

*More than 90 nations support
ICC as Israel faces charges for
war crimes in Gaza*



The Hague, June 16 (RHC)-- Ninety-three nations, all them state parties to the Rome Statute that created the International Criminal Court, reiterated their support for the ICC as it assesses an application for arrest warrants of high level Israeli government officials accused of perpetrating war crimes in Gaza.

The 93 countries -- including Canada, Bangladesh, Belgium, Ireland, Afghanistan, Costa Rica, Chile, Germany, France, Mongolia, Mexico, New Zealand and scores of others -- cited separate ICC statements defending its mandate for independence and upheld in their joint statement "that the Court, its officials and staff shall carry out their professional duties as international civil servants without intimidation."

Though neither nation is named in the joint statement, both the United States and Israel have publicly condemned ICC chief prosecutor Karim Khan for his May 20th arrest warrant applications for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant over alleged "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity" in the Gaza Strip.

Khan also submitted arrest warrants for Hamas leaders Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri, and Ismail Haniyeh for their alleged roles in the October 7th attack on southern Israel. Following Khan's announcement in May, U.S. President Joe Biden said: "Whatever this prosecutor might imply, there is no equivalence—none—between Israel and Hamas. We will always stand with Israel against threats to its security."

In April, it was reported that the U.S. government was working behind the scenes to block the ICC from issuing any arrest warrants targeting Israel officials. Neither Israel nor the U.S. is party to the Rome Statute, though the United Nations has recognized the ICC's jurisdiction over the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), where the alleged war crimes by the occupying power, Israel, took place.

After Khan made his application for warrants, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said, "We've been really clear about the ICC investigation. We do not support it." On June 4, Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives, along with 42 Democrats, passed a measure that would sanction ICC officials if the arrest warrants for any Israeli officials were approved or carried out.

Balakrishnan Rajagopal, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, was among those who applauded Friday's public statement. Rajagopal thanked the signatory nations "for defending the ICC and standing up against the bullies, including the relics from the U.S. Senate whose idea of engaging with the world is to use threats," a possible reference to Sen. Lindsay Graham (R-S.C.) who denounced Khan's applications as "outrageous," applauded the House approval of sanctions, and vowed further punishment for the ICC.

Such punitive measures and high-profile threats directed at the ICC appeared to be the exact kind of intimidation Friday's joint pledge of support is responding to.

"The ICC, as the world's first and only permanent international criminal court, is an essential component of the international peace and security architecture," the statement reads. "We therefore call on all States to ensure full co-operation with the Court for it to carry out its important mandate of ensuring equal justice for all victims of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression, grave crimes that threaten the peace, security and well-being of the world."

With their show of unified support for the ICC and its mandate, the countries said they aim to "contribute to ending impunity for such crimes and preventing their recurrence while defending the progress we have made together to guarantee lasting respect for international humanitarian law, human rights, the of law and the enforcement of international criminal justice."



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