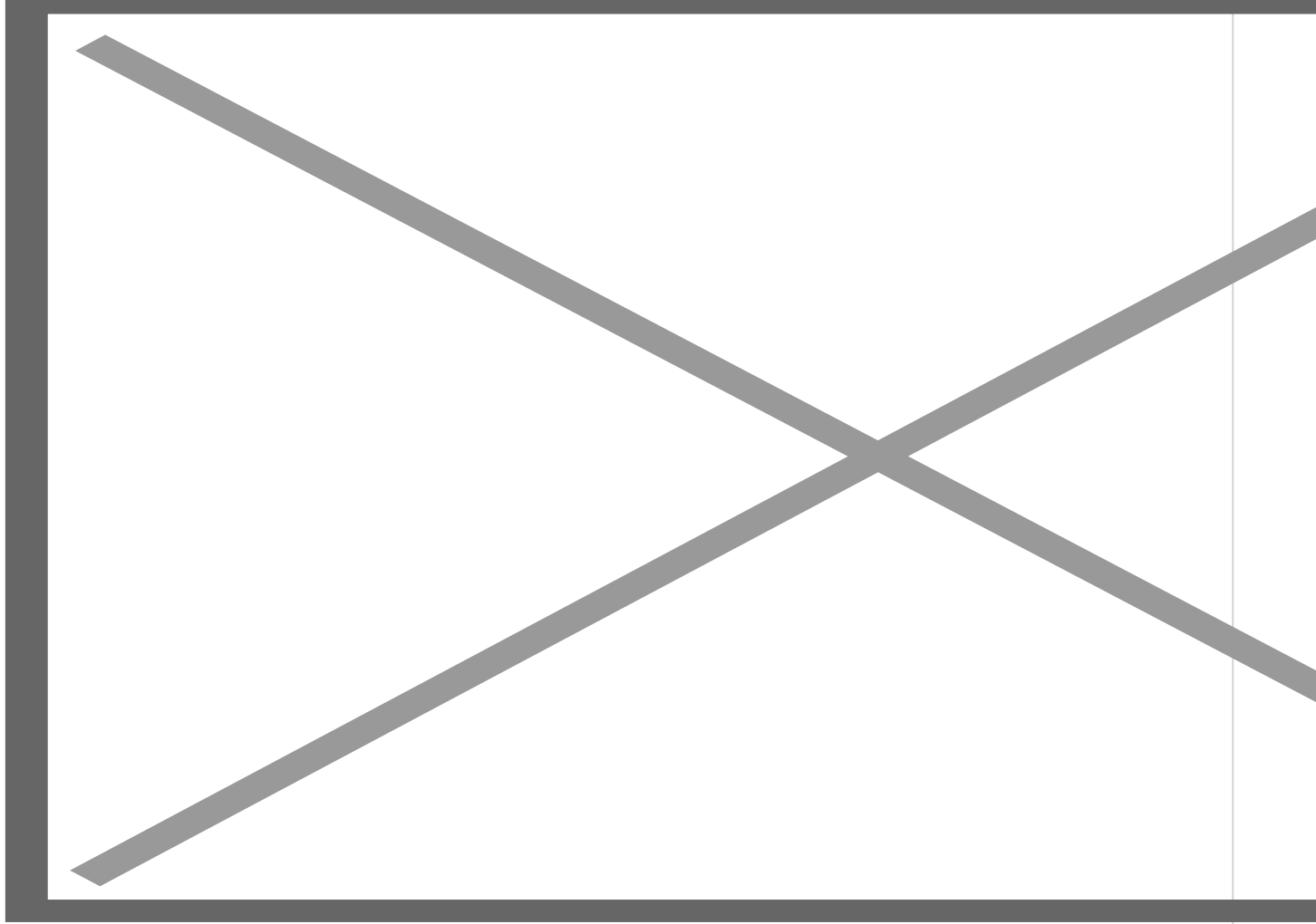


Israel starts construction of new illegal settler units in northern Jordan Valley

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This file photo shows the illegal settlement units built by the Israeli regime in the occupied Palestinian territories

Ramallah, April 20 (RHC)-- Israeli authorities have begun the construction of new settler units in the Jordan Valley, despite strong international condemnation of the Tel Aviv regime's land grab policies in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Qassem Awad, director general of Documentation and Publishing at the Colonization and Wall Resistance Commission, told Palestine's official Wafa news agency on Monday that a number of companies have started the construction of 23 new illegal settler units in the Maskyot settlement in the northern Jordan Valley.

Awad added that the Tel Aviv regime had approved the regional council's request to build these units on October 24, 2020, highlighting the fact that the move falls within Israel's support for settlement expansion activities.

The development comes as the Israeli regime is pushing plans for further illegal annexation of Palestinian territories, which have been met with far-and-wide regional and international objection.

In the fertile Jordan Valley, which makes up some 30 percent of the occupied West Bank, Palestinian residents outnumber Israeli settlers to a great extent. However, the Tel Aviv regime considers the region crucial to its security and has determined to annex it.

Since 1967, when Israel occupied the West Bank, it has sent thousands of settlers to the Jordan Valley. Some of the settlements in which they live were built almost entirely on private Palestinian land.

Back in March 2019, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) said in a report that Israel had occupied more than 85 percent or 27,000 square kilometers of historical territories of Palestine in an expropriation process.

According to the report, Palestinians now live on and own only 15 percent of their ancestral land. The Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley regularly face evacuations due to Israeli military exercises in the region. Much of the Jordan Valley is fully controlled by the Israeli military.

The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas has already warned that Tel Aviv's escalation of its demolition campaigns in the Jordan Valley is aimed at removing the true residents of the region in an attempt to replace them with Israeli settlers.

Israeli authorities usually demolish Palestinian homes in the occupied West Bank, claiming that the structures have been built without permits, which are nearly impossible to obtain. They also sometimes order Palestinian owners to demolish their own homes or pay the demolition costs to the municipality if they do not.

More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 illegal settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East Jerusalem al-Quds. Emboldened by former U.S. President Donald Trump's all-out support, Israel has stepped up its settlement construction activities in recent years.

All Israeli settlements are illegal under international law. The UN Security Council has condemned Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions.

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