

Will Netanyahu be Arrested When he Arrives in London? Cameron “Says No”, War Criminals have “Complete Immunity”

By [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#)

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A Petition has been launched under the auspices of the British parliament calling for the arrest of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu upon his official state visit to the United Kingdom scheduled for September.

[The text of the petition](#) is published on the UK Parliament website,

[TO SIGN THE PETITION](#) (British Citizens and UK Residents)

It demands Netanyahu’s arrest upon his arrival in the UK on an official visit scheduled for September:

Benjamin Netanyahu to be arrested for war crimes when he arrives in London

Benjamin Netanyahu is to hold talks in London this September. Under international law he should be arrested for war crimes upon arrival in the U.K for the massacre of over 2000 civilians in 2014.

The petition procedure under the auspices of the British parliament requires the government to respond to petitions which have more than 10,000 signatures.

When it has more than 100,000 signatures it is referred for debate in the House of Commons.

At the time of writing, the petition has more than 74, 000 signatures.

Below is the Cameron government’s response, which is published on the website of the British parliament as well as our comments. (highlights by GR)

Government responded

Under UK and international law, visiting heads of foreign governments, such as Prime Minister Netanyahu, have immunity from legal process, and cannot be arrested or detained.

Read the response in full below

The British Government has invited Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, as head of the

Israeli Government, to visit the UK in September. Under UK and international law, certain holders of high-ranking office in a State, including Heads of State, Heads of Government and Ministers for Foreign Affairs **are entitled to immunity, which includes inviolability and complete immunity from criminal jurisdiction.**

We recognise that the conflict in Gaza last year **took a terrible toll.** As the Prime Minister said, we were all deeply **saddened by the violence** and the UK has been at the forefront of international reconstruction efforts. However the Prime Minister was clear on the UK's recognition of Israel's right to **take proportionate action to defend itself, within the boundaries of international humanitarian law.** We condemn **the terrorist tactics of Hamas** who fired rockets on Israel, built extensive tunnels to kidnap and murder, and repeatedly refused to accept ceasefires. Israel, like any state, has the right to ensure its own security, as its citizens also have the right to live without fear of attack.

The UK consistently urged Israel to do everything possible to avoid civilian casualties, to exercise restraint, and to help find ways to bring the situation to an end. The UK continues to urge the parties to give priority to reaching a durable solution for Gaza which addresses the underlying drivers of conflict, and to take the necessary practical steps to ensure Gaza's reconstruction and economic recovery.

We welcome the fact that Israel is conducting internal investigations into specific incidents during Operation Protective Edge. Where there is evidence of wrongdoing those responsible must be held accountable whatever their position in society. Both parties must also demonstrate robust and credible internal investigations which are in line with international standards. We have also encouraged the Israeli authorities, as we do all countries, to cooperate with the independent Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) regarding the preliminary examination into the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories since 13 June, 2014, whilst noting that Israel is not a State Party to the ICC.

The UK is a close friend of Israel and we enjoy an excellent bilateral relationship, built on decades of cooperation between our two countries across a range of fields. Our priority for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains the achievement of a two-state solution, based on 1967 borders. We continue to believe that negotiations will be necessary in order to achieve this, and that both parties need to focus on steps that are conducive to peace. The UK Government will reinforce this message to Mr Netanyahu during his visit.

Comments

Prime Minister Cameron is totally ignorant regarding the tenets of international humanitarian law. Let us refresh his political mind:

"A major part of international humanitarian law is contained in the four Geneva Conventions of 1949. ... The Conventions have been developed and supplemented by two further agreements: the Additional Protocols of 1977 relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts.

Other agreements prohibit the use of certain weapons and military tactics and protect certain categories of people and goods."

Also of relevance is Article 38 of the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), ratified and violated by Israel.

Amply documented and known to the British government, Israel is routinely involved in killing Palestinian children. The CRC Convention “requires state parties (including Israel) to take “all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict.”

Prime Minister Cameron acknowledges the so-called “terrible toll”, a rather ambiguous term which in relation to Gaza (in plain English) consisted in deliberate acts of killing and destruction directed against civilians.

But then Cameron casually accuses the victims.

“Saddened by the violence” ordered and instigated by Netanyahu, who was, according to Cameron is rightfully “defending Israel” within the “boundaries of international humanitarian law”.

Those boundaries have been broken. the Geneva Conventions are explicit in this regard: Israel has committed extensive crimes against humanity, and Britain is complicit:

International humanitarian law protects those who do not take part in the fighting, such as civilians and medical and religious military personnel. ...

These categories of person are entitled to respect for their lives and for their physical and mental integrity. They also enjoy legal guarantees. They must be protected and treated humanely in all circumstances, with no adverse distinction.

More specifically: it is forbidden to kill or wound an enemy who surrenders or is unable to fight; the sick and wounded must be collected and cared for by the party in whose power they find themselves. Medical personnel, supplies, hospitals and ambulances must all be protected.

The Petition will soon be reaching 100,000 signatures. Will parliament accept to debate the issue?

Whatever the outcome, my advice to Netanyahu, think twice before coming to London.

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