UK Petition to Arrest Netanyahu for Gaza War Crimes Reaches Over 80,000 Signatures

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A petition calling on the UK government to arrest Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu for war crimes in Gaza when he arrives in London has garnered more than 80,000 signatures. But David Cameron’s government says no way: Netanyahu has diplomatic immunity.

The [petition](https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/105446), posted on the UK government’s website, has already been signed by some 81,000 Brits. Its initiator, Damian Moran, claims that under international law, the Israeli prime minister can be detained when he comes to the British capital in September “for the massacre of over 2,000 [Palestinian] civilians” during the 51-day offensive by the Israeli Defense Force in Gaza last year. The number of signatures has doubled in the last two weeks.

If the petition garners 100,000 signatures by February 7, 2016, the UK parliament is required by law to debate it. However, Moran, the petition’s author, said he "doesn't expect him [Netanyahu] to get arrested because of the universal jurisdiction laws.”

He added: “It is a clear message to him that there's a massive amount of people who don't want him here.”

The UK government was required to provide an official answer to the petition as soon as it gathered 10,000 signatures. It replied: “Under UK and international law, visiting heads of foreign governments, such as Prime Minister Netanyahu, have immunity from legal process, and cannot be arrested or detained.”

"We recognise that the conflict in Gaza last year took a terrible toll," the government statement added. “[A]s the Prime Minister said, we were all deeply saddened by the violence and the UK has been at the forefront of international reconstruction efforts.”

The UK recognizes Israel’s right to “take proportionate action to defend itself,” within the “boundaries of international humanitarian law” and British government condemns the “terrorist tactics” of Hamas, who “fired rockets on Israel, built extensive tunnels to kidnap and murder, and repeatedly refused to accept ceasefires,” the statement said.

Like any state, Israel has the right to ensure its own security, as its citizens also have the right to “live without fear of attack,” it added, stressing that the UK is a close ally of Israel’s and the two countries enjoy an “excellent bilateral relationship.”

Israel's embassy in London dismissed the petition as a "meaningless publicity stunt."

The military action, Operation Protective Edge, was launched on July 8, 2014 against Hamas-ruled Gaza, and resulted in deaths of over 2,000 Palestinians, including 551 children. Sixty-six Israeli soldiers died in the operation.