

Arab League blasts Israel over plans to build 1,300 new illegal settler units

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File photo shows a view of the Israeli settlement of Efrat on the southern outskirts of Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank. (By AFP)

Cairo, October 27 (RHC)-- The Arab League has condemned in the strongest terms Israel's declaration that it will build more than 1,300 new settler units in the occupied West Bank.

In a statement released in Cairo, the 22-nation Arab bloc said the construction plan is part of the continuous and escalating Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people. The statement came a day after the Israeli Housing Ministry said that tenders had been published to build 1,355 new housing units in seven different West Bank settlements.

The ministry further noted that the new units would be added to over 2,000 units that reports said in August would be authorized for Israeli settlers in the West Bank.

The Arab League said the Tel Aviv regime's settlement construction activities are meant to Judaize the occupied Palestinian territories, including al-Quds, in order to end any hope or possibility for the so-called two-state solution, which "expresses the choice and will of the international community and embodies the resolutions of international legitimacy."

All Israeli settlements established in the occupied Palestinian territories are illegal under international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, especially Security Council Resolution 2334 approved on December 23, 2016, it added.

The pan-Arab bloc also urged the international community and concerned countries to assume their legal and moral responsibilities and denounce the Israeli crime of constructing new Israeli settlements with all the threats it poses to peace and stability.

"The [Israeli] occupation authorities' continued impunity from accountability under the provisions of international law encourages them to move forward with their crimes and continue to defy the will and decisions of the international community," it said, underlining the need to exert pressure on Israel to stop its settlement schemes and implement UN resolutions.

The Arab League further called for international protection to the Palestinian people, land, and holy sites with the aim of ending the occupation and enabling the nation to exercise its right to self-determination and independence as the only path to achieve security, stability, and the desired peace in the region.

Also on Monday, Egypt's Foreign Ministry said it was following with great concern the Israeli regime's new settlement announcement. The plan, it said, harms the geographical contiguity of the Palestinian lands, leading to the gradual elimination of the so-called two-state solution and the future of the Palestinian state.

It also reiterated the illegitimacy of Israeli settlements and demanded a halt to any unilateral actions that would harm the establishment of the Palestinian state. Similarly, the European Union and France criticized Israel's settlement expansion policies.

Most of the international community considers Israeli settlement construction illegal under international law and an obstacle to the so-called two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 illegal settlements built since the 1967 occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East al-Quds. The UN Security Council has in several resolutions condemned the Tel Aviv regime's settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian lands.

Israel has been consistently slammed as an "apartheid regime" across the globe by human rights groups and activists, officials, and United Nations investigators over its aggressive measures against Palestinians in the occupied territories, including its settlement activities.

In an interview published on Monday, the director of Crisis Advocacy at Human Rights Watch underlined that the Israeli apartheid regime's discriminations against Palestinians, including in the East al-Quds neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, sparked the conflict between Israel and Palestinian resistance groups in Gaza in May.

“As we focus on the bloodshed from Israeli bombing in Gaza, and [Palestinian resistance group] Hamas’s rocket attacks into Israel, we should not forget the Israeli government’s discriminatory oppressive rule in the occupied territory that sparked the conflict, such as in Sheikh Jarrah,” Akshaya Kumar told Fars news agency. “The word to describe that is apartheid,” Kumar stressed.

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