Cour Pénale Internationale

International Criminal Court

Original: English

No.: ICC-01/18 Date: **06 August 2024**

PRE-TRIAL CHAMBER I

Before:

Judge Iulia Motoc , Presiding Judge

Judge Reine Alapini-Gansou

Judge Nicolas Guillou

SITUATION IN THE STATE OF PALESTINE

Public Document

Written observations of Chile and Mexico pursuant to Rule 103(1) of the Rules of Procedure and Evidence

Source:

Chile and Mexico

Document to be notified in accordance with regulation 31 of the Regulations of the Court to:

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for Israel, B'nai B'rith UK, the International Legal Forum, the Jerusalem Initiative and the Simon Wiesenthal Centre: International Commission of Jurists (ICJ); The Palestinian Association for Human Rights (Witness); Guernica 37 Chambers; the Federative Republic of Brazil: ALMA - Association for the Promotion of International Humanitarian Law; Ireland; Avocats pour la Justice au Proche-Orient (AJPO); Federal Republic of Germany; Dr Shahd Hammouri; Al-Haq Law in the Service of Mankind (Al-Haq), Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights (Al-Mezan) and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR); République Démocratique du Congo; Arpit Batra; South Africa, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Comoros, and Djibouti.

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I. Introduction

- 1. On 12 July 2024, the Republic of Chile ("Chile") and United Mexican States ("Mexico") requested leave to submit written observations pursuant to Rule 103(1) of the Rules of Procedure and Evidence, on issues of jurisdiction, the relevance of the principle of complementarity, and the proper interpretation of the Oslo Accords. As countries that jointly referred the Situation in the State of Palestine to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (the "Court"), Chile and Mexico are interested in ensuring that the jurisdiction of the Court is properly determined. By Order dated 22 July 2024, Pre-Trial Chamber I authorized Chile and Mexico to provide their written observations.
- Mexico and Chile contend that the territorial jurisdiction already asserted by the Court in the Situation of the State of Palestine covers all individuals who committed crimes in the territory of that State, independently of their nationality, and independently of the Oslo Accords.
- 3. In accordance with Article 12 of the Rome Statute, for a crime to fall within the jurisdiction of the Court, it must meet one of the two alternative requirements: either jurisdiction *ratione loci* or *ratione personae*.¹ A plain reading of Article 12(a) of the Statute indicates that, when a case is referred to the Prosecutor under Article 13(a), the Court may exercise its jurisdiction if the relevant conduct occurred within the territory of at least one State Party to the Statute.
- 4. The Court has already concluded that the State of Palestine ("Palestine") is a State Party to the Statute, which falls within the hypothesis of Article 12(a), and thus, the Court's territorial jurisdiction in the Situation in Palestine extends to the territories occupied by the State of Israel ("Israel") since 1967, namely Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.² As will be argued below, this jurisdiction complements the domestic jurisdiction that States may have.
- 5. In the case at hand, Mexico and Chile contend that the Oslo Accords do not prevent the Court from exercising jurisdiction, as the Court has territorial jurisdiction over any core crimes committed in the territory of Palestine; and that any considerations on complementarity regarding domestic exercises of jurisdiction (by either Palestine or Israel) may raise issues of admissibility but do not deprive the Court from jurisdiction.

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¹ Pre-Trial Chamber II, Situation in the Republic of Kenya, "Decision Pursuant to Article 15 of the Rome Statute on the Authorization of an Investigation into the Situation in the Republic of Kenya", ICC-01/09-Corr, 31 March 2010, para. 39

² Pre-Trial Chamber I, *Situation in the State of Palestine*, "Decision on the 'Prosecution request pursuant to article 19(3) for a ruling on the Court's territorial jurisdiction in Palestine'", ICC-01/18-143, 5 February 2021, p. 60.

6. Thus, this submission addresses three points. First, the jurisdiction of the Court cannot be limited by any international agreement, including the Oslo Accords. Second, in any case, the Oslo Accords cannot be interpreted as contravening peremptory norms of international law. Third, the relevance of the principle of complementarity in the present situation.

