

UN says Israel has advanced plans for 22,000 housing units in West Bank in three years



United Nations, December 20 (RHC)-- The United Nations says the Israeli regime has advanced or approved plans for more than 22,000 housing units in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem al-Quds in the course of just three years since the UN Security Council adopted a resolution slamming settlements on Palestinian lands.

UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov said Tel Aviv has further issued tenders for around 8,000 housing units since late 2016.

On December 23, 2016, the Security Council adopted its Resolution 2334, which concerns the Israeli settlements in "Palestinian territories occupied since 1967". It called on the occupying regime to "immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem." The resolution also declared that the Israeli settlements have "no legal validity."

The UN Mideast envoy further said the shocking number of the units "should be of serious concern to all those who continue to support the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian state alongside

Israel.” Mladenov also said the Tel Aviv regime had taken no steps to “cease all settlement activities” and its demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures also continued.

The UN official was reporting to the world body about implementation of the 2016 resolution, which was adopted by the council in the final weeks of the administration of former U.S. President Barak Obama.

The veto-wielding US at the time abstained rather than using its veto to support longtime ally Israel as it had done many times in the past.

However, the administration of incumbent President Donald Trump strongly opposes the resolution.

During the session, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Kelly Craft repeated Washington’s opposition to the resolution, saying: “Had I been the ambassador at the time of the vote on the resolution, I would have vetoed it.”

Additionally this week, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a report to the Security Council that the settlements have “no legal effect”, declaring that construction and approvals “must cease immediately and completely.” He said: “The existence and expansion of settlements fuel resentment and hopelessness among the Palestinian population and significantly heighten Israeli-Palestinian tensions.”

“In addition, they continue to undermine the prospects for ending the (Israeli) occupation and achieving the two-state solution by systematically eroding the possibility of establishing a contiguous and viable Palestinian state,” the UN chief added.

Last month, the White House announced that it no longer viewed Israel’s construction of new housing units in the occupied West Bank “inconsistent with” international law, a provocative stance, about which Guterres expressed his deep regrets.

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