

Arab League foreign ministers criticize U.S. position on Israeli settlements



Cairo, November 26 (RHC)-- The foreign ministers of the Arab League have rejected a decision by the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump that reversed Washington's four-decade-old position on Israeli settlements in the occupied territories.

A statement issued after an emergency meeting at the Cairo headquarters of the Arab League said that the policy shift was "an extremely adverse development." The top Arab diplomats said the decision "has no legal effect and is a clear violation of UN resolutions."

The statement contained "condemnation and rejection of the U.S. decision." On November 18, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the United States no longer considered the settlements in the occupied West Bank and Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem al-Quds illegal.

Pompeo claimed that after legal consultation Washington had concluded the establishment of settlements was "not, per se, inconsistent with international law." That policy shift came nearly two years after Donald Trump overturned decades of US policy by recognizing the holy city of Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel's "capital."

International organizations have censured the Trump administration over the controversial announcement. Last week, the European Union, Russia, China and other members of the UN Security Council strongly opposed the U.S. in its move to quit considering the settlements in the occupied West Bank as violating international law.

Nickolay Mladenov, the UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, opened the Security Council meeting, expressing “regret” at the US action. He reiterated the UN position that the settlements under a December 2016 resolution “are a flagrant violation under international law.”

Following the Security Council meeting, ambassadors from the 10 non-permanent members who serve two-year terms stood before reporters while Deputy German Ambassador Jurgen Shultz read a joint statement.

Palestinian officials lash out at the administration of President Donald Trump for breaking with decades of US policy on Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.

The policy shift has been widely interpreted as a green light for Israeli settlement building in the West Bank.

Israel occupied the West Bank as well as East Jerusalem al-Quds during the Six-Day War in 1967. It later annexed the Palestinian city in a move not recognized by the international community. Israel lays claim to the whole city, but the Palestinians view its eastern sector as the capital of their future sovereign state.

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