

White House to close Palestine Liberation Organization's Washington office



Washington, September 11 (RHC)-- The Donald Trump administration has announced that the U.S. will shutter the Palestine Liberation Organization's Washington office, part of a pressure campaign to supposedly bring the Palestinians to the negotiating table for Middle East peace talks as envisaged by President Donald Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner.

In a speech to the conservative Federalist Society, White House national security adviser John Bolton announced the PLO office closure as well as threatened the International Criminal Court with economic sanctions and various other punitive measures if it moves forward with investigations of U.S. military and intelligence workers who served in Afghanistan.

"We have permitted the PLO office to conduct operations that support the objective of achieving a lasting, comprehensive peace between Israelis and the Palestinians since the expiration of a previous waiver in November 2017. However, the PLO has not taken steps to advance the start of direct and meaningful negotiations with Israel," State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said in a statement.

The Trump administration has also grown increasingly frustrated with the ICC since May, when Palestine urged the court to probe Israel's "past, ongoing and future crimes within the court's jurisdiction, committed in all parts of the territory of the State of Palestine."

Palestinian officials on Monday quickly rebuked the Trump administration. “We reiterate that the rights of the Palestinian people are not for sale, that we will not succumb to U.S. threats and bullying and that we will continue our legitimate struggle for freedom, justice, and independence, including by all political and legal means possible,” a top Palestinian official, Saeb Erekat, said in a statement.

The administration’s rebuke of the ICC aligns with Bolton’s longstanding aversion to international institutions he views as getting in the way of U.S. domination. In addition to the sanctions, the White House also intends to punish nations that cooperate with the ICC if the court takes action against the U.S. or its allies.

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