**Israel praises Brazil for steadfast support against ICC war crimes probe**

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Israel’s Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi met Sunday his Brazilian counterpart in Jerusalem and thanked his country for its “steadfast position against the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) decision to launch a [war crimes] probe” against the Jewish state.

“It is a decision that harms international law and distances the possibility to advance negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians,” Ashkenazi stressed at the meeting.

Last week, ICC senior prosecutor Fatou Bensouda announced she had opened a formal probe into alleged war crimes in the Palestinian territories, consisting of the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

The decision led to a stinging backlash from the Israeli establishment, with officials urging allies around the world to exert diplomatic pressure against the ICC.

The Israeli minister and Araujo further discussed Middle East developments, Ashkenazi stipulating landmark changes that have taken place after four Arab nations -- the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco -- signed the Abraham Accords.

The former military chief warned of increasing Iranian efforts in recent days to destabilize the region. “We clearly identify Iran’s fingerprints in recent attempts to harm Israeli targets around the world. The international community must ensure that Iran ceases its efforts to reach the threshold of military nuclear technology and fulfills its commitments to the last detail,” Ashkenazi asserted.