**Naftali Bennett: The Hague's ICC is home of modern antisemitism**

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The International Criminal Court in The Hague is where antisemitism is made, Defense Minister Naftali Bennett said days after the ICC’s chief prosecutor called to investigate alleged war crimes by Israel.

At the graduation ceremony for the IAF pilots’ course, Bennett said, “The State of Israel will provide a legal Iron Dome for its soldiers and officers... You defend us; we’ll defend you. No soldier and no commander will be deterred from defending the lives of his nation and family because of the hypocritical court in The Hague.”

Bennett said that he is aware of the great stresses pilots face on missions, where they serve as Israel’s “long arm that accurately strikes those who seek to harm us... An additional component has been added to this stress in recent days: The International Court in The Hague. We cannot allow this to weaken you,” he stated. “We won’t let this antisemitism enter the cockpit.”

Bennett said the ICC comes from an antisemitic starting point, such that Israel will always lose because it is the Jewish State and Israel should not try to ingratiate itself to the court. “Every time the hypocritical world scolds us and we accept it, they want more. The Hague is the workshop of modern antisemitism. And now, when the picture is clear, we must treat them as such… The court in The Hague does not do justice, it does politics, it does modern antisemitism. It encourages terror,” he stated.

Overnight Tuesday, Australia said it opposes the International Criminal Court Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda’s decision to investigate alleged war crimes by Israel and the Palestinians, joining the US in speaking out against the probe. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade said, “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.”

Australia does not recognize a Palestinian state and therefore does not see it as party to the Rome Statute, the agreement leading to the ICC’s formation, the ministry told J-Wire, a Jewish news website for Australia and New Zealand. The Palestinian Authority signed the Rome Statute in January 2015, three years after the UN General Assembly granted it non-member observer state status.

“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,” Canberra stated. Foreign Minister Israel Katz tweeted his gratitude to Australia, writing: “Many thanks to the Australian government for taking the unequivocal and principled stance against the ICC prosecutor’s decision... I urge other countries to take a similar stance and not allow the court to turn into a political weapon against Israel.”

Australia joined the US in expressing its disapproval of the ICC probe, with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo making a similar argument that the Palestinians do not have a sovereign state and thus cannot be member states of international bodies like the ICC. Pompeo said this means the ICC cannot hear a case about Israel without Jerusalem’s consent or a referral from the UN Security council.

“We expect that the decision on the part of the United States and Israel not to join [the ICC] and not to place our personnel under the court’s jurisdiction will also be respected,” Pompeo added. Meanwhile, on twitter Pompeo said, “We firmly oppose this unjustified inquiry that unfairly targets Israel. The path to lasting peace is through direct negotiations.”

Last month, Pompeo announced that the US does not consider Israeli settlements in the West Bank to be illegitimate or illegal.