Netherlands asks Israel to clarify confiscation of PA minister's travel pass

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The Netherlands said on Tuesday it had asked Israel to clarify the status of Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki after his travel credentials were revoked following a visit to the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

A PA official said on Sunday that al-Maliki's VIP card, a pass granted by Israel to allow senior PA officials to move freely through border crossings, had been confiscated.

"We have raised the matter with the [Israeli] embassy [and] informed them that, as a host country, the Netherlands is very invested in the fact that the ICC must be able to carry out its work without interference," a Dutch foreign ministry spokesman said.

ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda announced this month that she would [investigate alleged Israeli war crimes in Judea and Samaria and Gaza](https://www.israelhayom.com/opinions/the-gross-hypocrisy-of-the-icc/), after the court ruled that it had jurisdiction in the case.

Maliki met with Bensouda at the ICC last week to urge her to accelerate the investigation, his office said.

"We will not be subject to intimidation as we seek justice for victims of atrocity crimes committed in Palestine," said Rawan Sulaiman, who serves as head of the Palestinian mission in the Netherlands and Palestinian representative to the ICC.

Sulaiman called on ICC member states "to support the integrity, impartiality and independence of the ICC, particularly, in light of the threats it, and those cooperating with it, continue to face."

Israel, which does not recognize the jurisdiction of the ICC, and the United States, which has not ratified its founding statute, have both denounced the war crimes investigation.

The revocation of a PA official's VIP status is a step Israel has not taken for years. Israeli officials said the decision to revoke his status was a response to the PA's ICC lawsuit, as well as its ongoing attempts to smear Israel in other international organizations.

Since the Palestinian ICC case hopes, among other things, to hamper freedom of movement for Israeli officials, Israel has decided that Maliki – who is spearheading the legal proceedings – should no longer enjoy extra privileges at the border. He retains the same rights as any other Palestinian citizen, officials said.

Ahmed al-Deek, an official at Maliki's office, said Israeli officers detained and questioned Maliki's aides for 90 minutes.

Deek said that the minister left the crossing without the card. It was not clear when it would be returned to him.