

UN urges Israel to immediately halt settlement expansion



United Nations, June 26 (RHC)-- The United Nations has accused Israel of flagrantly violating international law by expanding settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, urging the country's new government to halt their expansion immediately.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and UN Mideast envoy Tor Wennesland reported on the implementation of a 2016 Security Council resolution that declared settlements have "no legal validity." The global body demanded a halt to the settlement expansion, which jeopardises the possibility of a future Palestinian state.

Wennesland said in a briefing to the council on Guterres' 12-page report that he was "deeply troubled" by Israel's approval of a plan to add 540 housing units to the Har Homa settlement in East Jerusalem as well as the establishment of settlement outposts. He said that is "illegal also under Israeli law."

“I again underscore, in no uncertain terms, that Israeli settlements constitute a flagrant violation of United Nations resolutions and international law,” the UN envoy said. “They are a major obstacle to the achievement of a two-state solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.” “The advancement of all settlement activity must cease immediately,” Wennesland said.

Settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories are regarded as illegal under international law and by much of the international community. Between 600,000 and 750,000 Israeli settlers live in more than 250 illegal settlements (130 official, 120 unofficial) in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Both Guterres and Wennesland also called on Israeli authorities to end the demolition of Palestinian homes and other property and the displacement of Palestinians – another flashpoint – “and to approve plans that would enable these communities to build legally and address their development needs”.

The Israeli plan to forcefully displace Palestinians from the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods in occupied East Jerusalem last month sparked protests across Palestinian territories, as well as inside Israel by its Palestinian citizens.

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