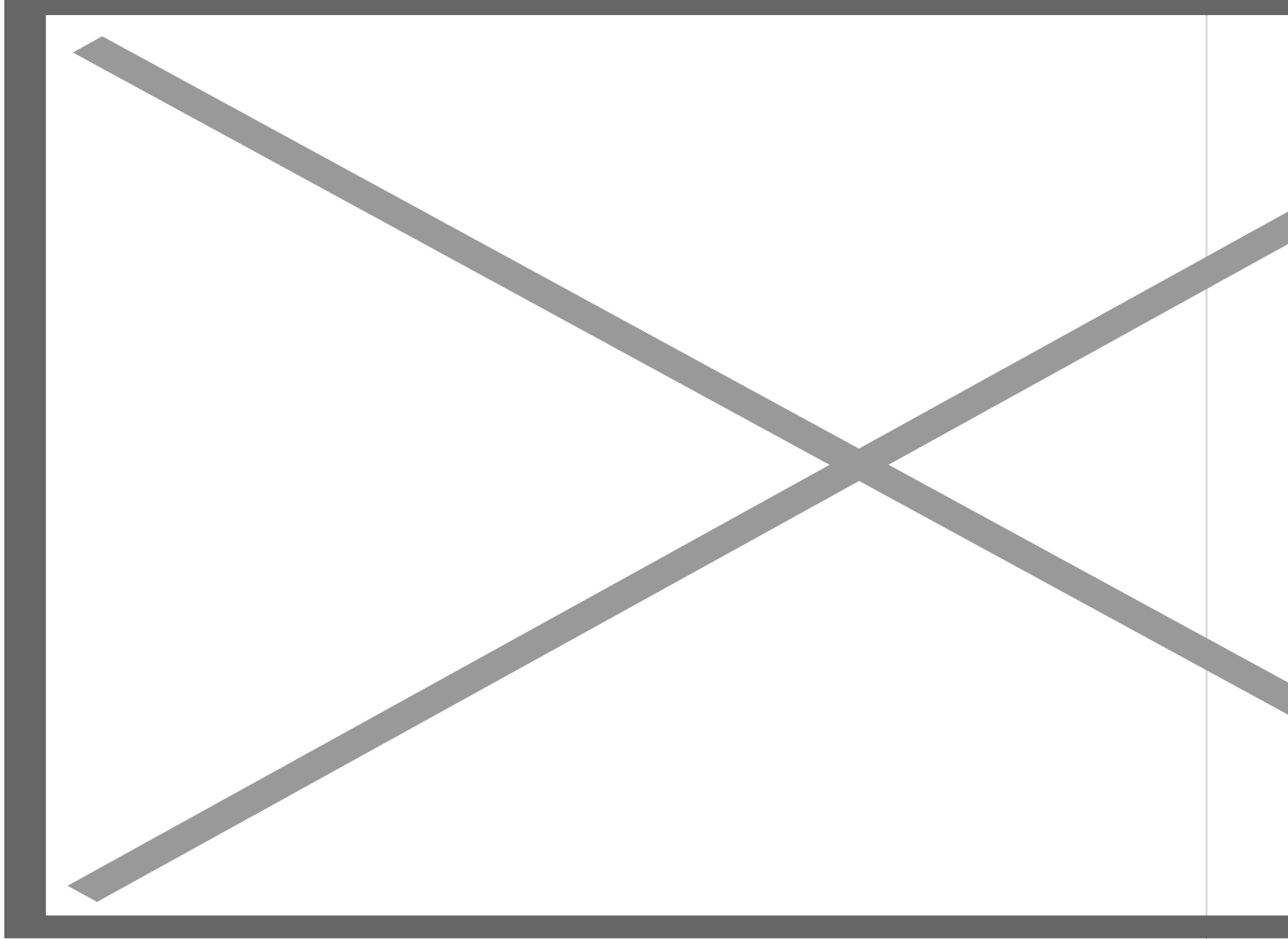


Palestinians condemn Knesset bill allowing settlers to return to evacuated illegal settlements

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Jihad Taha, spokesman for the Gaza Strip-based Palestinian resistance movement of Hamas

Gaza City, March 23 (RHC)-- Palestinian officials have condemned the Knesset (the Israeli parliament)'s lending its approval to a bill that allows the Israeli regime's settlers to return to evacuated settlements north of the Tel Aviv-occupied West Bank.

On Tuesday, the Israeli legislature pushed through with the second and third readings of the bill "that repeals the clauses of the Disengagement Law that ban settlers from living in the region where the four settlements were established," the Palestinian Information Center news agency reported.

The Gaza Strip-based Palestinian resistance movement of Hamas condemned the move, with spokesman Jihad Taha saying the decision was "part of the Israeli settlement expansion and Judaization plans," the report added.

Taha stressed that such plans "will be met with more resistance," it noted. The Hamas official urged the international community to assume responsibility and stop the Israeli "racist crimes."

Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for the Palestinian Authority's President Mahmoud Abbas, similarly denounced the move by the Israeli parliament. The measure, Rudeineh said, marked "a violation of the resolutions of international legitimacy, particularly UN Security Council resolution 2334, which considers all settlements in all the Palestinian lands to be illegal," the official Palestinian Wafa news agency reported.

More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East al-Quds. Palestinians want the West Bank to serve as part of a future independent state with East al-Quds as its capital.

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