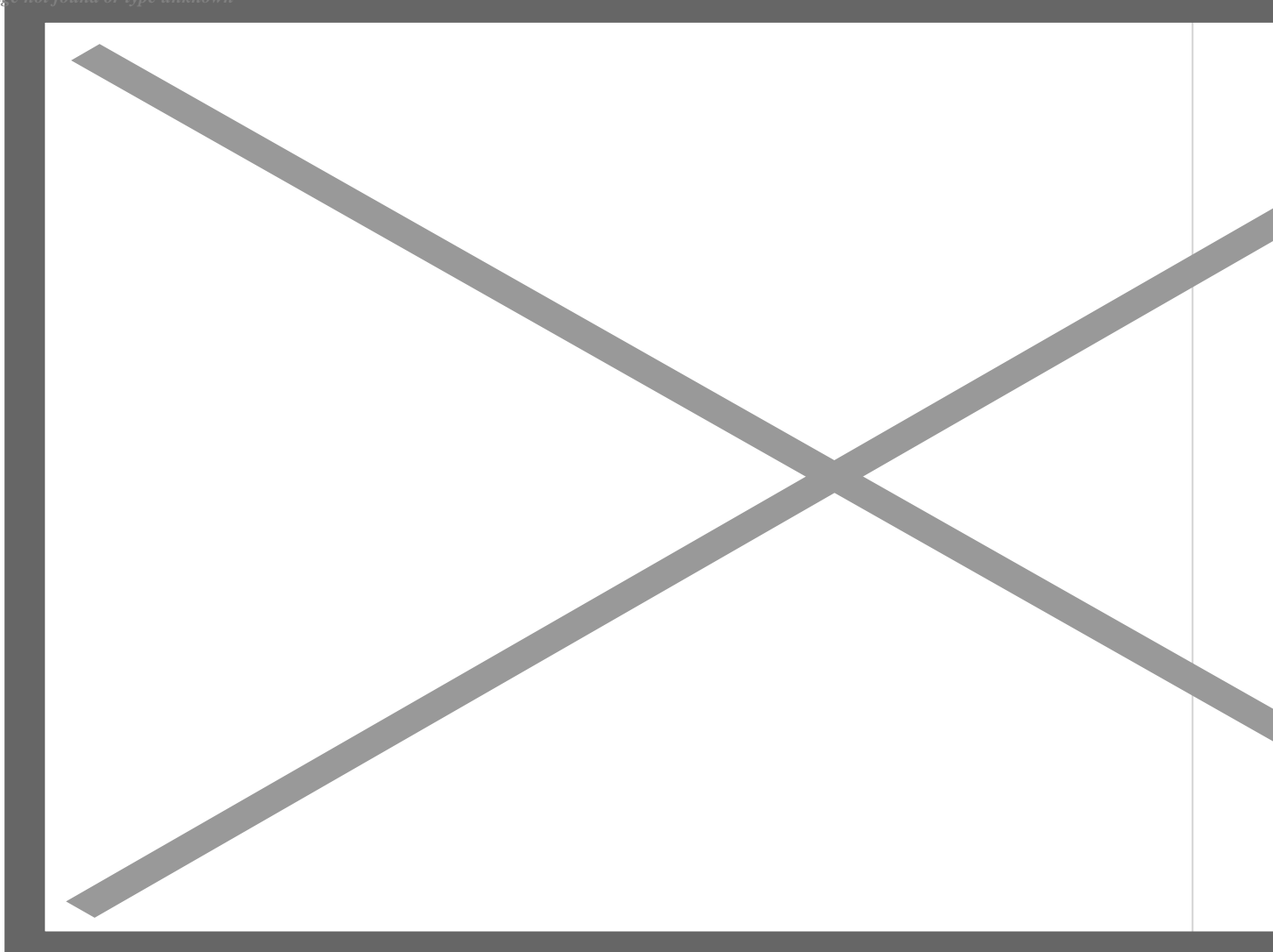


Norway closes its Palestine office after Israel revokes status of diplomats

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Oslo, August 17 (RHC)-- Norway has announced the closure of its Representative Office in al-Ram, Palestine, after Israel's "extreme" decision to revoke the diplomatic status of several Norwegian diplomats.

Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide said it was an "extreme and unreasonable" decision made by the regime. "This decision seeks to target the Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority and all those who defend international law, the two-state solution and the Palestinians' legitimate right to self-determination."

The minister vowed that his country will continue to support the Palestinian people "with full force." "We will do our utmost to ensure that this does not affect our work for Palestine and for a viable Palestinian state. Our commitment will continue with full force."

He noted that the Israeli decision obviously "has consequences for our work in Palestine." "It affects our locally employed staff. Many of them have worked at the representative office for several years. It also affects our diplomats and their families. We are now fully focused on how to safeguard our employees and our work in the best possible way," Eide said.

Earlier this month, Israel revoked the diplomatic status of eight Norwegian diplomats who had been working in Norway's representative office to the Palestinian Authority.

Ties between Oslo and Tel Aviv has been deteriorating since Norway recognized the state of Palestine in May. More than two-thirds of the United Nations, approximately 140 countries, already recognize a Palestinian state.

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