**Australia rejects ICC Palestine probe; Germany warns against politicization**

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Australia rejected the effort by the International Criminal Court’s chief prosecutor to launch an investigation into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, arguing that the matter must be resolved by the two parties at the negotiating table.

Germany, in a more nuanced stance, said it had full trust in the court, was confident the ICC’s judges would “address issues of admissibility,” and cautioned against politicization.

“Australia is concerned by the ICC prosecutor’s proposal to consider the situation in the Palestinian Territories, subject to a ruling by the court’s pre-trial chamber on the scope of the court’s territorial jurisdiction in the matter,” a spokesperson for Canberra’s Foreign Ministry told Australian-Jewish news site, J-Wire on Tuesday.

“Australia’s position is clear — we do not recognize a so-called ‘State of Palestine’ and we do not recognize that there is such a State Party to the ICC’s Rome Statute,” the spokesperson went on.

“We consider that the question of territory and borders can be resolved only through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. This is the only way to ensure a durable and resilient peace.”

Israel’s Foreign Minister Israel Katz praised Australia for the statement and called on other governments to follow suit.

“Many thanks to the Australian government for taking the unequivocal and principled stance against the ICC prosecutor’s decision,” he wrote on his Twitter account. “I urge other countries to take a similar stance and not allow the court to turn into a political weapon against Israel.”

Germany on Tuesday weighed in on the ICC prosecutor’s statement as well, reiterating Berlin’s support for the court, while at the same time warning against a politicization of it.

“We trust the independence of the International Criminal Court and are now confident that the court will resolve the issues raised. This will also address issues of admissibility that may be doubtful,” the spokeswoman of Germany’s foreign ministry, Maria Adebahr, said, during a press conference in response to a reporter’s question.

“We as the federal government cannot comment on specific details of ongoing proceedings. But, as I said, we trust that all arguments will belong fairly in the further proceedings. We are, of course, also committed to making the court strict on the basis of the Rome Statute,” she said.

“Basically, it applies to us that we naturally resist the fact that cases of any kind are used to politicize before the court. We are betting that admissibility will be checked and that the court will do it on the basis of the Rome Statute.”

Germany is generally known as a staunch supporter of the court, which is why officials in Jerusalem were positively surprised about Adebahr’s statement about a possible politicization.

The ICC prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, announced Friday that at the end of her five-year preliminary examination, she has reached the conclusion that “there is a reasonable basis to initiate an investigation into the situation in Palestine.” There are indications that both the Israeli army and Hamas and other Palestinian terror groups may have committed war crimes, she stated.

At the same time, Bensouda acknowledged that the ICC may not have jurisdiction over the case, and asked the court’s pre-trial chamber to rule on the matter within 120 days.

Israel vociferously rejects her statement, arguing that the court clearly does not have jurisdiction over the case, as there is no Palestinian state that has the mandate to transfer criminal jurisdiction over its territory to The Hague.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu went as far as calling Bensouda’s statement “pure anti-Semitism,” and vowed to fight for Israel’s good name. He also sent letters to several leaders of countries considered friendly to Israel, including Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, asking them to speak out against the ICC probe into Israel/Palestine.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Friday issued a statement saying the administration remains “firmly” opposed to the ICC’s supposed investigation into the matter, slamming it as an unfair attack on Israel.

“As we made clear when the Palestinians purported to join the Rome Statute, we do not believe the Palestinians qualify as a sovereign state, and they therefore are not qualified to obtain full membership, or participate as a state in international organizations, entities, or conferences, including the ICC,” Pompeo said.

“The United States remains deeply, firmly, and consistently committed to achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians. The only realistic path forward to end this conflict is through direct negotiations,” he added.