

Israel advances plan to build more than 1,000 illegal settler units in West Bank



Israel advances plan to build more than 1,000 settler units in West Bank. Illegal Israeli settlements are seen from Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank. (File photo by AFP)

Tel Aviv, February 18 (RHC)-- Israeli authorities have issued a tender to build hundreds of new settler units in the West Bank, irrespective of the international outcry against the Tel Aviv regime's land grab policies in the occupied Palestinian territories.

According to the Israeli anti-settlement group Peace Now, the tender is for constructing 974 additional housing units in the Efrat settlement south of Bethlehem. It warned that the construction of an entire neighborhood in the Efrat settlement expands the settlement by 644 dunams, and will increase the number of illegal settlers there by approximately 40 percent.

The Israeli rights group said the new Israeli neighborhood blocks the development of an envisaged Bethlehem metropolis to the south, and if Israel seeks to annex the area, it will cut off the entire southern West Bank.

While the residents of the occupied territories set their sights on the release of captives and an end to the Gaza war, the Netanyahu cabinet is operating 'on steroids' to establish facts on the ground that will destroy the chance for peace and compromise, Peace Now said.

Nineteen Israeli captives and five Thai workers have been released in exchange for 1,135 Palestinian prisoners under a Gaza ceasefire agreement that took effect on January 19th.

More than 700,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East al-Quds. The international community views the settlements as illegal under international law and the Geneva Conventions due to their construction on occupied territories.

The UN Security Council has condemned Israel's settlement activities in several resolutions.

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