

Palestinian prime minister says Israel's settlement activity needs to be stopped

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Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh chairs a cabinet meeting in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah. (File photo by Wafa news agency)

Ramallah, April 21 (RHC)-- Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh says there needs to be an immediate halt to Israel's new settlement expansion scheme in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Over the past few months, Israeli authorities have endorsed plans for the construction of 12,000 settler units in various parts of the occupied West Bank, in addition to the legalization of some settlement outposts.

Speaking at the weekly cabinet meeting in Ramallah, the seat of the Palestinian Authority, Shtayyeh said the settlement expansion undermines the prospects for the establishment of a viable Palestinian state, the official Wafa news agency reported.

The settlement scheme violates UN Security Council Resolution 2334, the minister highlighted. The resolution says the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem al-Quds constitute "a flagrant violation under international law." The regime in Tel Aviv has increased settlement construction particularly since former US President Donald Trump took office in December 2016.

Shtayyeh also called for the protection of Palestinian worshippers at the al-Aqsa Mosque during the blessed fasting month of Ramadan. Israeli settlers frequently disrupt Muslim rituals there right under the eyes of the regime's military forces. Palestinian worshippers have limited access to the mosque due to restrictions put in place by Israeli authorities.

Since 1967, Israel has built over 230 settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East Jerusalem al-Quds.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Palestinian prime minister pointed to the long-awaited May 22 elections. Key Palestinian factions, including Fatah and Hamas, have reached an agreement for the voting to take place in the West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip.

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