ICC under pressure to open investigation into Israel war crimes

December 2, 2019

Middle East Monitor

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20191202-icc-under-pressure-to-open-investigation-into-israel-war-crimes/>

The International Criminal Court is coming under pressure from a group led by former ministers and professors of international law to open an investigation into possible Israeli war crimes in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Known as the Rights Forum, the group founded in 2009 by former Dutch Prime Minister Andreas van Agt, will hand-deliver this demand to the ICC on 10 December on behalf of a coalition of organisations.

Their demand will coincide with International Human Rights Day, which marks the United Nations General Assembly’s adoption and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It is also the date on which Dries van Agt founded the Rights Forum, exactly a decade ago this year.

“Today, on Human Rights Day, the signatories of this letter call on you to open an official, full-scale investigation into the ‘situation in Palestine’ without further delay,” the group said in its letter which will be sent to the ICC’s Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda after the signatures of supporting organisations have been gathered.

The ICC, which has been [sitting on a case to investigate Israel](https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20150408-icc-begins-preliminary-examination-into-alleged-israeli-crimes-in-gaza/) over alleged war crimes, is accused of stalling by the Rights Forum. “Since January 2015 the International Criminal Court (ICC) has been engaged in a preliminary investigation into the ‘situation in Palestine’, focusing on possible war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories,” said the group. It explained that almost five years have passed with the ICC failing to reach a conclusion and criticised the delay saying that it is “inexplicable” and “irresponsible”.

“As the preliminary investigation drags on, the crimes continue. The Israeli colonization of occupied lands – a war crime under the Rome Statute – comes with the systemic violation and abuse of the human rights of millions of Palestinians,” the group added in the letter which also raised the ICC’s [expressed concerns over Gaza](https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180409-icc-warns-israel-over-killing-of-protesters-in-gaza/).

“Concerning Gaza, you yourself have stated that the Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians could amount to war crimes,” said the group.

The letter claimed that the ICC’s failure to launch an official investigation has fuelled a “culture of impunity”, and warned that the “integrity and credibility of the ICC” was on the line.

The Rights Forum describes itself “as a high-level network of former ministers and professors of international law who have joined forces to promote a just and durable solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.”