

Pompeo in Israel to talk annexation as Palestinian rage inceases



Tel Aviv, May 13 (RHC)-- The U.S. secretary of state is in the Israeli-occupied territories to discuss Tel Aviv's plan to annex Palestinian land under a controversial plan by U.S. President Donald Trump, among other topics.

Mike Pompeo arrived in Israel on Wednesday on his first foreign trip since Washington began enforcing a lockdown against the new coronavirus outbreak. Shortly after arrival, he held a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is scheduled to be sworn into office again on Thursday.

The top U.S. diplomat is also set to sit down for talks with opposition leader Benny Gantz. Pompeo had earlier outlined the talking points of the meetings in remarks to Israel Hayom daily. "This meeting is important enough to hold face to face," he said.

In a statement alongside Pompeo, Netanyahu claimed the new Israeli administration presents an opportunity "to promote peace and security based on the understandings I reached with President Trump in my last visit in Washington." In turn, Pompeo voiced support for Israel's atrocities in the occupied Palestinian territories, saying the regime had the "right to defend" itself.

In January, Trump outlined the main points of a self-styled plan for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Palestinians have already rejected what Trump has called the “deal of the century.” The scheme proposed Israel’s annexation of the Jordan Valley and about 30 percent of the Palestinian territory of the West Bank, including the settlements that the regime has set up there since occupying the land in 1967. More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built in the West Bank since the occupation.

Tel Aviv has set July 1 as the earliest date on which Netanyahu could hold a vote on the annexation. “We will discuss the best way to implement the vision for peace that the prime minister agreed to,” Pompeo said in the interview, referring to Trump’s scheme. Pompeo, meanwhile, claimed: “We created a plan that gives a better life to the Palestinian people.”

The plan features several other hugely controversial high points, including endorsement of Trump’s outrageous recognition in December 2017 of occupied Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel’s “capital.”

Palestinians — who have historically demanded that the city’s eastern part serve as the capital of their future state — stopped recognizing any intermediary role by Washington after the 2017 announcement.

The Palestinian Authority (PA), which has its headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah, has invited various Palestinian factions, including the Hamas and Islamic Jihad resistance movements that are based in the Gaza Strip to discuss Tel Aviv’s annexation ambitions.

A senior PA official told The Jerusalem Post that the decision to invite the Gaza-based groups and others to the Saturday meeting served as “a warning message” to Israel and the Trump administration.

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