us, and through his blessing, we understood his hatred of us: "Lo, it is a people that shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Numbers, 23:9).

With around 20 anti-Israel resolutions passed year by various UN bodies each year, Israel's exclusion from the family of nations through international institutions and the imposition of double legal standards on Israel is the continuation of the old anti-Semitism that exempted the Jew from the rest of society and should be treated as such. The main lesson we learned from thousands of years of wandering without defense is: No one will deter us from protecting our citizens and our fighters. For this purpose, too, we have returned to Zion.