

UN says ICC move to probe Israel for war crimes ‘opens the door’ for justice in Palestine



Israeli forces arrest a Palestinian demonstrator following a protest in the West Bank city of Bethlehem. (Photo: AFP)

The Hague, February 11 (RHC)-- A UN expert says the International Criminal Court (ICC)'s ruling on its jurisdiction to investigate Israeli war crimes in the occupied territories “opens the door” for justice in Palestine.

Michael Lynk, the UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories, made the remarks as he was referring to the recent ICC ruling that it has jurisdiction to investigate the atrocities committed by the Israeli military in the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip since 1967.

“The leading political organs of the United Nations have repeatedly failed to enforce their own significant body of resolutions on the Israeli occupation”, Lynk said. “This ruling opens the door for credible allegations of Rome Statute crimes to finally be investigated and potentially reach the trial stage at the ICC.”

Stressing that the ruling is a “significant step forward in the quest for justice and accountability,” Lynk also called on the international community to support the ICC’s move. The UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories censured Israel's protracted occupation and said the international community has permitted a "culture of exceptionalism" to prevail.

Lynk noted that despite a number of authoritative UN reports urging for accountability and for Israel to investigate credible allegations of crimes, none of those calls for justice had been heeded. "Had international legal obligations been purposely enforced years ago, the occupation and the conflict would have been justly resolved and there would have been no need for the ICC process," Lynk said.

The UN expert further noted that ending impunity and pursuing justice can solve the crisis in Palestine and bring peace in the West Asia region.

The Hague-based intergovernmental organization ruled on Friday that it had jurisdiction to open an investigation into Israel's war crimes on the occupied Palestinian territories, with ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda having maintained since December 2019 that there is “reasonable basis” to open a full investigation into war crimes committed there.

The ICC verdict was condemned by Israel but praised by Palestinians and international rights organizations, paving the way for the court to open a war crimes investigation in the occupied territories despite objections from the Tel Aviv regime.

Any international decision that leads to supporting the rights of Palestinians is in conformity with human values, said the Hamas media official.

Israel occupied East Jerusalem al-Quds, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, territories the Palestinians want for their future state, during the six-day Arab-Israeli war in 1967.

About 700,000 Israelis now live in over 230 illegal settlements built in the West Bank and East Jerusalem al-Quds since then. The international community views the settlements as illegal under international law but has done little – if any - so far to pressure Israel to freeze or reverse their exponential growth.

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