II. The jurisdiction of the Court cannot be limited by any international agreement, including the Oslo Accords

- 7. On its request for leave to submit written observations, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ("UK") raised the question of whether Palestine could delegate criminal jurisdiction over Israeli nationals to the Court, considering its obligations under the Oslo Accords.³ Although the UK has finally decided not to submit written observations, similar arguments were presented in the past by different actors, who argued that Palestine could not delegate to the Court a jurisdiction that itself lacked, pursuant to the principle nemo dat quod non habet.
- 8. Chile and Mexico regret that this debate has delayed the decision on the Prosecutor's application for arrest warrants in the Situation in Palestine, and submit that this question was already resolved by the Court by its 5 February 2021 decision. Indeed, Pre-Trial Chamber I was very clear in stating that "[b]y becoming a State Party, Palestine has agreed to subject itself to the terms of the Statute and, as such, all the provisions therein shall be applied to it in the same manner than to any other State Party". 4 That should be the end of the debate.
- 9. For instance, in the Situation in the People's Republic of Bangladesh/Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Court found that to exercise its jurisdiction, it was sufficient that at least one element of a crime occurred on the territory of a State Party to the Statute. Although this decision was rendered before the opening of an investigation, it shows that the principle of territoriality is enough to support the Court's jurisdiction.⁵

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³ Pre-Trial Chamber I, Situation in the State of Palestine, "Request by the United Kingdom for Leave to Submit Written Observations Pursuant to Rule 103", ICC-01/18-171, 10 June 2024, para. 18.

⁴ Pre-Trial Chamber I, supra note 2, para. 102 (emphasis added).

⁵ Pre-Trial Chamber I, Situation in the People's Republic of Bangladesh/Republic of the Union of Myanmar, "Decision on the 'Prosecution's Request for a Ruling on Jurisdiction under Article 19(3) of the Statute'", ICC-RoC46(3)-01/18, 06 September 2018, para. 72.

- 10. Accordingly, Chile and Mexico support the Court's previous finding in this Situation and submit that the Oslo Accords cannot limit the Court's jurisdiction. Three arguments support this conclusion.
- 11. First, contrary to the UK's assertion, the Court's jurisdiction is not based on a delegation by State Parties. Article 12 of the Rome Statute clearly establishes that State parties "accept"—not "delegate"—the jurisdiction of the Court, and that such jurisdiction may be exercised both with respect to crimes committed in the territory of a State Party and by nationals of a State Party. As noted by Stahn, "the ability of the ICC to exercise jurisdiction is grounded in the competence of the state to adhere to treaties, rather than delegation of equivalent jurisdictional titles by the state". Similarly, Sadat explains that the jurisdiction of the Court "is not derived from or transferred by each individual state's national jurisdiction but is, rather, a function of their collective action at the international level, representing, in other words, a form of 'collective conferral'".
- 12. States may be subject to different limitations in the exercise of their criminal jurisdiction. For instance, the rules of immunity may prevent a State from exercising jurisdiction over certain individuals. Similarly, a State may have enacted rules establishing amnesties or statutes of limitations for these crimes, or may even face practical impediments to the exercise of such jurisdiction, including a lack of legislation or the inability to exercise jurisdiction over a portion of its territory that is not under its physical control.
- 13. Crucially, however, those limitations and exclusions are not transferred to the Court. Quite the contrary, sometimes States accept the jurisdiction of international courts, "precisely because they need and want those courts and tribunals to do things that they cannot do in their national systems". In this sense, international criminal tribunals aim to complement the gaps in domestic jurisdictions. That is why even scholars who defend the delegation-based theory still recognize that such delegation "is reflective of an internationally recognized legal authority, and

⁶ Carsten Stahn, "Response: The ICC, Pre-Existing Jurisdictional Treaty Regimes, and the Limits of the Nemo Dat Quod Non Habet Doctrine—A Reply to Michael Newton" 49:2 Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law (2016), p. 449. See also Adil Ahmad Haque, "The International Criminal Court's Jurisdiction in Palestine and the 'Oslo Accords Issue'", Just Security (9 July 2024) https://www.justsecurity.org/97584/israel-palestine-icc-oslo-accords/, accessed 29 July 2024.

⁷ Leila Nadya Sadat, "The conferred jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court", 99:2 Notre Dame Law Review (2023), pp. 557-558. See also Claus Kreß, "Article 98: Cooperation with Respect to Waiver of Immunity and Consent to Surrender" in Kai Ambos (Ed), Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (4th edition, 2021), p. 2648 ("the ICC has not been established to exercise delegated national jurisdiction but to exercise the *ius puniendi* of the international community with respect to crimes under CIL").

⁸ Leila Nadya Sadat, *supra* note 7, p. 553.

⁹ Carsten Stahn, supra note 6, p. 448.

