

# *Israel begins building largest settlement in East Jerusalem*

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Tel Aviv, November 28 (RHC)-- Israel has begun the expansion of the illegal Nof Tzion settlement in the Palestinian area of East Jerusalem's Jabal Mukkaber neighborhood, Haaretz reported Wednesday.

The ongoing enlargement is only the first phase, with another 300 apartments expected to be approved and built, the newspaper said. Nof Tzion is the second-largest Jewish settlement in the area and works for its extension are expected to transform it into the largest Israeli enclave, surpassing the Ma'ale Zeitim settlement with its 200 families.

Almost 100 settlers' families currently live in Nof Tzion, after residents started to move years ago in the housing facilities facing the Old City of Jerusalem.

Israel has built some 140 settlements in the Occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem since the 1967 six day war. These settlements are illegal under international law. The Jewish occupation of the Palestinian land started following years of a legal battle as Palestinian-U.S. entrepreneur Bashar al-Masri tried to purchase the land in order to prevent the construction of the settlement.

However, the land was eventually purchased by right-wing activists with the collaboration of Jewish-Australian businessman Kevin Bermeister, one of the founders of Skype. Israeli authorities approved the expansion in 2017.

“The expansion of the settlement into the neighborhood of Jabal Mukkaber is a symbol of the Israel government’s choice to prevent the possibility of an agreement in Jerusalem and to continue to impose its rule on the residents of East Jerusalem without equal rights and with increasing oppression,” said Aviv Tatarsky, a researcher with the NGO Ir Amim, in response to the construction.

“Jerusalem is a binational city and therefore it will be good for the Israelis here only if it is good for the Palestinians,” he added. Last week, the United States through Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Israel’s settlements in the occupied West Bank are not “inconsistent with international law,” leaving behind a 40-year-long position of policy regarding the sensitive issue and endorsing Israel’s illegal settlements at the expense of the peace process and the two states solution.

According to several United Nations Security Council resolutions, Israeli settlements are illegal under international law as they violate the Fourth Geneva Convention, which says an occupying power cannot move its civilian population into the territory it occupies.

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