
Palestinians to become ICC member from April 1, UN confirms

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The UN treaty website says that due to the court's procedures *"the statute will enter into force for the State of Palestine on April 1, 2015."*

Along with the ICC application, the UN chief approved other sets of documents, enabling Palestine to join 16 international agreements, conventions and treaties.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas signed the ICC application documents on the last day of 2014, following the UN Security Council's resolution on December 30, which rejected Palestine's official bid for statehood, a document vetoed by the US in support of Israel.

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The Palestinian delegation submitted its ICC application on January 2.

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Israel's immediate reaction was negative.

"We will not let Israel Defence Forces (IDF) soldiers and officers be dragged to the International Criminal Court in The Hague," Netanyahu said at the start of the weekly Cabinet meeting, AFP reported.

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The Israeli administration immediately applied financial pressure on the Palestinian Authority, freezing the transfer of half a billion shekels (over \$127 million) in monthly tax revenues it collected on behalf of the Palestinians.

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The US joined the financial pressure on the Palestinian Authority on Monday, when the Obama administration announced a review of America's annual \$440 million aid package to the Palestinians. As AP pointed out, once the Palestinian Authority apply any case against Israel to the International Criminal Court, US financial help to Palestine will cease immediately under American law.

Joining the ICC will give the Palestinian Authority new and powerful leverage to make Israel more compliant regarding withdrawal from the occupied territories.

In anticipation of the ICC bid last week, Palestinian Ambassador Riyad Mansour announced the Palestinians will prosecute Israel for crimes committed during the war in Gaza last summer. According to Mansour, Palestinians will also sue Israel for constructing settlements on the occupied Palestinian territory.

In late 2014, the Palestine stepped up its efforts to gain international recognition as a sovereign state. It came following the failure of the latest round of US-brokered peace talks with Israel, which was initiated after the bloody 50-day armed conflict in Gaza that left some 2,120 Palestinians and 68 Israelis dead.

Unlike before, this time around the aspirations of the Palestinians have found much wider international support, as many countries have openly spoken in favor of creating a sovereign Palestinian state.

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