**PA, Hamas applaud ICC ruling, vow to prosecute Israelis for ‘war crimes’**

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The ruling by the International Criminal Court (ICC), according to which it has jurisdiction over the West Bank, Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem, paves the way for pursuing Israelis suspected of committing war crimes, Palestinians said over the weekend.

Hailing the ruling as an “historic victory,” several Palestinian officials said it was a severe blow to Israel and called on the court to immediately launch investigations into Israeli “war crimes” against Palestinians.

In a majority ruling published on Friday, the ICC judges said that, “The ruling applies to lands occupied by Israel since 1967, namely Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.”

Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh praised the ruling as a “victory for justice and humanity and the values of truth, justice and freedom.”

The ruling, Shtayyeh said, was a “message to the perpetrators of crimes that their crimes will not be subject to a statute of limitations, and they will not go unpunished.”

Shtayyeh said that his government was continuing to document “ongoing Israeli crimes, especially house demolitions, killings, land confiscation and settlement expansion.”

PA Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki said that the ICC ruling “conforms to the principles of international law and opens the door to the pursuit of criminal accountability for the most egregious crimes under the court’s mandate, which have been and continue to be committed against the Palestinian people.”

Malki said that he stands ready to cooperate with and extend all assistance to the court “during the investigation into Israeli crimes, which should start in order.”

He added: “This is an historic day for the principle of criminal accountability. The decision sends a clear message to perpetrators of heinous crimes and their accomplices that they are not out of reach and that their crimes will not go unpunished.”

Mahmoud al-Habbash, religious adviser to PA President Mahmoud Abbas, praised the ICC ruling and said it “opens the door for the prosecution of Israeli war criminals in international courts.” He described the ruling as a “legal victory of Palestine.”

PA Minister of Justice Mohammad Shalaldeh said that the ruling was a “victory for the liberation movements and the State of Palestine headed by President Mahmoud Abbas, as it contributes to strengthening and advancing the rules of international law.”

Shalaldeh said that the ruling would pave the way for launching investigations into Israeli “war criminals, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.”

PLO Executive Committee member Saleh Rafat welcomed the ICC ruling and called for launching an immediate investigation “into the crimes of the occupation, especially the settlements and house demolitions,” as well as the 2014 Gaza war, also known as Operation Protective Edge.

Hamas also welcomed the ICC ruling.

Rafat Murra, a senior Hamas official, said that “any decision that supports the rights of the Palestinian people is an appropriate decision in line with human values and the principle of prosecuting war criminals.”

The Palestinians, Murra added, “are looking forward to the day when the occupation and its leaders will be brought to trial for the crimes they have committed against the Palestinian people.” The Hamas official accused the “Zionist entity and its leaders of committing the most heinous crimes against the Palestinian people.”