Palestinians press ICC to probe Israel for war crimes

May 22, 2018

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The Jerusalem Post

<https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Palestinians-press-ICC-to-open-war-crimes-probe-against-Israel-558006>

The Palestinian Authority is set to press the International Criminal Court on Tuesday to open a war crimes probe against Israel for settlement activity in the West Bank and east Jerusalem.

PA Foreign Minister Riad Malki is scheduled to meet Tuesday morning with ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda at The Hague to hand her a new file against Israel, to follow on previous submissions to the court.

The ICC must “accelerate the opening of a criminal investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Israel,” the PLO’s Negotiations Affairs Department told the media.

“It is time to hold the Israeli war criminals accountable and to bring justice to the Palestinian People,” the Negotiations Affairs Department said.

The PA has pushed the ICC to open such a case since it submitted its first files against Israel in June 2015, shortly after it signed onto the Rome Statute in December 2014.

In a summary report of the court’s activities for 2017, the ICC said it had progressed in its work to determine “whether there is a reasonable basis to proceed with an investigation.

“The Office has reviewed thousands of pages of material and drafted multiple analytical products,” the ICC said.

It added that this assessment would continue with an eye toward reaching a conclusion “within a reasonable time frame.”

The PLO Negotiating Affairs Department told the media on Monday night that, “in light of the accelerating rate and intensity of crimes related to the settlement regime, the State of Palestine finds that the delay in the ongoing preliminary examination does not serve the cause of justice.”

Nor, it said, does the delay “fulfill the Court’s mandate” in deterring against the “commission of future crimes through achieving accountability.”

The Palestinians returned to the ICC in the aftermath of accelerated settlement activity in which Israel advanced plans for over 10,000 new homes in 2017.

Israel also created a new settlement in 2017 and began the process of approving another one earlier this year.

The renewed PLO push at the ICC, is just one of a number of Palestinian activities against Israel on the international stage over the last five days. With the help of Kuwait the PA has asked the United Nations Security Council to consider providing it with international protection. It also successfully swayed the United Nations Human Rights Council on Friday to launch a commission of inquiry into the IDF killing of Palestinian protestors during violent riots on the Gaza border.