

Israeli-Palestinian Relations and the International Criminal Court (ICC): Will the U.S. Retaliate with New Sanctions on Israel's Behalf?

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Even a "deaf, blind and mute judge" knows that the Palestinians are responsible for the "indiscriminate murder of men, women, children and babies for the last 100 years" – Israel Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman

Fresh off the Main-Stream Media's (MSM) mixed reaction of President Barack Obama's proposal on why the U.S. should lift Cuba's economic embargo comes a new development, but this time in the Middle East. There is a real possibility that Washington will impose new economic sanctions on the Palestinian Authority (PA) for joining the International Criminal Court (ICC) to appease Israel. The London-based news service, The Guardian published a report titled '*Palestinian president signs up to join international criminal court*' and stated that "*The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, dramatically moved to join the international criminal court on Wednesday, setting Palestinians on a diplomatic collision course with Israel and Washington, and risking imposition of US sanctions.*" The only alternative to the Security Council (the U.S. is a permanent member) which has undermined the PA's ambitions for an independent state with a U.S. and Australia "No Vote" has signed "*the Rome statute governing the court and 19 other international agreements, potentially opening the way to Palestinians to pursue Israel for war crimes in the court of last resort based in The Hague.*" It is understood by the international community that such actions undertaken by the PA would prompt Washington to react with economic sanctions that would further cripple the Palestinian economy. The report said that "*The US also condemned the move which it described as "deeply troubling" with State Department spokesman Jeff Rathke saying it was "an escalatory step that will not achieve any of the outcomes most Palestinians have long hoped to see for their people."* Washington is most likely to move forward with new economic sanctions. Last September, US Secretary of State John Kerry threatened the PA with sanctions when Abbas insisted on presenting a plan to end the Israeli occupation to the UN Security Council.

Washington and Israel are exploring the possibilities of new economic sanctions without inflaming world opinion especially when it comes to the Palestinians. President Abbas will examine what options to take in regards to war crimes and other human rights violations committed by Israel. "*They attack us and our land every day, to whom are we to complain? The Security Council let us down — where are we to go?" Abbas told a gathering of Palestinian leaders in remarks broadcast on official television*" the New York Times reported. President Abbas is hopeful that the process would lead to a course of action that would find the State of Israel guilty by the ICC. It would solidify Israel's legacy as a "*Criminal*

State” that illegally occupied Palestinian lands. Israeli media including the Jerusalem Post was quick to criticize the PA’s actions when it said that

“The world is a different and much harsher place for Israel after the Palestinians signed the Rome Statute, which probably grants them access to the International Criminal Court.” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that the Palestinian Authority has more of a reason to fear signing on to the ICC because of their political relationship with Hamas:

Netanyahu, in his initial reaction to the move, said the Palestinian Authority, which is in a unity government with Hamas, should be more concerned about the ICC than Israel. Netanyahu said that Israel would respond – though he did not give any indication of how it would do so – and would defend the soldiers of the IDF, which he called “the most moral soldiers in the world.”

By contrast, Netanyahu said Hamas was an avowed terrorist organization that – like Islamic State – commits war crimes. “We will rebuff this additional effort to impose a diktat on us, just as we rebuffed Palestinian efforts in the UN Security Council,” he said.

Washington’s influence in the UN Security Council will seek to impose sanctions on the Palestinians as they did to a number of countries that did not obey their policies. Sanctions are an imperial tool of U.S. foreign policy that has imposed economic, political and military sanctions on various countries including Iran, North Korea (since 1950), Cuba (since 1960), Syria and most recently Russia for geopolitical reasons. With high poverty levels in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, economic sanctions will exacerbate whatever is left of the Palestinian economy. The western-dominated World Bank released a report in 2014 titled *‘Palestinian Economy in Decline and Unemployment Rising to Alarming Levels’* and stated their findings:

The deterioration of the Palestinian economy continued in 2014, particularly in Gaza where the situation was dire even before the recent conflict. The average yearly economic growth exceeded 8% between 2007 and 2011 but declined to 1.9% in 2013, and reached minus 1% for the first quarter of 2014. A quarter of the Palestinian population lives in poverty, with the rate in Gaza twice as high as that in the West Bank, as Palestinian businesses were crippled by the restrictions on movement of people and goods.

New economic sanctions will ignite an angry reaction from the Palestinian people in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Are Washington and Tel Aviv trying to instigate another conflict in the Palestinian territories? The Obama administration will impose new economic sanctions once it submits the bill to the AIPAC controlled U.S. congress for approval, rest assured it will pass. The Palestinian people will suffer the consequences of the US/Israel alliance. The Palestinians have been seeking a state of their own since the Zionist occupation, but with Washington’s commitment to Israel’s security, new economic sanctions on the Palestinian people will only push both sides further apart, making peace an impossible goal.

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