

Palestine Negotiator Slams Israel for Withholding Tax Revenues

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Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat on Saturday described as “piracy” an Israeli decision to stop the transfer of Palestinian tax revenues collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority.

“We were unofficially told a few hours ago that the Israeli government had decided to hold back tax revenues it collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority every month,” Erekat said.

“Israel should be committed to transferring these revenues,” he added in a statement.

He accused Israel of practicing what he described as “piracy” against international law.

He said the revenues withheld was not charity from Israel, but money owned by the Palestinian people.

“Israel seeks to break the will of the Palestinian people, which uses peaceful means stipulated in international laws, by taking a decision like this one,” Erekat said.

“This move will not stop us and we will continue to struggle for the creation of our independent state, which has East Jerusalem as its capital,” he added.

Earlier on Saturday, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* said that the Israeli government had decided to stop the transfer of around \$125 million in tax revenues collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority.

The newspaper quoted an unnamed Israeli official who said the move boiled down to the decision of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to sign the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Abbas signed the statute on Wednesday, only hours after the United Nations Security Council turned down a Palestinian draft resolution calling for setting a three-year deadline for ending Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.

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