- not of the material ability of actually exercising jurisdiction over either the territory in question or over certain individuals within or outside that territory".¹⁰
- 14. Second, the submission that the Oslo Accords may not limit the exercise of jurisdiction by the Court is further confirmed by the fact that the Rome Statute does not allow for reservations. An interpretation of the Oslo Accords that would allow Palestine to accept the jurisdiction of the Court with respect to crimes committed by Palestinian nationals, but not with respect to crimes committed by nationals of third-States (including Israel) in the territory of Palestine, would be equivalent to a reservation to Article 12 of the Rome Statute, which is inadmissible.
- 15. Notably, such an interpretation would also be detrimental to the Court's mission to ensure accountability for international crimes, acting in complementarity with national jurisdictions. Indeed, if States could reach agreements with other States to limit the exercise of jurisdiction, and those limitations could be enforced before the Court, States would have a legal avenue to guarantee impunity. That conclusion cannot be accepted.
- 16. Third, even assuming, *arguendo*, that the Oslo Accords impose a limitation on the exercise of jurisdiction by Palestine, and that such impacts on the Court's jurisdiction, Chile and Mexico submit that this still does not impede the Court from exercising jurisdiction over Israeli nationals for crimes committed in the territory of a State Party. In this regard, Chile and Mexico follow the views of the Court's former Prosecutor who explained that, at best, the Oslo Accords limit the exercise of enforcement jurisdiction by Palestine, but have no bearing on its prescriptive jurisdiction. Once again, this is a view shared even by scholars that support the delegation-based theory, which have nevertheless noted that the Oslo Accords did not limit Palestine's prescriptive jurisdiction, and that accordingly, Palestine could delegate this jurisdiction to the Court. Thus, if Palestine is indeed under an obligation not to exercise enforcement jurisdiction with respect to Israeli nationals under the Oslo Accords, this might become an issue of cooperation or complementarity, but would not affect the Court's jurisdiction.

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¹⁰ Yuval Shany, "In Defence of Functional Interpretation of Article 12(3) of the Rome Statute: A Response to Yaël Ronen", 8:2 *Journal of International Criminal Justice* (2010), p. 339 (emphasis added).

¹¹ Pre-Trial Chamber I, Situation in the State of Palestine, "Prosecution request pursuant to article 19(3) for a ruling on the Court's territorial jurisdiction in Palestine", ICC-01/18-12, 22 January 2020, para. 184. See also Carsten Stahn, supra note 6, p. 450.

¹² Kai Ambos, "Palestine, UN Non-Member Observer Status and ICC Jurisdiction", *EJIL Talk!* (6 May 2014) https://www.ejiltalk.org/palestine-un-non-member-observer-status-and-icc-jurisdiction/, accessed 29 July 2024.

¹³ Pre-Trial Chamber I, supra note 11, para. 185.

III. The Oslo Accords cannot be interpreted as contravening peremptory norms of international law

- 17. In addition, the Oslo Accords need to be interpreted in accordance with peremptory norms of international law (*jus cogens*). It has been widely accepted that, because peremptory norms of general international law reflect and protect fundamental values of the international community, they are universally applicable and are hierarchically superior to other rules of international law.¹⁴
- 18. As a consequence of this hierarchy, "where it appears that there may be a conflict between a peremptory norm of general international law (*jus cogens*) and another rule of international law, the latter is, as far as possible, to be interpreted and applied so as to be consistent with the former". Otherwise, the conflicting rule would be deemed void, and its provision will have no legal effect. 16
- 19. In fact, pursuant Article 31(3)(c) of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, and because of their special character, an "interpreter cannot ignore a peremptory norm." As suggested by Judge Simma, "the provisions of any treaty have to be interpreted and applied in the light of the treaty law applicable between the parties as well as of the rules of general international law 'surrounding' the treaty. If these general rules of international law are of a peremptory nature (...) then the principle of interpretation just mentioned turns into a legally insurmountable limit to permissible treaty interpretation." ¹⁸
- 20. In this regard, considering that in its most recent Advisory Opinion, the International Court of Justice ("ICJ") has recognized that the right to self-determination in cases of foreign occupation, constitutes a peremptory norm of international law; and that Article XIX of the Oslo Accords directly mandates the parties to "exercise their powers and responsibilities pursuant to [the Accords] with due regard to internationally-accepted norms and principles of human rights

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¹⁴ Report of the International Law Commission of its Seventy-third session (2022), UN document A/77/10, Conclusion 2 of the Draft conclusions on identification and legal consequences of peremptory norms of general international law (jus cogens), p. 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, Conclusion 20 of the Draft conclusions on identification and legal consequences of peremptory norms of general international law (jus cogens), p. 79.

