**Palestine calls on all states to respect ICC – says foreign ministry**

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RAMALLAH, Sunday, February 07, 2021 (WAFA) – Palestine called on all states to respect the International Criminal Court and its invaluable work in prosecuting the most heinous crimes worldwide, stating that: No one is above the law, not even those allied with powerful states, today said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates in a statement.

The State of Palestine is following with great concern statements made by states, including Australia, objecting to the Decision of the Pre-Trial Chamber on the International Criminal Court's territorial jurisdiction in Palestine, said the ministry.

“Aside from their objectionable opposition to the pursuit of justice and accountability, these statements are purely political in nature and amount to undue pressure on the Court,” stressed the statement.

“As a State Party to the Rome Statute, Palestine reiterates its support to the Court's independence. States cannot be allowed to influence, coerce, or otherwise affect the working of the Court if such work does not correspond to their political positions,” it said.

In this regard, Palestine called on all states to respect the Court and its invaluable work in prosecuting the most heinous crimes worldwide. No one is above the law, not even those allied with powerful states.

“The Pre-Trial Chamber's Decision serves the cause of justice for victims and advances the chances of peace. Pursuing accountability is a cornerstone of the enduring peace Palestine seeks.”

“Crimes and impunity, entrenched and encouraged from the lack of accountability have only deepened the wounds of this conflict and increased the suffering of the Palestinian people, said the ministry, stating that: “That stops now because accountability is finally within reach.”

The ministry added: while the State of Palestine pursues friendly and peaceful relations with all States, it does not consider that any fellow state has any right to decide on the issue of Palestinian statehood, which has already been decided on by the Palestinian people and recognized by the vast majority of states.

“Attempts to undercut, diminish, or deny Palestinian statehood can only be understood as stemming from a position that accepts the permanent colonization of Palestine and denying the Palestinian people of their inalienable right to self-determination and independence,” said the statement.

“The State of Palestine is a legal and political fact that can neither be ignored nor denied any longer. Governments that remain in denial are advised to move over to the right side of history on this issue,” the statement concluded.

T.R.