

Using National Courts and International Police and Judicial Cooperation Mechanisms as a Complementary Path to the Work of the International Criminal Court

Turkish Judiciary's Request for an INTERPOL Red Notice Against Benjamin Netanyahu:

An Important Step Toward Internationalizing Accountability and Pursuing Suspects of International Crimes

21 August 2026

The decision of the **Istanbul 11th High Criminal Court**, issued on **14 July 2026**, to take the necessary steps to request an **INTERPOL Red Notice** against Israeli Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu**, in connection with the **Global Sumud Flotilla case**, represents an important legal development that moves the case beyond the national judicial sphere and seeks to activate one of the principal mechanisms of international police cooperation.

The Turkish court is examining the case in the context of serious allegations which, according to Turkish reports, include **crimes against humanity, genocide, torture, intentional injury, deprivation of liberty, and the unlawful seizure or detention of means of transportation**, among other alleged offences.

Turkish media reports indicated that the decision concerning the Red Notice was taken as part of efforts to secure Netanyahu's appearance before the court.

However, the legal significance of this development requires a clear distinction between **the Turkish judiciary's decision to request a Red Notice** and **the actual issuance of such a notice by INTERPOL**.

I. What Does the Turkish Court's Decision Mean?

The decision of the Istanbul 11th High Criminal Court means that the Turkish judiciary has sought to move the case beyond domestic judicial proceedings by utilizing **international police and judicial cooperation mechanisms to locate the wanted person and seek to secure his appearance before the court**.

This is particularly important when the wanted individual is located outside the territory of the state conducting the proceedings, since enforcing a national arrest warrant beyond national borders requires mechanisms of international judicial and police cooperation.

However, the Turkish decision **does not automatically mean that INTERPOL has issued a Red Notice against Netanyahu.**

INTERPOL defines a Red Notice as a request to law-enforcement authorities worldwide to **locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender, or similar legal action.** A Red Notice is based on an arrest warrant or judicial order issued by the competent authorities of the requesting country.

Importantly, INTERPOL emphasizes that:

A Red Notice is not an international arrest warrant.

INTERPOL itself does not order the arrest of an individual. Each member country determines, in accordance with its own domestic law, the legal value it gives to a Red Notice and whether the person concerned may be arrested.

II. The Critical Stage: Review by the NDTF

When an INTERPOL member country submits a request for a Red Notice, the request is **not automatically circulated.**

Instead, it undergoes specialized review by the:

Notices and Diffusions Task Force (NDTF)
INTERPOL's specialized team responsible for reviewing notices and diffusions.

INTERPOL established the NDTF in **2016** to strengthen the legal review of requests for notices and diffusions.

The team consists of **lawyers, police officers, operational specialists, and experts with diverse professional and linguistic backgrounds.** It conducts a legal and professional review of requests before they can be approved through INTERPOL's General Secretariat.

In Netanyahu's case, this means that there are **two distinct stages:**

Stage One: The Turkish judicial decision to request a Red Notice — which took place on **14 July 2026.**

Stage Two: INTERPOL's review of the request, particularly through the NDTF, followed by a determination as to whether the request complies with INTERPOL's rules and can be approved.

As of **21 August 2026**, there is no publicly available official confirmation from INTERPOL indicating that it has approved the Turkish request and actually issued a Red Notice against Netanyahu.

III. What Does INTERPOL Examine?

The review process is not merely procedural or formal.

According to INTERPOL, the NDTF assesses whether a request complies with the **INTERPOL Constitution, the Rules on the Processing of Data, relevant General Assembly resolutions, and the organization's practices concerning Articles 2 and 3 of its Constitution.**

Among other matters, the team examines:

- the identity of the person concerned;
- the relevant judicial information;
- the nature of the alleged offences;
- the purpose of the request;
- compliance with procedural and legal requirements; and
- the broader context of the case.

The NDTF may also use information provided by INTERPOL member countries, INTERPOL databases, and **external and open sources** as part of its assessment.

This is particularly important in Netanyahu's case because the file would therefore be subject to an **international legal compliance review separate from the decision of the national court itself.**

IV. Article 3 Will Be One of the Key Legal Tests

Article 3 of the INTERPOL Constitution prohibits the organization from undertaking any intervention or activities of a **political, military, religious, or racial character.**

Article 2(1), meanwhile, requires INTERPOL to operate in the spirit of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights.**

Accordingly, when considering a Turkish request, INTERPOL would need to assess its compatibility with these provisions.

However, the fact that a case arises in a broader political or military context does not necessarily, in itself, automatically exclude it from INTERPOL's mechanisms. INTERPOL itself refers to practices and decisions concerning the interpretation and application of Articles 2 and 3 in relation to various categories of offences, including **crimes against humanity**.

The central question would therefore concern the **legal characterization of the alleged conduct and offences and whether the request satisfies INTERPOL's applicable rules**, rather than merely the identity or political position of the individual concerned.

V. Why Is the Turkish Decision Important?

The significance of the Turkish step lies in its attempt to transform the principle of **combating impunity** from a political or moral position into concrete judicial procedures.

In practical terms, the decision reflects the principle that holding a senior political position should not, in itself, prevent a court from examining allegations of individual criminal responsibility and taking measures available to it under the law.

