

# *Palestine asks ICC to probe Israel rights violations linked to settlements*

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The Hague, May 24 (RHC)-- Palestine has asked the International Criminal Court (ICC) to probe the human rights violations linked to the Israeli regime's illegal settlement activities on occupied Palestinian territories.

The request was submitted to The Hague-based court by Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki.

"The Referral covers past, present, and future Israeli actions to promote, expand, and entrench the settlement regime, perpetrated by, or with the assistance of, the government of Israel or its agents and accomplices in the occupied territory of the State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem," a Palestinian statement said.

According to the statement, the request underscores "that there is sufficient compelling evidence of the ongoing commission of grave crimes to warrant an immediate investigation."

Israel has been building settler units across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since 1967, when it occupied the territory during an all-out war.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki is set to hold a meeting with the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Netherlands to call for a probe into Israeli atrocities in Gaza. About 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements that are illegal under the international law, which prohibits construction on occupied land.

The tribunal has been conducting a preliminary probe into crimes in the Palestinian territories since 2015.

The probe covers Tel Aviv's actions during the regime full-scale war of 2014 against the Gaza Strip. The Referral could speed up a decision on whether to open a full-blown investigation that could ultimately lead to the indictment of high-ranking Israelis, The Washington Post reported.

"While the ICC can indict suspects, it has no police force and has to rely on cooperation from member states to enforce arrest warrants," the paper added.

Leading Western states regularly visited by Israeli officials have so far strictly resisted calls by human rights groups to apprehend the officials over the regime's atrocities against Palestinians.

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