

Arab League and Europeans condemn Israel's approvals for new settler homes

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Cairo, October 16 (RHC)-- Arab League and top European diplomats have denounced Israel's approval of thousands of new settler units across the occupied West Bank, less than a month after the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain signed agreements to normalize relations with the Tel Aviv regime, which in return pledged to freeze its plans to annex swathes of the occupied territory.

Secretary-General of the Arab League, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, censured Israeli officials over giving the green light for the construction of the structures after an eight-month lull in settlement expansion. He emphasized that the Israeli settlement expansion activities remain a formidable obstacle to implementing a so-called two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“Netanyahu administration’s insistence on pressing ahead with settlement expansion to satisfy the extreme right-wing reflects its rejection of a solution to the conflict, and even its commitment to eliminate any chances for achieving peace in the future,” Aboul Gheit said.

“The international community should assume its responsibilities regarding the Netanyahu administration's attempts to resume settlement activities, especially since there are indications that other settlement construction plans are being prepared to be announced soon,” the Arab League chief pointed out.

Aboul Gheit added he had discussed the matter with the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, during a recent meeting. Separately, Mladenov condemned on Thursday Israel's approval of thousands of new settlement housing units in the occupied West Bank.

“On October 14 and 15, Israeli authorities advanced nearly 5,000 housing units, most of which are in outlying locations deep inside the occupied West Bank. Settlement construction is illegal under international law and is one of the major obstacles to peace,” he said in a statement.

The high-ranking UN official then called on Israeli authorities to immediately cease all settlement-related activities.

Moreover, senior European diplomats on Friday condemned Israel's decision to approve thousands more settlement units in the occupied West Bank, calling it a “counterproductive” move that undermines regional peace efforts.

“The expansion of settlements violates international law and further imperils the viability of a [so-called] two-state solution to bring about a just and lasting peace to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” a joint statement from the foreign ministers of Germany, France, Britain, Italy and Spain read.

“As we have emphasized directly with Israel, this step furthermore undermines efforts to rebuild trust between the parties with a view to resuming dialogue,” the top diplomats said, demanding the immediate cessation of settlement construction activities in the Palestinian lands.

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