The importance of this step is further heightened by the **transnational nature of international crimes** and the need for cooperation among states in investigation, prosecution, arrest, and extradition proceedings where the applicable legal requirements are met.

VI. Significance of the Turkish Step for Palestine

In relation to Palestine, the Turkish step carries significance that extends beyond the individual case concerning Netanyahu.

One of the greatest challenges facing international justice in relation to alleged violations committed against Palestinians has been the **gap between documenting crimes and achieving effective enforcement and accountability**.

Human rights reports, commissions of inquiry, and even judicial proceedings may have limited impact if they are not accompanied by effective enforcement and international cooperation mechanisms.

In this context, **the use of national courts and international police and judicial cooperation mechanisms can constitute a complementary pathway to the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and other accountability mechanisms**, subject to the applicable rules governing jurisdiction, fair-trial guarantees, and immunities where legally applicable.

National and international mechanisms therefore need not operate as competing systems. When used lawfully, they may form different components of a broader international accountability architecture.

VII. An Advanced Turkish Position Worthy of Human Rights Recognition

From the perspective of supporting accountability and combating impunity, the Turkish judiciary's decision to utilize available legal mechanisms rather than limiting the response to political statements can be viewed as a significant development.

The Turkish position merits recognition insofar as it seeks to translate declared commitments to the protection of civilians and accountability for alleged international crimes into **judicial and procedural mechanisms capable of being tested through international institutions**.

Recognition should focus particularly on the legal step itself and on the principle that serious allegations should be subjected to **independent judicial scrutiny**, while simultaneously emphasizing the necessity of respecting all fair-trial guarantees and relevant rules of international law.

International justice derives its credibility from being based on **law, evidence, due process, and sound judicial procedures — not on the identity, nationality, or political status of the accused**.

VIII. What Would Happen if INTERPOL Approved the Request?

If the Turkish request successfully passes the NDTF review and is approved through INTERPOL's General Secretariat, the issuance of a Red Notice could alert law-enforcement authorities in INTERPOL member countries that the person concerned is internationally wanted on the basis of the underlying Turkish judicial order.

This would **not**, however, mean that Netanyahu would automatically be arrested in every country he visits.

INTERPOL explicitly states that it **cannot compel the law-enforcement authorities of any member country to arrest an individual who is the subject of a Red Notice**.

Each country determines, under its own national laws and international obligations, what legal effect it gives to a Red Notice and whether arrest, extradition, surrender, or another legal measure is available.

Nevertheless, if a Red Notice were ultimately approved, this would represent a significant legal and political development, as the Turkish judicial order would move from being a purely national measure toward an **international police cooperation mechanism operating through INTERPOL's network**.

IX. What Is Required from a Human Rights Perspective?

From a human rights perspective, the case should undergo a **full, independent, impartial, and legally rigorous review**, applying the same standards and rules governing other requests submitted to INTERPOL.

This is precisely where the importance of the NDTF system lies: it separates the **decision of the requesting state** from the **independent assessment by the international organization as to whether its mechanisms may lawfully be used in the particular case**.

INTERPOL further explains that incoming Red Notice requests do not become searchable within its information systems for member countries until they have undergone the required compliance review and approval.

X. Key Human Rights Recommendations

In light of the above, the following steps are important:

1. **The Turkish authorities should complete all necessary legal procedures** for the Red Notice request and ensure that it is supported by the relevant judicial orders, documentation, and evidence.
2. **INTERPOL should examine the request independently and impartially**, in accordance with its Constitution, rules, and established legal procedures.
3. The submitted case file should clearly establish the **nature of the alleged crimes, the factual and evidentiary basis, the judicial foundation of the request, and the relevant jurisdictional grounds**.
4. States should respect their legal obligations concerning **the fight against impunity and judicial cooperation in relation to international crimes**, while acting consistently with their domestic laws and international obligations.
5. Cooperation between **national judicial systems and international criminal justice mechanisms** should be strengthened in cases involving alleged international crimes committed against Palestinians.

6. The independence of **judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and institutions working on accountability cases** should be protected from political pressure, threats, intimidation, and punitive measures.
7. Human rights organizations should closely monitor and document every stage of the process:

Turkish judicial decision → Turkish referral and governmental procedures → NDTF review → INTERPOL decision → responses of INTERPOL member states.

Conclusion

The decision of the **Istanbul 11th High Criminal Court on 14 July 2026** represents an important judicial step toward activating international cooperation mechanisms in relation to serious alleged violations connected to Palestine and solidarity flotillas seeking to reach Gaza.

Its significance extends beyond the individual case. It highlights the potential role of **national jurisdictions, international police cooperation, and international criminal justice mechanisms as mutually reinforcing avenues in the broader struggle against impunity.**

At the same time, legal precision remains essential: a decision by a Turkish court to seek an INTERPOL Red Notice **is not equivalent to the issuance of a Red Notice by INTERPOL itself.** The latter remains subject to INTERPOL's independent compliance review and applicable rules.

The Turkish judicial initiative nevertheless represents a noteworthy effort to move accountability from political declarations toward **concrete judicial and international cooperation procedures.**

Ultimately, the broader principle at stake is clear: allegations of the gravest international crimes should be addressed through **independent courts, credible evidence, due process, and effective international cooperation**, and accountability should not be rendered impossible merely because an accused person holds a senior political position.

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