Palestinian Authority seeks to prosecute Israel for 'war crimes' - Abbas

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The Palestinian Authority will seek to prosecute Israelis for “war crimes” before international courts, PA President Mahmoud Abbas said Wednesday.

"The brutal attacks that the occupying power is carrying out in the [Gaza Strip](https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/israel-strikes-hamass-tunnel-network-as-rockets-aimed-at-air-force-bases-668500) against civilians, the deliberate bombing of homes and facilities, the destruction of the infrastructure and the killing of children, the elderly and women is an organized state terrorism practiced by the Israeli occupation state and war crimes punishable by international law,” he said in a recorded speech before an emergency meeting of the Arab Parliament, the legislative body of the Arab League. “We will not be lenient in prosecuting the perpetrators of these crimes before international courts.”

The Palestinians were now focusing their efforts on “stopping the Israeli aggression against our people in Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and then entering into a serious political process that would lead to an end of the Israeli occupation of the land of the State of Palestine,[including east Jerusalem](https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/escalation-over-jerusalem-is-how-wars-start-analysis-666229), our holy capital, and a just and comprehensive solution to the issue of our holy capital,” Abbas said.

The Palestinians have informed the new US administration of their readiness to work with it within the framework of the Quartet, which includes, in addition to the US, Russia, the United Nations, and European Union, he said.

Abbas repeated his demand for a full Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 lines. The Palestinians want a just and comprehensive peace based on international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, he said.

Endorsed by the Arab League in 2002, the initiative offers normalization of relations by the Arab world with Israel in return for a full withdrawal from the West Bank, Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights, a “just settlement” of the Palestinian refugee issue based on UN Resolution 194 and the establishment of a Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital.

“We seek peace, not war,” Abbas said. “But at the same time, we cannot compromise any of our people’s rights, particularly in the city of Jerusalem.”

Jerusalem is the “essence of the Palestinian national identity, in addition to being part of our religious and historical identity, as well as the identity of all Arabs and Muslims,” he said.

Without Jerusalem, “there will be no peace or security or stability or agreement,” he added.

Abbas said he had decided in late April to delay the Palestinian general elections because of Israel’s alleged refusal to allow the vote to take place in Jerusalem.

“From the beginning, we said there would be no elections without Jerusalem, regardless of the price,” he said. “Jerusalem is more important than anything else. Holding elections without Jerusalem means accepting the ‘Deal of the Century’ and that the city is the united capital of Israel, as they claim. This will never happen.”

The Deal of the Century refers to former US president Donald Trump’s plan for Mideast peace, which was dismissed by the Palestinians as a “conspiracy to eliminate the Palestinian issue.”

Efforts to set a new date for the parliamentary and presidential elections, which were supposed to take place on May 22 and July 31, respectively, will continue, Abbas said.

He also expressed readiness to form a Palestinian national government “that would adhere to international legitimacy and be accepted by the international community.”