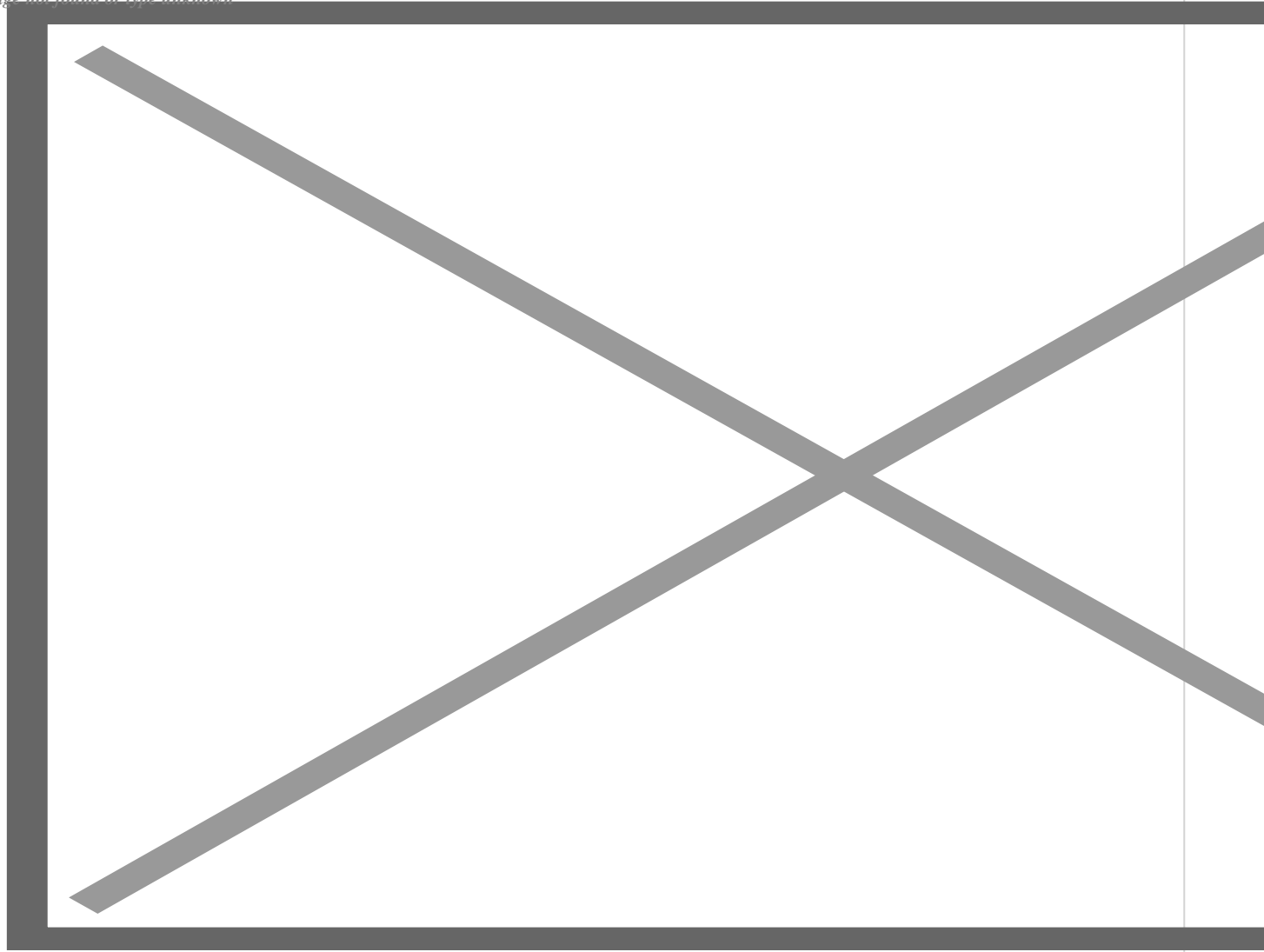


Israel approves building road to seize more Palestinian land

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Digital plan for the Hawara bypass route (upper road) in the northern parts of the occupied West Bank. (Photo: Yesha Council)

Tel Aviv, December 28 (RHC)-- Israel has approved the building of a settlement ring road in the northern parts of the occupied West Bank that will lead to the appropriation of large swaths of agricultural lands of Palestinians.

Israeli minister of transportation Miri Regev approved 76 million shekels for the so-called Lubban Bypass, which passes in the vicinity of the Lubban village in Salfit district, the Palestinian Information Center reported, citing an Israeli news website.

It said the project would occupy thousands of dunums of Palestinian agricultural land, adding the ring road is the latest in a series of similar roads approved in various other areas in the occupied West Bank. A similar road, known as the Hawara bypass, would also expropriate thousands of dunums of Palestinian agricultural land, and work would begin in it soon to the southern parts of Nablus, it further said. A third such road - the al-Aroub bypass - bypasses the al-Aroub refugee camp in al-Khalil (Hebron).

The Hebrew news website, as cited by the Palestinian Information Center, added that the new project came in light of Regev's plan to further expand the Israeli occupation of the West Bank through a large network of roads connecting West Bank settlements with transportation lines inside the 1948 Occupied Palestine.

It added that one of the main goals of such projects – set by the Yesha (Settlements) Council in the West Bank last year - is to bring a million Israeli settlers to new settlements in the West Bank within a decade and a half.

Earlier, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz revealed in an investigative report that Tel Aviv intended to carry out the annexation plan through the implementation of expansionary settlement projects in various parts of the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem al-Quds.

Haaretz further said that the current road projects aimed to connect settlements to major Israeli cities and to limit the development of Palestinian cities.

Back in June, Reuters reported that Tel Aviv was busy constructing a major new ring road for Jerusalem al-Quds that would create yet another obstacle to Palestinian hopes of making the eastern sector of the city the capital of their future state.

It added that the bypass, called The American Road, would connect those Jewish settlements in the West Bank situated north and south of the city, at a projected cost of \$187 million.

In the Six-Day War in 1967, the Israeli regime captured and annexed East Jerusalem al-Quds, in a move that has never won international recognition, along with the West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip.

The Israeli settlements in the West Bank have mushroomed during the regime's successive administrations since the aftermath of the 1967 War. Currently, more than 400,000 Israelis live in settler units there, with another 200,000 in East Jerusalem al-Quds. Palestinians say these increasing settlements make a future state unviable.

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