**ICC begins tweeting in Hebrew and Arabic, in clear message to Israelis**

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As the International Criminal Court (ICC) sets out a path to begin probing into allegations of war crimes perpetrated by Israel in Gaza, the West Bank and east Jerusalem, the Hague tribunal began tweeting in Hebrew and Arabic to make certain its intentions were made clear to Israelis and Arabs alike.

The ICC tweeted a series of tweets detailing the “scope” of the upcoming investigation and how it came to be, noting that the Pre-Judicial Court ruled that the ICC holds jurisdiction over matters in “Palestine.”

“In December 2019, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court requested from Pre-Trial Chamber I a jurisdictional ruling on the scope of the Court’s territorial jurisdiction under article 12(2)(a) of the Rome Statute in Palestine,” the ICC’s official Twitter account said.

It added that: “Last Friday, after a judicial proceeding in which a number of states, regional organizations and other stakeholders participated and filed pleadings, the pre-trial tribunal gave its decision, by a majority.

“The trial court ruled that the tribunal has territorial jurisdiction over the situation in Palestine.”

The ICC noted that its jurisdiction encompasses any Israel-held or “occupied” territories annexed since the Six Day War of 1967, “namely Gaza and the West Bank, including east Jerusalem.”

“The Chief Prosecutor’s Office welcomes this judicial clarity, and is now carefully analyzing the decision,” the ICC account said, posting a stoic picture of Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda. “Thereafter, the plaintiff will decide on the next step solely on the basis of the mandate given to it under the Treaty of Rome, and while exercising independent and impartial discretion.”

The initial tweets in English were made available to ICC followers on the day of the ruling, February 5. The Hebrew and Arabic tweets were posted just hours before midnight on Monday.

As previously mentioned, the ICC pre-tribunal ruled that it holds jurisdiction to probe into allegations of Israeli war crimes against Palestinians populations.

Such war crimes suits could be leveled against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, defense ministers and any other high-level officials involved in such activity since June 13, 2014. Soldiers and commanders could also be targeted.

Friday’s 2-1 ruling by the International Criminal Court’s three-member Pre-Trial Chamber in The Hague significantly advanced the possibility of such suits, although this is not the final step.

The matter now returns to the hands of Bensouda for further investigation as whether war crimes suits could be filed. The process could still be a protracted one. A former ICC chief prosecutor estimates it could take around 18 months.

Bensouda’s office tweeted Friday that it was “currently carefully analyzing the decision & will then decide its next step guided strictly by its independent & impartial mandate & obligations under the #RomeStatute.”

The United States rejected the ruling, and Israel charged that the decision was antisemitic. The Palestinians welcomed the ruling as a historic move in the direction of accountability.

The PA had asked the ICC in 2015 to allow for war crimes suits to be filed against Israelis. It did so after signing that same year the Rome Statute, which governs the ICC. Neither Israel nor the US are parties to the statute.

The PA’s request also opened the door for war crimes suits to be filed against Palestinians, including Hamas, but Israel fears the court’s overwhelming focus will be on its citizens and leaders.

In December 2019, Bensouda announced she had reason to believe that both Israelis and Palestinians had committed war crimes and that she intended to open an investigation into the matter.