

# *Bernie Sanders Calls for End to Israeli Occupation*

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Washington, June 5 (RHC)-- U.S. Senator and former Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders has called on Israel to end its years-long occupation of Palestine and start treating Palestinians better.

"We are now in the 50th year of Israel's occupation, an occupation which denies basic Palestinian rights while failing to deliver Israel real security," Sanders said in a video message to Israel's left-wing Meretz party.

"I know so many of you agree with me when I say: this occupation must end. Peace - real peace - means security not only for every Israeli, but for every Palestinian. It means supporting self-determination, civil rights and economic well-being for both peoples."

Meretz released the message on Sunday before screening it at a conference later in the day, which marks 50 years of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories since 1967. Uri Zaki, chairman of the Meretz central committee, praised Sanders for stating the truth about occupation and said the party also holds the same view.

"The truth is that the occupation represents the greatest existential and material threat to" Israel, Zaki noted, adding that the occupation "represents inequality and racism."

Sanders took the opportunity to attack U.S. President Donald Trump, who has voiced strong support for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu while turning a blind eye to the Tel Aviv regime's undermining of the so-called peace process.

Netanyahu has been widely criticized for having seriously dimmed the prospect of a peace deal by, among other things, caving in to the demands of the far-right extremists that surround him.

The expansion of settlement construction in occupied Palestinian territories under Netanyahu has created a major obstacle for the efforts to establish peace in the Middle East.

Bernie Sanders warned that "demagogues who are scapegoating minorities" were on the rise, citing Trump and his visa ban against citizens of several Muslim countries as an example. The Jewish Vermont senator, who was defeated by former U.S. secretary of state Hillary Clinton in last year's race for Democratic presidential nomination, calls himself a "strong defender of Israel" and remains an opponent of the worldwide Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions anti-Israeli movement.

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