**Israel wants US to shut Palestinians’ DC office — report**

September 28, 2017

By: Raphael Ahren

Times of Israel

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-wants-us-to-shut-palestinians-dc-office-report/>

Israel is working on a plan to get the American administration to shut the Palestinians’ diplomatic offices in the US, according to a Hebrew media report.

The plan was hatched together with US lawmakers, Israel’s Kan state TV reported Thursday, and is meant to punish the Palestinians for their recent diplomatic advances, including their successful bid to join Interpol, the world’s largest police organization, and their ongoing efforts to have Israeli leaders tried at the International Criminal Court.

Hours after Interpol’s General Assembly voted Wednesday to make the “State of Palestine” a full-fledged member, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu threatened that the move would have consequences, though he did not specify what they would be.

During a meeting with Jason Greenblatt, US President Donald Trump’s envoy to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Netanyahu raised the Palestinians’ actions at the ICC and their accession to Interpol, a step he said “violates signed agreements with Israel.”

Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki last week met ICC chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda in New York. Since joining the Hague-based court in 2015, Palestinian officials have continually provided its investigators with supposedly incriminating information about ostensible Israeli “war crimes.”

According to a readout of the meeting, which was also attended by US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman, the prime minister told his interlocutors that “the actions of the Palestinian leadership in recent days severely impairs the chances of achieving peace and added that the Palestinian diplomatic warfare would not go unanswered.”

Netanyahu’s plan to have the US shut its offices was discussed in the meeting, Kan reported Thursday, without citing its sources.

Since the US does not recognize Palestinian statehood, there is not formal embassy in Washington. The PLO has a diplomatic mission on Wisconsin Avenue that serves as de facto embassy.

PLO Ambassador to the US, Hussam Zomlot told TOI he did not know if the report was true. He added that the PLO office in DC is “purely a matter between the US and the Palestinians.” He charged that Netanyahu wanted to see the office closed because it is a “center of engagement with the Trump administration” for Palestinians.

The Prime Minister’s Office and the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem declined to comment on any punitive steps Israel would take against Interpol for admitting Palestine, a step Israel said would hinder rather than help the organization’s efforts to combat cross-border terrorism.

According to existing US legislation, Washington is obligated to cease funding the United Nations “or any specialized agency thereof” that accepts the Palestine Liberation Organization as a full member. This led the US to defund the UN’s Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) after it voted to accept Palestine as a member in 2011.

However, neither Interpol nor the ICC are directly affiliated with the UN.

Eytan Gilboa, an expert on US-Israel relations, said the reported threat to have the US close the PLO’s Washington office should be seen as warning to the Palestinians to cease their unilateral moves at international institutions.

“I imagine the whole idea of this initiative is to convey dissatisfaction with this Palestinian policy,” he said.