

EU Foreign Policy Chief Supports East Jerusalem as Palestinian Capital



Brussels, January 23 (RHC)-- The European Union has assured President Mahmoud Abbas that the 28-nation bloc supports Palestinians' bid to have East Jerusalem as capital of their future state. During a meeting with Abbas at the EU headquarters in Brussels on Monday, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini rejected U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

"I want to reassure President Abbas of the firm commitment of the European Union to the two-state solution with Jerusalem as the shared capital of the two states," media outlets quoted Mogherini as saying. Mogherini, in reference to Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, also called on those involved in the process to speak and act "wisely," with a sense of responsibility.

Abbas' presence at the EU headquarters in Brussels was seized on by European officials and foreign ministers as a chance to restate opposition to Trump's decision to move the U.S. embassy to the occupied Holy City.

Meanwhile, Deputy German Foreign Minister Michael Roth said that Trump's decision had made talks between Palestinians and Israelis harder. And French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian also said that

Paris wanted to push the European Union to offer closer trade ties through a so-called EU association agreement, an EU treaty covering unfettered access to the bloc's 500 million consumers, aid and closer political and cultural ties. "We want to say to Mahmoud Abbas that we want to move towards an association agreement and to start the process already."

But offering an EU association agreement to the Palestinians was also fraught with difficulties, diplomats said. The Palestinian president, for his part, urged EU governments to recognize a state of Palestine immediately. "We are keen on continuing the way of negotiations," Abbas said, adding: "We are determined to reunite our people and our land."

Last week, Abbas said that Trump's so-called Middle East peace efforts are the "slap of the century" after his recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. On December 6, 2017, Trump announced that Washington would recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and would relocate the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to the occupied city.

At least nine EU governments, including Sweden and Poland, already recognize Palestine. Slovenia has also recently raised the possibility of recognizing the state of Palestine. A parliamentary committee there is due to consider the issue on January 31.

EU governments also reject Israeli settlements on land Israel has occupied since a 1967 war -- including the West Bank, East al-Quds and the Golan Heights.

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