

EU envoy calls on Israel to reconsider illegal settlement plans in West Bank

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Nablus, May 27 (RHC)-- A European Union representative has condemned the Israeli regime's plans for the construction of nearly 600 new illegal settler units in the occupied West Bank, calling on Tel Aviv to reconsider the decision.

Sven Kuhn von Burgsdorff, the EU's ambassador to Palestine, made the remarks in a statement during a visit by a delegation of 20 European ambassadors and consuls to the historical town of Sebastia, north of Nablus. The EU diplomat said Sebastia is an occupied territory, adding that any action by the Israeli regime in this area is a violation of international law. He also expressed the EU's solidarity with the residents of Sebastia, emphasizing that it is the right of Palestinians to stay and live there.

Israel has approved a proposal to invest 29 million Israeli shekels (\$8 million) to develop the Sebastia site to allow more settlers to reach the area and to decrease Palestinians access there.

Last week, the chief of the Israeli military's Central Command also signed an order that allows Israelis to enter the illegal Homesh outpost in the northern part of the West Bank, paving the way for a formal settlement to be built there.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Von Burgsdorff denounced the occupying regime's support for Israeli settlers to return to evacuated settlements in the northern West Bank. "Legalizing the return of settlers to evacuated outposts in the northern West Bank is contrary to the decisions" of Israel's so-called supreme court as well as the international law, he said, asserting that "all forms of settlements are illegal."

The EU official further called on Israel to stop its acts of violence, prevent settler attacks, and protect Palestinians against those attacks. Incidents of sabotage and violence by settlers against Palestinians and their property have become a daily occurrence throughout the occupied territories, particularly in the West Bank.

However, Israeli authorities rarely prosecute settlers and the vast majority of the files are closed due to deliberate police failure to investigate them properly.

The European Union has deplored the Israeli regime's plans for the construction of nearly 4,500 new illegal settler units in the occupied West Bank, calling on Tel Aviv to reverse the decision. The United Nations has already warned of a surge in Israeli settler violence against Palestinians, mostly in the areas of al-Khalil, al-Quds, Nablus and Ramallah.

Israel occupied the West Bank, including the western part of the holy city of al-Quds, in 1967. It later annexed East al-Quds, which Palestinians want as the capital of their future state.

More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East al-Quds. All Israeli settlements are illegal under international law as they are built on occupied land. The UN Security Council has condemned Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions.

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