Standing with Israel against the ICC boosts credibility

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The [International Criminal Court](https://www.jpost.com/tags/international-criminal-court)’s decision earlier this month giving itself authority to investigate war-crime allegations against Israel over the 2014 military campaign against Hamas in Gaza and settlement activity, only reinforced a feeling among many Israelis that the world is against them.

This is a deep-seated feeling rooted in a long history of one-sided resolutions, condemnations, investigations and indictments of Israel in a plethora of world bodies, from the infamous 1975 “Zionism is a form of racism” resolution in the UN General Assembly, later rescinded, to the UN Human Rights Council’s ongoing obsession – there is no other word for it – with the Jewish state.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave voice to these sentiments when he thundered after the recent ruling: “The court established to prevent atrocities like the Nazi Holocaust against the Jewish people is now targeting the one state of the Jewish people.

“First, it outrageously claims that when Jews live in our homeland, this is a war crime. Second, it claims that when democratic Israel defends itself against terrorists who murder our children and rocket our cities, we are committing another war crime. Yet the ICC refuses to investigate brutal dictatorships like Iran and Syria, who commit horrific atrocities almost daily.”

For the ICC to investigate Israel for alleged war crimes, Netanyahu said, “is pure [antisemitism](https://www.jpost.com/tags/antisemitism).”

It is heartening, therefore, to see some countries taking a principled stand and making it clear that the ICC has overstepped its bounds. On Tuesday Austria and Lithuania joined a number of other countries – including the United States, Australia, Canada, Germany and the Czech Republic – that have come out against the court ruling.

The Lithuanian Foreign Ministry said that while it supports the work of the ICC, “it is essential to avoid any politicization of the Court, which could diminish its ability to carry out its primary mission.”

The position of Austria and Lithuania, along with that of Germany and the Czech Republic, is especially encouraging in light of a comment an EU spokesman said about the matter.

“Both the ICC and its prosecutor are independent and impartial judicial institutions with no political objectives to pursue,” Peter Stano, the EU’s spokesman for foreign affairs, was quoted as saying. “The EU is a strong supporter of the ICC and of its independence.”

The difference of opinion on this issue between the EU as a body and some of its 27 member states reveals something that in recent years has become increasingly obvious: a split in Europe toward Israel. While the EU officials and bureaucrats in Brussels usually take very critical positions toward Israel, the positions of some of the member states are often more supportive and understanding of Jerusalem’s positions.

And that is a cause of solace for Israel, because it shows that the world is not reflexively against it, and that not even Europe is reflexively against it; that there are brave countries willing to swim against the blame-Israel-first tide that exists among many of the EU bureaucrats in Brussels.

Israel is not perfect, nor is its conduct in war without blemish. But it has an independent judiciary able – as it has demonstrated in the past – to mete out justice to its malefactors. It does not need ICC intervention.

The whole-world-is-against-us mentality is an unhealthy one. First, because it is wrong. Even with powerful enemies of the Jewish state both in the region and outside, the whole world is not against Israel. It has friends. And while the painful course of Jewish history has taught those Jews gathered in Zion the importance of being self-reliant, self-reliance does not mean everyone should be viewed as an enemy or potential adversary. That is a rather dismal way of looking at the world.

Secondly, the them-against-us mentality perpetuates a mindset that we can do no wrong. We can – and do – do wrong. It is much easier to recognize that when those pointing out those wrongs do not blast Israel for everything, all the time. Critics of Israeli policies gain credibility when they themselves have credibility; meaning, when their default mode is not to automatically slam Israel.

Austria and Lithuania should be applauded for joining other states willing to stand up for Israel on the world stage. If other countries would do the same, it would give them enhanced credibility with the Israeli public, if and when they choose to give advice or impact policy.