

# *UN chief says all Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory must stop*

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United Nations, February 23 (RHC)-- The United Nations secretary-general has called for an end to the Israeli regime's settlement activities, stressing the illegality of all the occupying regime's structures in the Palestinian territory.

"All settlement activity is illegal under international law. It must stop," Antonio Guterres said on Wednesday, addressing the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

"Each new settlement is another roadblock on the path to peace," the UN chief said, adding that "incitement to violence is a dead end. Nothing justifies terrorism."

The Israeli regime has built over 230 settlements since its 1967 occupation of the Palestinian territory of the West Bank, including East al-Quds. The settlements house more than 600,000 illegal Israeli settlers.

The international community views the settlements as illegal under the international law due to their construction on the occupied land.

Guterres also said: "Our immediate priority must be to prevent further escalation, reduce tensions and restore calm," noting that, "the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is at its most combustible in years."

Hours before Guterres' speech, Israeli troops killed nearly a dozen Palestinians in a raid on the occupied West Bank city of Nablus, while more than 100 people were injured, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

Israel's right-wing government has in recent weeks faced criticism over a decision to give retroactive permission to multiple settlement outposts in the occupied West Bank and to build new units.

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. On January 25, Israeli media sources informed that the Israeli cabinet was planning to increase the number of the settler units within the settlements by a whopping 18,000 in the coming months.

Last week, the UN Security Council drafted a resolution calling on the Israeli regime to "immediately and completely" end its settlement expansion activities.

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