

International Criminal Court issues arrest warrant for Benjamin Netanyahu for war crimes

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The Hague, November 21 (RHC)-- The International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former defense minister for war crimes.

Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant were accused of “crimes against humanity and war crimes committed from at least 8 October 2023 until at least 20 May 2024”, a statement from the court said on Thursday. There are “reasonable grounds” to believe that Gallant and Netanyahu “intentionally and knowingly deprived the civilian population in Gaza of objects indispensable to their survival, including food, water, and medicine and medical supplies, as well as fuel and electricity,” it said.

Netanyahu’s office said in a statement that “Israel rejects with disgust the absurd and false actions leveled against it by ICC,” adding that Israel won’t “give in to pressure” in the defense of its citizens.

ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan had applied for arrest warrants against the Israeli officials in May. Al Jazeera’s senior political analyst Marwan Bishara praised the court’s decision to issue the long-awaited arrest warrants, saying “at last, the people of Gaza, after a year of unfolding genocide, might be able to see their perpetrators face justice.”

Reporting from Deir el-Balah in central Gaza, Al Jazeera’s Hani Mahmoud said that within the enclave, people have taken the news of the arrest warrants “with a grain of salt.” “It is taken with a little bit of skepticism... again, we know the unwavering American support (to Israel). In fact at some point it felt...it is actually the U.S. that is carrying out this genocide in the Gaza strip,” he said.

“So people are very suspicious of the outcome of this arrest warrant and say that it might be challenged by the U.S. administration, whether it is the old one or the new which has also vowed support to Israeli officials.”

Gaza’s Ministry of Health said on Thursday that Israel’s war in Gaza has killed at least 44,056 Palestinians and wounded 104,286 since October 7, 2023.

Neve Gordon, international law professor told Al Jazeera that the signatories of the Rome Statute and members of the ICC are bound to arrest Gallant and Netanyahu if they travel to their country. “But I think that by issuing the arrest warrants, the ICC has also made a certain demand on Western countries both in North America and throughout Europe,” he said. “And that has to do with the kind of trade agreements that they have with Israel – first and foremost with the trade relating to arms,” he noted.

“If the leaders of Israel are charged with carrying out crimes against humanity by the ICC, it means that the weapons the European countries are sending to Israel are used to carry out crimes against humanity and they have to reassess all their trade of weapons with Israel from today and, I would say, stop sending these weapons,” Gordon continued.

So far, the Netherlands has become the first nation that has said it is prepared to act upon the arrest warrant issued by the ICC against Netanyahu if needed, Dutch news agency ANP reported.

“The Netherlands implements the Rome Statute 100 percent,” Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp said.

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