

# *PLO asks Europe to show decisive action against Israeli settlement expansion activities*

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Ramallah, August 4 (RHC)-- The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has called on Europe to take practical measures to prevent the Israeli regime from advancing its plans to build hundreds of new illegal settler units in the strategically sensitive E1 region of the occupied West Bank.

"We welcome the letter of protest signed by the European Union Representative and 15 European ambassadors [a few days ago] against Israel's plans to commence construction in the illegal settlement of Givat Hamatos and possibly the E1 Area on the outskirts of occupied al-Quds," said Hanan Ashrawi, member of the PLO's Executive Committee.

"Nevertheless, we believe that the European Union and the envoys should adopt practical measures that would deter Israel from treading the path of illegality, impunity, and land expropriation. Rhetorical opposition has not stopped Israel. In fact, Israel is adamant to press ahead with its criminal actions because it is confident that verbal opposition will not change into practical actions," she added.

The senior PLO official further highlighted that the Israeli plan would "completely separate occupied al-Quds from its natural Palestinian surroundings, and split the occupied West Bank in half. They (Israeli

officials) would complete the Greater Jerusalem colonial project with the theft of strategic Palestinian land and in light of absence of any firm action to establish a Palestinian state.”

“While the international community is concerned with the possibility of [West Bank] annexation, Israel is implementing the scheme on the ground without any obstruction. This includes the choking siege and silent ethnic cleansing of Silwan, al-Issawiya and Wadi al-Joz [neighborhoods in al-Quds] through home demolitions, systematic acts of violence, and megaprojects that will displace thousands of Palestinians,” Ashrawi pointed out.

She urged European states “not to allow Israel to carry out this ruse. The principle of accountability is undermined ... as long as Israel is given carte blanche to continue its gross violations of Palestinian rights and international law.”

Critics say construction in the E1 area would effectively complete a crescent of Israeli settlements around East Jerusalem al-Quds dividing it from the rest of the West Bank and its Palestinian population centers. It would also nearly bisect the West Bank jeopardizing the prospects of a contiguous Palestinian state. Palestinians describe the E1 plan as an effort to Judaize Jerusalem al-Quds.

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