GOP lawmaker calls for Justice Dept. to probe international court

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Rep. Andy Biggs (R-Ariz.) is calling for the Department of Justice to launch a probe into the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) ties to certain non-governmental organizations, raising concerns that the global body is working with groups tied to U.S.-designed foreign terror organizations.

Biggs, the chairman of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, sent a letter to Attorney General [William Barr](https://thehill.com/people/william-barr) on Thursday raising the allegations, saying a report from the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (JCPA) shows “troubling parallels between the ICC’s investigation of the U.S. and that of Israel.”

“As a member of the House Judiciary Committee, I encourage the Justice Department to take appropriate action with respect to shocking information alleging troubling ties between the International Criminal Court (ICC); key non-governmental organizations driving the ICC’s investigations of the U.S. and Israel; and U.S.-designated foreign terrorists and Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” he wrote.

Biggs's letter follows a move earlier this year by the ICC to authorize an investigation into alleged war crimes by U.S. troops in Afghanistan. The U.S. rebuked the move, with [President Trump](https://thehill.com/people/donald-trump) signing an order in June to place [sanctions](https://thehill.com/policy/national-security/502236-trump-signs-order-sanctioning-officials-at-international-court) on ICC officials who aid in investigations into the U.S. and its allies.

The ICC separately [announced](https://thehill.com/policy/international/475686-netanyahu-calls-icc-war-crimes-probe-anti-semitic) in December 2019 that it was investigating alleged war crimes committed by Israeli forces in Palestinian-controlled areas such as the West Bank and Gaza Stip. That probe stemmed from a case brought to the international body by Palestinian officials in 2015.

Biggs praised the Trump administration's actions pushing back on the ICC while urging the Justice Department to review [the JCPA report](https://jcpa.org/legal-assault-how-the-icc-has-been-weaponized-against-the-u-s-and-israel/) in addition to his own report "summarizing links between NGOs and numerous terrorist groups and individuals."

"What is notable about this parallel effort by the ICC to investigate Israel is that the NGOs and individuals pursuing both the Israel case and the U.S. case are closely related. Specifically, the two international NGOs advancing the case against the U.S., the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), have strong ties to the Palestinian NGOs that brought the complaint against Israel to the ICC—Al-Haq, Palestinian Center for Human Rights PCHR), Al Mezan and Al-Dameer—and were intimately involved in their submissions to the court," he wrote.

"In turn, these four Palestinian organizations, Al-Haq, Al-Dameer, Al Mezan and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR), which together submitted six reports to the ICC between 2015 and 2018, have strong ties to U.S.-designated FTOs, including Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)," he stated.

The Hill has reached out to the ICC and Justice Department for comment.

The ICC was established in 1998 to investigate serious international crimes including genocide. The court’s jurisdiction is confined to countries that have signed on to the Rome Statute, which the U.S. and Israel have not.

Earlier this year, lawmakers in both chambers [sent bipartisan letters](https://thehill.com/policy/international/497640-bipartisan-lawmakers-call-on-pompeo-to-defend-israel-against-icc-probes) to Secretary of State [Mike Pompeo](https://thehill.com/people/mike-pompeo) expressing a similar concern that the ICC had a bias against the United States and Israel, with members calling for the administration to defend Israel against the Hague-based court’s investigation.

The lawmakers asserted they believe “the ICC does not enjoy legitimate jurisdiction” over the cases brought forth against the U.S. and Israel, arguing that the court’s determination that Palestine would be treated as a state during the investigation hinders efforts to negotiate a solution to the Israeli and Palestinian conflict.