**PA says will foil any Israeli, US plan for UNSC to suspend ICC probe**

By: Tovah Lazaroff

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The Palestinian Authority will thwart any Israeli and or the United States initiative for the United Nations Security Council to suspend the International Criminal Court’s probe into Israeli war crimes by 12 months, its Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki said on Sunday.

Speaking on Palestine TV Malki said he planned to travel soon to The Hague in the Netherlands to meet with the ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda about her war crimes probe into Israeli and Palestinian actions in the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza since June 13, 2014.

Bensouda announced her intention to hold such an investigation last week and is now expected to inform the PA and Israel that such a probe will be opened. The two governments will then have a month to respond and to argue against the necessity for such a probe.

Israel has yet to decide whether it intends to respond to Bensouda or whether it will refuse to participate in the proceedings.

It has already begun its diplomatic behind-the-scenes battle to dissuade the ICC from moving forward on the investigation.

Malki hinted Sunday that one place of redress could be the 15-member UN Security Council in New York.

According to the ICC website, “the UNSC can, by a resolution adopted under Chapter VII, suspend an ICC investigation or prosecution for a period 12 months, renewable under the same conditions, pursuant to article 16 of the Rome Statute.”

Israel is not a member of the UNSC, so it could not take such an initiative. But as one of the 15 UNSC members, the US could put forward such a request.

The Biden administration has been very vocal in opposing the ICC war crimes probe.

To date some eight counties have attempted to intervene on Israel’s behalf with the ICC: Canada, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany, Austria, Australia, Brazil and Uganda. However, none of these countries are UNSC members.

It’s unclear how much support – if any – the US would have at the UNSC for such a request.

Four countries – aside from the US – have veto power at the UNSC: Russia, China, France and the UK. Any one of those countries could singlehandedly halt such an initiative.

Former ambassador to the UN Dore Gold said that China and Russia could easily come to the defense of the Palestinians unless they could be swayed that this case sets a precedent that could also be used against them.

The precedent created by the ICC probe against Israel “has implications for a lot of countries that are engaged in military operations beyond their borders and within their borders,” Gold said. It also “sets a very dangerous precedent for all countries engaged in the war against terror.”

The US could possibly, therefore, create a quiet momentum behind-the-scenes for countries to rethink how the ICC impacts them,” said Gold, who is president of the think tank Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

Malki told Palestine TV that the Palestinians had friends at the UNSC with veto power and that it could likely halt such a move. His words were also published by the Palestinian News Agency Wafa.

Malki called on the Biden administration to rescind sanctions on ICC officials, including Bensouda, that had been imposed by the former Trump administration. He also asked that Trump-era policies against the Palestinians be reversed.

“We still believe that the new US administration has the desire to reassess the US-Palestinian relationship and return it to its correct path, and are awaiting practical steps on the ground,” Malki said according to Wafa.