Threats and intimidation stalling top ICC prosecutor's Israel case: Report

Report says Karim Khan 'privately threatened' by then-Foreign Secretary David Cameron with UK's withdrawal from International Criminal Court.

Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan appears in a courtroom at the International Criminal Court in The Hague [File: Peter Dejong/Pool/EPA]

New details have emerged about a series of intimidation campaigns, including threats to safety as well as possible sanctions, directed at the British chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) as he pursues an investigation into alleged war crimes committed by Israeli officials in Gaza.

Karim Khan has also been subjected to intense pressure from top British and United States public officials for The Hague court to withdraw the arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, the Middle East Eye (MEE) news website reported.

The latest report followed an earlier revelation by the London-based online publication in July that Khan and the ICC were threatened with being "destroyed" if they pursued the case against Israel.

According to the MEE report published on Friday, Khan was "privately threatened" by then-British Foreign Secretary David Cameron in April 2024 that the UK would defund and withdraw from the ICC if it issued warrants against the Israeli leaders, which it did so in November.

In May 2024, US Republican Senator Lindsey Graham also "threatened" Khan with sanctions if he applied for the warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant, the MEE reported.

Since then, the administration of US President Donald Trump has imposed sanctions on Khan and four ICC judges.

Khan also received a security briefing warning him that Israel's Mossad intelligence agency "was active in The Hague and posed a potential threat" to him, the MEE reported.

Khan, who is currently on indefinite leave amid allegations of sexual misconduct, was also reportedly told by his female accuser in text messages that there were "games being played" and attempts to make her a "pawn in some game I don't want to play", according to the MEE.

The ICC investigations into Khan's alleged behaviour were later closed after the female witness refused to cooperate with them, but a separate United Nations probe remains.

Khan has strenuously denied all the allegations against him.

Two weeks before he was forced to go on leave in May 2025, Khan also reportedly met with Nicholas Kaufman, a British-Israeli defence lawyer at the ICC, to discuss the Israel investigation, the MEE report said.

In a note of the meeting on file at the ICC, Kaufman reportedly told Khan that if the warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant were not dropped, "they will destroy you, and they will destroy the court."

The report said some ICC lawyers have privately "expressed doubts" about the allegations against Khan, which emerged after the arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant were issued.

The ICC issued arrest warrants against Netanyahu, Gallant and Hamas leader Mohammed Deif on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity over the Hamas-led October 7, 2023, attacks on Israel and Israel's subsequent war in Gaza. Deif has since been confirmed killed in an Israeli attack.

The Israeli defendants remain internationally wanted suspects, and ICC member states are under a legal obligation to arrest them.

Israel's war on Gaza has killed at least 60,430 Palestinians and wounded 148,722.

In recent months, Israel has been accused of committing new war crimes after reports that Israeli forces intentionally shot and killed hundreds of unarmed Palestinian civilians waiting to collect humanitarian aid from GHF food distribution points.