

*Permanent Observer Mission  
of the State of Palestine  
to the United Nations*



البعثة المراقبة الدائمة  
لدولة فلسطين  
لدى الأمم المتحدة

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**Statement of H.E. Riyad Mansour, Minister, State of Palestine, before the 22<sup>nd</sup> Assembly of States Parties of the International Criminal Court**

Why did we establish the ICC?

The answer is in the Rome Statute It states:

Mindful that during this century millions of children, women and men have been victims of unimaginable atrocities that deeply shock the conscience of humanity, and “Determined to put an end to impunity for the perpetrators of these crimes and thus to contribute to the prevention of such crimes”, Which crimes is it referring to? Aggression, War crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

The unimaginable atrocities that deeply shock the conscience of humanity being committed against children, women and men in the Gaza Strip by Israel for two months now.

2.3 million Palestinians have spent every day of the last two months trying to survive. Besieged, bombed, with nowhere to go, asked by the killers to move from one place to the next, to be killed here and there, north and south. No place is safe, no one is spared.

Israel has admitted several times now that it is denying access to humanitarian assistance as a method of war. It was aware of the horrific number of people that were going to be killed in its bombardments and considered that was an acceptable number. 16,000 Palestinians, including 7000 children, a justified number. This is the mindset of war criminals.

Israel states that it is observing international law, an international law nobody has heard of, one that allows the killing of entire families in their sleep, one that allows indiscriminate attacks, one that allows bombardments that are killing primarily and often only civilians, 70 of those killed are women and children, one that allows besieging millions of people depriving them of objects essential to their survival.

The entire international criminal law relies on a single premise: there is no justification for such crimes.

We have joined the ICC 9 years ago, at a time where crimes had been committed for decades. And the crimes continued being committed for 9 years since. And not a single arrest warrant has been issued yet. This is a failure. Failure to deliver justice to victims. And failure to deter the perpetrators.

Gaza makes any further delay unacceptable, unjustifiable, unforgivable.

Israel has effectively destroyed every single requirement for life in the Gaza Strip while the entire world was watching, and it is still shelling neighbourhoods as we speak. It has made of hospitals and UN shelters, and mosques and churches its primary targets, and it has made of children, of the sick and the wounded, of the vulnerable, its primary victims.

Why did we adopt the Rome Statute if not to protect these people?

There is no credibility without consistency. One cannot say taking of hostages is a crime and fail to mention two million Palestinian hostages. One cannot show outrage for attacks against civilians and not be outraged by the attacks against hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians.

We have extended our full cooperation to the Prosecutor and his office and spared no effort to help the investigation move forward. The Prosecutor was met by the Palestinian leadership and government at the highest levels in recent days, and by some of the Palestinian victims of Israeli crimes. Had he visited Gaza or any part of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, he would have seen Palestinian victims wherever his eyes laid sight.

At the occasion of this visit, the anger and frustration of the Palestinian people with the ICC was more than evident. The credibility and authority of the Court are facing their greatest test with the situation in the State of Palestine, a test the Court cannot afford to fail.

If this institution embodies double standards and both side-ism instead of delivering justice to the victims who need it most, I remind here that this is a Court of last resort, and Palestinians have no other resort, if it fails to deliver justice to Palestinians, now, when it still matters, if it fails to hold perpetrators accountable, those who are most responsible for the most serious crimes, the Israeli leaders, it will fail our people but also its sacred mission.

Finally, Israeli settlements, which imply the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity, are built by official decisions, taken at the highest level, funded from the Israeli budget. Israel has provided the Court with evidence of its crimes, day in and day out, they are available online, together with clear and unambiguous confessions by Israeli leaders. Settlers' violence is only one manifestation of this overall criminal enterprise. What is taking so long to start prosecuting those responsible for the crimes related to settler colonialism as well?

Israel is defying this Court, from its Prime Minister to its soldiers, it is showing the deepest contempt for the law and the Court established to protect it. They are confident they have nothing to worry about. We want to remain confident the Court will prove them wrong.

For 9 years now they were right and are acting accordingly. Anyone who wants to see an end to these crimes and prevent their recurrence, must start by giving the signal that this era of impunity has lasted long enough and killed way too many Palestinians, and is finally over.

There is one law, one set of rules, for all, regardless of the identity of the victims or the identity of the perpetrators. We said 9 years ago, we are joining the Court because we are seeking justice not vengeance. Aren't the Palestine people entitled to justice?

Every country here, some sooner other later, have come to say that what Israel is doing is unacceptable. What are they willing to do to stop it? That is the only question that matters now. How do you stop the assault on Palestinian children, on our civilians, on our lives? How do you make Israel cease fire? You don't ask, you act. That is how. That is the duty of the Court, that is the duty of every State, that is the duty of everyone.