¹⁶ United Nations, *Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties*, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1155, p. 331, 23 May 1969, Article 53. See also *Ibid.*, Conclusions 10 to 16 of the Draft conclusions on identification and legal consequences of peremptory norms of general international law (jus cogens), pp. 48-64.

¹⁷ Sâ Benjamin Traoré, "Peremptory Norms and Interpretation in International Law" in Dire Tladi (Ed.) *Peremptory Norms of General International Law (Jus Cogens)*" (2021), p. 152.

¹⁸ Separate Opinion of Judge Simma in *Oil Platforms (Islamic Republic of Iran v. United States of America), ICJ Reports* 2003, p. 161, at pp. 172-173, para. 9.

¹⁹ Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024, p. 66, para. 233.

- and the rule of law", 20 which includes the right to self-determination, 21 the Oslo Accords need to be interpreted in accordance with the right of self-determination.
- 21. The right of self-determination of peoples has a broad scope of application,²² and includes the Palestinian's right to an independent and sovereign State, over the entirety of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.²³ Such a sovereign right necessarily entails Palestine's right to accept, at the international level, the jurisdiction of the Court over crimes committed in its entire territory in the terms of Article 12(2) of the Rome Statute, even if its enforcement jurisdiction has been renounced at the domestic level.
- 22. Pre-Trial Chamber I, in its 5 February 2021 Decision on jurisdiction, reached a similar conclusion when it noted that the exercise of the Court's territorial jurisdiction in the Situation in Palestine over the territories occupied by Israel since 1967 on the basis of Palestine's accession to the Statute "is consistent with the right to self-determination." In consequence, the Oslo Accords cannot be interpreted as a limitation of the Court's jurisdiction contrary to the Palestine's right of self-determination.
- 23. This means that, regardless of any jurisdictional agreement within the Oslo Accords, at the international level, Palestine retained at all times its power to accept the Court's jurisdiction over any crime within its competence occurring in the territory of Palestine, resulting from its right to self-determination.
- 24. Additionally, the interpretation of the Oslo Accords should also consider States obligations under international humanitarian law.
- 25. Notably, under Article 47 of the Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War ("IV Geneva Convention"), no agreement between the Occupying Power and the authorities of the occupied territories may deprive protected persons of the benefits of the Convention. This includes the obligations under Article 146 of the IV Geneva Convention to enact legislation which establishes effective penal sanctions for persons committing grave breaches, the search of persons alleged to have committed those crimes, and to bring them "regardless of their nationality", before its own courts. Accordingly, the Oslo Accords cannot be read as excluding Palestine's obligations under the IV Geneva

²⁰ Ibid, para. 102.

²¹ *Ibid*, para. 102.

²² Ibid, para. 234.

²³ *Ibid*, para. 237.

²⁴ Pre-Trial Chamber I, supra note 2, para. 123.

Convention, including its obligations to exercise jurisdiction over war crimes. This further confirms that the Court may also exercise jurisdiction over those offences.

IV. The relevance of the principle of complementarity

- 26. Lastly, Mexico and Chile note the Court's previous finding that "States have the primary responsibility to exercise criminal jurisdiction and the Court does not replace, but complements them in that respect. Article 17 (1) (a) to (c) sets out how to resolve a conflict of jurisdictions between the Court on the one hand and a national jurisdiction on the other". ²⁵ The Court has also noted that "[o]nce the jurisdiction of the Court is triggered, it is for the latter and not for any national judicial authorities to interpret and apply the provisions governing the complementarity regime and to make a binding determination on the admissibility of a given case". ²⁶
- 27. As it has been explained, Mexico and Chile submit that the Oslo Accords do not affect the jurisdiction of the Court. In any case, if the Court considered that Palestine is subject to restrictions on the exercise of its domestic jurisdiction pursuant to these bilateral agreements (e.g restriction of its enforcement jurisdiction), this underscores the importance of analyzing the principle of complementarity in the present case.
- 28. Since both Palestine and Israel have domestic jurisdiction over the crimes investigated under the Situation in the State of Palestine on different grounds, the principle of complementarity, as enshrined in Article 17 of the Rome Statute must be analyzed regarding both States. The Court's role is to assess whether States which have jurisdiction are genuinely able and willing to prosecute international crimes falling within their jurisdiction, ensuring that justice is served and impunity is prevented through cooperative efforts.
- 29. Indeed, Article 17 of the Rome Statute requires the Court to: (a) determine whether there are or have been relevant proceedings at domestic level with respect to the same case or potential cases; and, only if the answer is positive (b) whether those domestic proceedings have been or are vitiated by unwillingness or inability on

²⁵ Appeals Chamber, *The Prosecutor v. William Samoei Ruto and Joshua Arap Sang*, "Judgment on the appeal of the Republic of Kenya against the decision of Pre-Trial Chamber II of 30 May 2011 entitled 'Decision on the Application by the Government of Kenya Challenging the Admissibility of the Case Pursuant to Article 19(2)(b) of the Statute'", ICC-01/09-01/11-307, 30 August 2011, para. 37.

