

# *Palestinian Membership in International Criminal Court Takes Effect*

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The Hague, April 2 (RHC)-- Palestine has officially become a member of the International Criminal Court. The Palestinian Authority joined the ICC earlier this year after the United States and Israel successfully lobbied against a UN Security Council measure calling for an end to the Israeli occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state by 2017.

Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said the court has already opened an inquiry into possible war crimes committed by Israel in the Occupied Territories. He told reporters: "The court has already begun preliminary examination and we hope that those who are trying to pressure Palestine not to make referral to the court -- we are the victims -- they should go to the criminals and ask them to stop committing crimes. Settlement activities, dictations, demolition of homes, the continuation of occupation are all war crimes and Israel will be held accountable."

Israel had retaliated against the ICC bid by withholding hundreds of millions in Palestinian tax revenue needed to pay salaries and provide public services. But it recently released the money in a bid to ease tensions with the United States and avert the Palestinian Authority's collapse.

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