

# *Israel uses COVID-19 as cover to grab more land*

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Ramallah, April 12 (RHC)-- Palestinians believe Israel is taking advantage of the disease caused by the coronavirus pandemic to grab more of their lands and to escalate aggression against the Palestinian people.

In Ramallah, the Anti-Settlement Commission of the Palestinian Authority said on Saturday that Tel Aviv is using the situation to expand its settlement activities in the occupied territories.

In a separate statement on Saturday, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) warned against a recently-leaked understanding between the United States and Israel over Tel Aviv's plans for further annexation of Palestinian lands, and for the purpose of building illegal colonial settlements on the occupied Palestinian territories.

The statement, issued by PLO's Department for the Defense of Lands, said that the Israeli regime is exploiting the world's engagement in fight against coronavirus by considering some annexation plans that would confiscate more Palestinian-owned lands for illegal settlement purposes.

The comments came a few days after the Arab League warned Israel was exploiting the international community's preoccupation with the viral outbreak to push ahead with its settlement expansion in the occupied territories.

Speaking in a telephone conversation with PLO Secretary General Saeb Erekat earlier this week, Arab League chief Ahmed Aboul Gheit said the Israeli violations include killing, arresting and displacing civilians, annexing new settlements and attacking Palestinian holy sites.

Aboul Gheit warned Israel against implementing its annexation plans for the occupied Palestinian territories, whether in the Jordan Valley, the northern West Bank or elsewhere.

The Tel Aviv regime has stepped up its settlement construction activities in defiance of UN Security Council Resolution 2334, which has declared settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem al-Quds “a flagrant violation under international law.”

Aboul Gheit wrote to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), calling on the humanitarian organization to help secure the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli detention centers amid rising cases of infection with the new coronavirus in the occupied territories.

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