

15 European countries slam Israeli plans to build over 4,000 new settler units in West Bank

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A view of the Israeli settlement of Har Homa in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. (Photo: Reuters)

Brussels, May 15 (RHC)-- Fifteen European countries have expressed concern over the Israeli regime's plans for construction of nearly 4,500 new illegal settler units in the occupied West Bank.

The move is in clear violation of international law and stands in the way of a just and lasting solution to the decades-long Palestinian-Israeli conflict, said the foreign ministries of France, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, and Sweden.

"The new housing units would constitute an additional obstacle to the [so-called] two-state solution. Israeli settlements are in clear violation of international law and stand in the way of a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace" to the crisis, they stated in a joint statement issued in Brussels.

This plan, as well as demolitions and evictions affecting the Palestinian populations in East al-Quds and Area C, directly threaten the viability of a future Palestinian state, the statement read. They urged Israeli authorities not to proceed with any planned demolitions or evictions, especially in Masafer Yatta region.

Peace Now, an Israeli anti-settlement organization, said on Thursday that the high planning committee of the so-called Israeli Civil Administration had given the final approval to a total of 4,427 units, including 2,791 housing units and initial endorsement for another 1,636 units.

"This is bad news for Israel and deepens the occupation, making it harder to achieve [the so-called] future peace," Hagit Ofra of Peace Now said, referring to the prospect of a so-called two-state solution that has so far been hindered due to Israel's expansionist policy, among other atrocities against Palestinians.

"The approval of these construction plans in the settlements is a slap in the face, not only to the prospect of [the so-called] peace, but also to the possibility of some future Palestinian economic development."

Ofra also said it was "disappointing" that the current Israeli administration was following the similar hostile policies of former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu against Palestinians.

Meanwhile, dozens of Israeli settlers took over a Palestinian building in the southern West Bank city of al-Khalil, situated 30 kilometers (19 miles) south of al-Quds, on Friday, while flanked by Israeli soldiers.

Issa Amro, director of the Youth Against Settlements activist group, tweeted a video of the scene which showed extremist settlers carrying their belongings, including mattresses and suitcases, as they stormed the three-storey building.

The official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that the building belonged to local Palestinian resident Walid al-Ja'abri, and it was undergoing renovations at the time that the Israeli settlers stormed in. Local sources also said that Israeli soldiers surrounded the building to prevent Palestinian residents from approaching the settlers.

Between 600,000 and 750,000 Israelis occupy over 250 illegal settlements built since the 1967 occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East al-Quds.

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