ICC to decide on Israel-Palestinians probe 'in due course': official

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By Laurent Lozano, [AFP](http://www.afp.com/)

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The International Criminal Court has no deadline for deciding whether to investigate alleged war crimes by Israel and the Palestinians, an ICC official said on Friday.

"There is no time limit," the ICC's Phakiso Mochochoko told AFP during a visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories.

"We are just working hard on this file and in due course when the time is right, when all the conditions have been met and when we have assessed everything, then the decision will be made."

The Palestinians formally asked the ICC last year to investigate the Jewish state, which is not a party to the treaty that governs the court, for alleged war crimes.

Palestinian foreign minister Riad al-Malki presented the court with a dossier alleging violations during the 2014 Gaza war and another on Israel's occupation and settlement of the West Bank and east Jerusalem.

Some 2,251 Palestinians, including 551 children, were killed in fighting between Israel and Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas and other factions, according to UN figures.

Israel is alleged to have used indiscriminate force against the blockaded territory, while Hamas is accused of firing rockets at Israeli civilian population centres and using Palestinians as human shields.

In January 2015 the ICC, the world's only permanent war crimes court, opened a preliminary examination into alleged abuses by both sides but has not moved to a formal investigation.

The Palestinians have expressed frustration at the slow pace of proceedings.

Mochochoko did not comment when asked if it could take years to reach a decision, but said the amount of data from all sides meant that the Gaza examination was "unique in its nature."

"There is a lot of information, there is a lot of reports and there is a lot of work that needs to be done in order to analyse that information and to assess it," he said, speaking in English.

Mochochoko, a member of the ICC's prosecutor's office, arrived Wednesday as part of a four-strong delegation for a five-day mission to Israel and the Palestinian territories.

He said the trip was purely about explaining the work of the court and not seeking testimony.

"At this stage...we do not have any mandate to engage with witnesses, we don't have any mandate to collect evidence," he said.

"We are not doing any fact finding mission," he added.

"What the future holds for us, that remains to be seen."