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## ICC: Palestine Needs Justice Now More Than Ever

On the 9th anniversary of the referral of crimes committed in Palestine to the International Criminal Court, Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK) sent a letter to the Public Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, signed by dozens of academics, MPs and legal experts, urging him to work on the case which has not made any progress since the end of the term of the former Public Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda.

The signatories to the letter included the linguist Noam Chomsky, the political science professor Norman Finkelstein, the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, the law professor William Schabas, MPs and former MPs in the European Parliament, Miguel Urban, Manu Pineda, Leïla Chaïbi, Pierre Larrouturou, Idoia VILLANUEVA RUIZ, Kateřina KONEČNÁ, Patrick Le Hyaric, Emer Costello, Paul Murphy, Massimo Ungaro and others.

The letter stated that on March 3, 2021, the former Public Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, announced the opening of an official investigation into the situation in Palestine. Before that, on February 5, 2021, the Pre-Trial Chamber had decided that the territorial jurisdiction of the Court extends to Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Since then, the current Prosecutor has not taken any steps forward in the case.

The letter stated that the current year has been identified as the most lethal to date, with the death toll reaching a minimum of 145, out of which 28 are children. This sobering statistic follows the 223 fatalities recorded in 2022, with nearly a quarter being children. The letter pointed out, "This consistent pattern of violence against Palestinians by the Israeli Occupation Forces underscores a worrying trend that has been evident since Palestine came under the court's jurisdiction in June 2014, resulting in hundreds of Palestinians either being killed or injured."



Furthermore, the letter expressed deep concern over the recent Israeli aggression in Gaza. It conveyed the human cost of these actions, saying, "The repercussions of this aggression were shocking: 33 lives were lost, including 6 children and 4 women, as reported by the Gaza Health Ministry and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)." The letter emphasized the far-reaching effects of this hostility, which extended beyond these fatalities, inflicting varying degrees of injuries to an additional 190 Palestinians. "The injured include a particularly vulnerable demographic, comprising 64 children, 38 women, and 10 elderly individuals," the letter added.

The letter pointed out the efforts made by the new Public Prosecutor in other cases, including Ukraine, and his disregard for the situation in Palestine, despite the escalation of crimes committed under the right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu. The letter emphasised that such crimes cannot be tolerated and requires urgent action from the Office of the Prosecutor, as the lives and freedom of people in Palestine are of the same importance as people in other countries.

The letter called on the Public Prosecutor to adhere to the basic principle of the ICC, that is, to fight the phenomenon of impunity for serious crimes.

The letter urged the Public Prosecutor to take a bold and courageous stance against the forces trying to obstruct the investigations of the Public Prosecution Office to protect the perpetrators of these crimes in Palestine, led by the USA and UK. AOHR UK deemed their stance ironic since these forces strongly support the investigations of the Public Prosecutor's Office in other countries, including Ukraine.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK)