UN’s International Court of Justice announces timeline for start of Israel probe

February 8, 2023

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The Times of Israel

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/uns-international-court-of-justice-announces-early-timeline-for-probe-into-israel/>

The International Court of Justice on Wednesday announced the timeline for the start of its probe into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, indicating that the process harshly opposed by Israel is moving forward apace.

The Hague-based ICJ said the court had decided that the UN, its member states and the Palestinians are ‘likely to be able to furnish information’ on the probe into Israel.

The court set a July 25 deadline for submitting written statements on the case, and an October deadline for comments on those statements.

The rest of the timeline has not been determined, the court said.

Late last month the court confirmed [it had received](https://www.timesofisrael.com/world-court-receives-un-request-for-opinion-on-israeli-occupation-and-annexation/) the UN General Assembly’s formal request to weigh in on the conflict, but had not yet indicated that it was moving forward with the probe or any specifics on the process.

The ICJ, also known as the world court, is the top UN court for mediating disputes between countries. Its rulings influence public opinion and legal processes but it has no enforcement mechanism. The court is separate from the International Criminal Court, which is also in The Hague.

The General Assembly in December [passed a resolution](https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-passes-resolution-asking-world-court-to-weigh-in-on-israeli-palestinian-conflict/) pushed by the Palestinians asking the court for an ‘advisory opinion’ on Israel’s ‘prolonged occupation, settlement and annexation of Palestinian territory.’ It also called for an investigation into Israeli measures ‘aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem’ and charged that Israel has adopted ‘discriminatory legislation and measures.’

The General Assembly made the request to the court after the UN Human Rights Council’s Commission of Inquiry recommended that it do so.

The Commission of Inquiry is [overwhelmingly critical](https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-commission-says-it-will-investigate-apartheid-charges-against-israel/) of the Jewish state and its reports almost entirely ignore Palestinian terrorism and violence and blame Israel for the conflict. One of its three members [made antisemitic comments](https://www.timesofisrael.com/member-of-un-gaza-probe-apologizes-for-jewish-lobby-remark-slammed-as-antisemitic/) last year but remains in his position and has not faced any UN repercussions.

Some US Congress members have introduced bills seeking to [eliminate the commission](https://www.timesofisrael.com/bill-calling-to-end-un-probe-into-israel-reintroduced-to-us-congress/), withdraw US funding from its investigation and ‘combat systemic anti-Israel bias at the United Nations Human Rights Council and other international fora,’ although the measures have not passed into law.

Israeli leaders have been harshly critical of the world court probe.

Israel denounced the General Assembly world court resolution, with Israeli envoy to the UN Gilad Erdan calling the vote a ‘moral stain’ on the world body. He argued at the time that the vote delegitimizes and demonizes Israel.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [slammed the General Assembly](https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-pans-despicable-un-vote-says-jews-cannot-be-occupiers-in-their-own-land/) over the resolution, accusing the global body of ‘distorting historical facts’ and declaring that the Jewish people cannot be ‘an occupier’ in its own land.

Israel sanctioned the Palestinians in response to the probe, including by [withholding funding](https://www.timesofisrael.com/pa-israel-held-78-million-from-monthly-tax-revues-collected-on-ramallahs-behalf/) from the Palestinian Authority. The retaliatory measures sparked [widespread international blowback](https://www.timesofisrael.com/bill-calling-to-end-un-probe-into-israel-reintroduced-to-us-congress/).

The US this week called on the Israelis and Palestinians to pause major policies that the other opposes in order to quash a recent surge in violence, [urging Ramallah](https://www.timesofisrael.com/coalition-party-vows-settlement-building-will-continue-despite-us-request-for-pause/) to cease its initiatives at international forums such as the UN. Wednesday’s announcement indicates the ICJ probe is moving forward anyway and outside of US control.

The US voted against the General Assembly’s ICJ resolution but will fund the probe as part of its budget for the UN. Israel [proposed defunding](https://www.timesofisrael.com/bill-calling-to-end-un-probe-into-israel-reintroduced-to-us-congress/) the court’s investigation during a UN vote in December, which failed, with the US abstaining.

The court last issued an advisory opinion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2004 when the General Assembly asked it to rule on the legality of the separation barrier. The court ruled that the separation barrier Israel built was ‘contrary to international law’ and called on the country to immediately halt construction.

Israel has ignored the decision, arguing that the barrier was a security measure meant to prevent Palestinian attackers from reaching Israeli cities. The Palestinians have said the structure was an Israeli land grab because of its route through East Jerusalem and parts of the West Bank.

The UN has a long history of passing resolutions against Israel, which has accused the world body of bias, together with the US. Israel has also accused the Palestinians, who have nonmember observer state status at the UN, of trying to use the world body to circumvent peace negotiations and impose a settlement.

Israel argues the investigations are part of a larger, discriminatory pattern at the UN. The General Assembly condemned Israel [more than all other countries](https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-condemned-israel-more-than-all-other-countries-combined-in-2022-monitor/) combined last year.

Erdan said late last month on Holocaust Remembrance Day that ‘when it comes to fighting antisemitism, sadly, the UN ignores its purpose,’ highlighting the Human Rights Council’s focus on Israel and antisemitic statements by UN staffers and investigators.