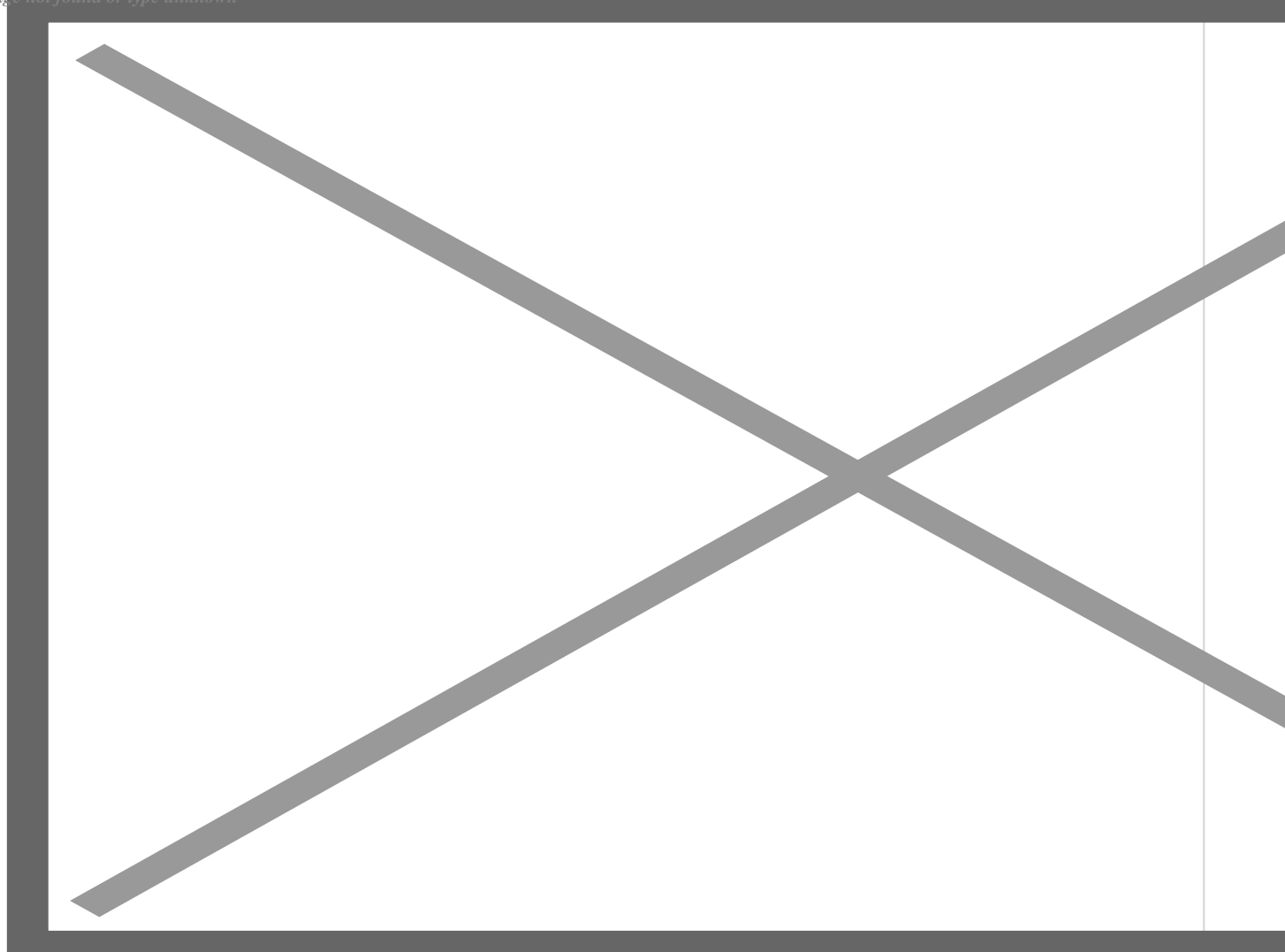


Draft UN resolution urges Israel to immediately end illegal settlement expansions

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A newly-drafted UN Security Council resolution has called on the Israeli regime to “immediately and completely” end its settlement expansion activities across the occupied Palestinian

territories, in a fresh blow to the extremist Israeli cabinet's plots to steal more Palestinian lands.

United Nations, February 17 (RHC)-- A newly-drafted UN Security Council resolution has called on the Israeli regime to "immediately and completely" end its settlement expansion activities across the occupied Palestinian territories, in a fresh blow to the extremist Israeli cabinet's plots to steal more Palestinian lands.

The resolution was drafted on Thursday ahead of a Security Council meeting on the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict and in response to a recent Israeli announcement that was set to legalize nine outposts and advance plans for some 10,000 new settlement homes in the occupied West Bank.

The draft resolution demanded that Israel "immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory." The resolution "reaffirms that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East [al-Quds], has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law."

The draft condemned "all Israeli settlement activities and all other unilateral measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East [al-Quds], including, inter alia, the construction and expansion of settlements, transfer of Israeli settlers, confiscation of land, demolition of homes and displacement of Palestinian civilians."

Taking Tel Aviv to task for contentious moves aimed at the further occupation of Palestinian territories, including outpost legalizations, the drafted resolution called for "upholding unchanged the historic status quo at the holy sites" in occupied East al-Quds. It also urged both parties to "observe calm and restraint, and to refrain from provocative actions, incitement, inflammatory rhetoric and hate speech."

The last time a resolution against Israel on its illegal settlement activities was passed by the Security Council was in December 2016. Fourteen of the body's 15 members threw their weight behind the measure while the US, under then-U.S. President Barack Obama, decided to abstain in order to allow the resolution to pass.

The anti-Israel resolution on Thursday was swiftly opposed by the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden, with the State Department labeling as "unhelpful" the push for the UN Security Council to denounce the Israeli move.

"Steps like settlement activity, steps like the introduction of such a resolution, are unhelpful and put us further away from a negotiated two-state solution," deputy State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel told reporters on Thursday. He said the United States was working with partners at the United Nations in New York on "next steps" which he did not specify.

The United Nations Security Council is scheduled to meet Monday to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian situation, but it remains unclear whether the draft will be presented for a vote, according to UN diplomats.

Tel Aviv has stepped up its efforts at expanding the illegal settlements since late December when Benjamin Netanyahu staged a comeback as the regime's prime minister at the head of a cabinet of hard-right and ultra-Orthodox parties.

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