**Palestinian Authority, Hamas welcome ICC decision to investigate Israel**

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The Palestinian Authority welcomed on Wednesday the International Criminal Court's decision to open a formal investigation into war crimes in the Palestinian Territories.

"This is a long-awaited step that serves Palestine’s tireless pursuit of justice and accountability, which are indispensable pillars of the peace the Palestinian people seek and deserve," the PA foreign ministry said in a statement.

The full war crimes probe against Israel and the Hamas terrorist group is expected to cover the 2014 Gaza War, the 2018 Gaza border crisis, the Israeli settlement enterprise in the West Bank as well as Hamas' rocket attacks against Israeli civilians.

Hamas also welcomed ICC decision to investigate into Israeli "war crimes" on and defended its actions as "legitimate resistance" on Wednesday.

“We welcome the ICC decision to investigate Israeli occupation war crimes against our people. It is a step forward on the path of achieving justice for the victims of our people,” Hazem Qassem, a Hamas spokesman in Gaza, told Reuters.

"Our resistance is legitimate, and it comes to defend our people. All international laws approve legitimate resistance,” said Qassem. Hamas is regarded as a terrorist organization by Israel, the United States and the European Union.

Joint List MK, Sami Abou Shahadeh made a statement on Twitter that "the brave decision by the ICC is another step in the right direction. It is clear why Israel is worried - it knows that the occupation is nothing but a war crime."

Former Joint List MK Jamal Zahalka also stated on Twitter that "this decision is a small step towards great justice; hopefully this will punish war criminals and deter the Israeli machine of aggression and occupation."

Both Hamas and Israel are being investigated for war crimes, ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said.