PLO official calls for ICC probe into Israeli ‘crimes’

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A senior Palestinian official on Saturday called for an international investigation into Israeli violence against Palestinians.

Speaking at a press conference in the West Bank city of Ramallah, Saeb Erekat said the International Criminal Court (ICC) has launched an initial investigation into Israeli “crimes” against the Palestinians.

"Now, the ICC is required to immediately declare an international investigation into these crimes,” said Erekat, the secretary of the umbrella Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

"It is time for the ICC Prosecutor to open an investigation against the Israeli Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu] and his Defense Minister [Avigdor Lieberman] on the events of sniping our people and our children in the Gaza Strip.”

At least 39 Palestinians have been killed and hundreds injured by Israeli gunfire during anti-occupation rallies on Gaza border since March 30.

Most of the deaths were reportedly caused by exploding bullets.

The rallies are part of a six-week demonstration that will culminate on May 15. That day will mark the 70th anniversary of Israel's establishment -- an event Palestinians refer to as the “Nakba” or “Catastrophe”.

Erekat accused U.S. ambassador to the UN, Nicky Healy, of encouraging the killing of Palestinians.

"I have not heard any Israeli official talking about opening an investigation into Israeli war crimes, but it was U.S. President Donald Trump's Middle East envoy, Jason Greenblatt, who announced the opening of an Israeli investigation into the circumstances of killing a 15-year-old boy in Gaza yesterday,” he said.

"He [Greenblatt] became a spokesman for the Israeli Foreign Ministry, and he attacked us today, because we said so," he added.