²⁶ Pre-Trial Chamber II, *The Prosecutor v. Joseph Icony, Vincent Otti, Okot Odhiambo, Dominic Ongwen,* "Decision on the admissibility of the case under article 19(1) of the Statute", ICC-02/04-01/05, 10 March 2009, para. 45.

the part of the State to carry them out genuinely.²⁷ In case of inaction, the second question does not arise, since inaction on the part of a State having jurisdiction renders a case admissible before the Court.²⁸

- 30. For Mexico and Chile, the complementarity test must be examined considering the information provided by States which aim to challenge the admissibility of a case before the Court —which has not taken place so far—, and duly considering the aim to end impunity for the commission of international crimes.
- 31. Since Article 17 focuses on the State that has jurisdiction over the case under review, both the territorial jurisdiction of the State of Palestine and the personal jurisdiction of the State of Israel (for crimes committed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory); as well as the personal jurisdiction of the State of Palestine and the territorial jurisdiction of the State of Israel (for crimes committed in the State of Israel), must be considered for the complementarity test.
- 32. On the one hand, Palestine's jurisdiction is not an impediment for the Court's exercise of jurisdiction. This, since although States have a duty to exercise their criminal jurisdiction over international crimes, the complementarity principle strikes a balance between safeguarding the primacy of domestic proceedings *visàvis* the role of the Court, and the goal of the Rome Statute to put an end to impunity. In this sense, the sovereign decision of a State to relinquish its jurisdiction in favor of the Court may well be seen as complying with the duty to exercise its criminal jurisdiction. 30
- 33. Additionally, although the final decision of admissibility should be taken at a later stage, at first glance, it seems clear that the judicial system of Palestine appears unable to handle prosecutions, as a consequence of the current situation, particularly the bombings and the occupation by the State of Israel. This is further confirmed by the fact that Palestine itself referred the situation in 2018, pursuant to Articles 13 (a) and 14 of the Rome Statute.³¹
- 34. On the other hand, and regarding the principle of complementarity concerning the jurisdiction that Israel may exercise over its nationals or over crimes committed on its territory, there is no information that the State of Israel has started any

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²⁷ Appeals Chamber, *The Prosecutor v. Germain Katanga*, "Judgment on the Appeal of Mr. Germain Katanga against the Oral Decision of Trial Chamber II of 12 June 2009 on the Admissibility of the Case", ICC-01/04-01/07-1497, 25 September 2009, para. 78. *See also* The Office of the Prosecutor, *Policy on Complementarity and Cooperation*, April 2024, para. 147.

²⁸ Appeals Chamber, supra note 27, para. 78.

²⁹ *Ibid*, para. 85.

³⁰ *Ibid*, para. 85.

³¹ The State of Palestine, *Situation in the State of Palestine*, "Referral by the State of Palestine Pursuant to Articles 13(a) and 14 of the Rome Statute", 15 May 2018.

prosecution for the possible commission of international crimes by Israeli nationals, including with respect to those for whom the Prosecutor has requested arrest warrants.

35. In sum, since the Court's jurisdiction over Israeli nationals is unaffected by the Oslo Accords, Mexico and Chile submit that the issue is not one of jurisdiction but of complementarity. Consequently, given the circumstances described above, the Court can clearly exercise its complementary jurisdiction over Israeli nationals for crimes committed within Palestinian territory.

V. Conclusion

36. For all the preceding reasons, Chile and Mexico respectfully submit that the Oslo Accords do not represent a bar to the exercise of the Court's jurisdiction in relation to Israeli nationals, and that the Court's jurisdiction should be exercised in compliance with the principle of complementarity with respect to Palestine and Israel. Therefore, Chile and Mexico call for Pre-Trial Chamber I to promptly decide on the Prosecutor's request for arrest warrants in the Situation in Palestine.

Respectfully submitted,

Jaime Moscoso Valenzuela

Ambassador of the Republic of Chile to the Kingdom of the Netherlands on

behalf of the Republic of Chile

Carmen Moreno Toscano

Ambassador of Mexico to the

Kingdom of the Netherlands on behalf

of the United Mexican States

Dated this 06 August 2024

At The Hague, The Netherlands