**Germany, Hungary join states opposing ICC probe of Israel**

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Germany and Hungary have voiced their opposition to the International Criminal Court’s ruling that it can investigate Israel for alleged war crimes.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said: “Our legal view on jurisdiction of the ICC regarding alleged crimes committed in the Palestine territories remains unchanged. The court has no jurisdiction, because of the absence of the element of Palestinian statehood required by international law.”

Maas added that Germany supports the ICC in general, as well as the establishment of a Palestinian state.

The German foreign minister’s statement came the day after he spoke with Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi.

On Friday, the ICC’s Pre-Trial Chamber ruled that it has the jurisdiction to probe war crimes in Gaza, the West Bank and east Jerusalem allegedly committed since June 13, 2014. This could include possible lawsuits against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, defense ministers and other high-level officials, as well as soldiers and commanders. The investigation includes Operation Protective Edge and settlement activity.

Attorney-General Avichai Mandelblit reiterated Israel’s position on the ruling in a conference on Tuesday, saying: “There is no such thing as the State of Palestine according to international law. Eight significant countries joined our position… According to the Oslo Accords, there is no State of Palestine, it doesn’t have borders… and it doesn’t have the jurisdiction to judge Israelis. This is an unfortunate and mistaken decision.”

Mandelblit added that he does not see an immediate danger to any Israelis.

“This court was established to investigate atrocities,” the attorney-general said at an event sponsored by religious right-wing pamphlet B’Sheva. “There are atrocities in this world. Israel does not commit atrocities; we have laws of war, we have a glorious judiciary of world renown.”

Australia, Germany, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria, Brazil, Uganda and Canada expressed their opposition to an ICC investigation of Israel before the ruling, and Jerusalem hopes to get their public support after, as well.

Ashkenazi continued calling Israel’s allies on Tuesday to bolster its case against an ICC investigation, speaking with his counterparts in Canada, Hungary and Cyprus.

Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó wrote on Facebook that “Hungary does not agree with this decision. During the legal procedure, we already signaled that, according to our position, Palestine does not have criminal jurisdiction over Israeli citizens.

“We have always supported Israel’s right to defend itself and we believe that peace in the region can only be achieved through negotiations based on mutual respect,” Szijjártó added. “The decision of the ICC does not take us closer to this.”

Cyprus Foreign Minister Nikos Christodoulides left the ICC out of his statement on the call with Ashkenazi, saying they had a “timely and useful exchange of views” and “discussed bilateral cooperation, including on COVID-19, and latest developments in our region.”

Ashkenazi spoke with Canadian Foreign Minister Marc Garneau on Tuesday afternoon, following Garneau’s statement supporting Israel’s position.

The night before, Garneau said: “The creation of a Palestinian state can only be achieved through direct negotiations between the parties. Until such negotiations succeed, Canada’s longstanding position remains that it does not recognize a Palestinian state and therefore does not recognize its accession to” the ICC.

Earlier this week, Ashkenazi spoke with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken for the second time, thanking him for his public support after the International Criminal Court ruled that it can investigate Israel for alleged war crimes, a decision Ashkenazi called “outrageous.”

“I emphasized to the Secretary of State that the court’s decision is mistaken at its core, and it endangers the rare opportunity to promote peace in our region,” Ashkenazi tweeted following the call.

On Saturday night, US State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said: “We do not believe the Palestinians qualify as a sovereign state... We have serious concerns about the ICC’s attempts to exercise its jurisdiction over Israeli personnel. The United States has always taken the position that the court’s jurisdiction should be reserved for countries that consent to it, or that are referred by the UN Security Council.”

Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne expressed “deep concerns” about the ICC ruling and called for the court not to get involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“Australia does not recognize a ‘State of Palestine,’ noting that matters relating to territory and borders can only be resolved through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians,” Payne said on Saturday. “We made clear in our observations submitted to the Pre-Trial Chamber that Australia does not therefore recognize the right of any so-called ‘State of Palestine’ to accede to the Rome Statute. The [ICC] should not exercise jurisdiction in this matter.”