

ICC Prosecutor Seeks Arrest Warrant for Israeli and Hamas Leaders, including Netanyahu

JERUSALEM (AP) – The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court said Monday he is seeking arrest warrants for Israeli and Hamas leaders, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in connection with their actions during the seven-month war between Israel and Hamas.

Karim Khan said that he believes Netanyahu, his defense minister Yoav Gallant and three Hamas leaders – Yehia Sinwar, Mohammed Deif and Ismail Haniyeh – are responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip and Israel.

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The prosecutor must request the warrants from a pre-trial panel of three judges, who take on average two months to consider the evidence and determine if the proceedings can move forward.

Israel is not a member of the court, and even if the arrest warrants are issued, Netanyahu and Gallant do not face any immediate risk of prosecution. But Khan's announcement deepens Israel's isolation as it presses ahead with its war, and the threat of arrest could make it difficult for the Israeli leaders to travel abroad.

Both Sinwar and Deif are believed to be hiding in Gaza as Israel tries to hunt them down. But Haniyeh, the supreme leader of the Islamic militant group, is based in Qatar and frequently travels across the region.

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Benny Gantz, a former military chief and member of Israel's War Cabinet with Netanyahu and Gallant, harshly criticized Khan's announcement, saying Israel fights with "one of the strictest" moral codes and has a robust judiciary capable of investigating itself.

"The State of Israel is waging one of the just wars fought in modern history following a reprehensible massacre perpetrated by terrorist Hamas on the 7th of October," he said. "The prosecutor's position to apply for arrest warrants is in itself a crime of historic proportion to be remembered for generations."

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