

United Nations Calls on Israel Not to Grab Palestinian Land



United Nations, September 2 (RHC)-- The United Nations has called on Israel not to go ahead with its plan to grab hundreds of hectares of Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank. A spokesman for UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said on Monday that he is "alarmed" by the Israeli plan.

"The secretary general is alarmed by yesterday's announcement by Israeli authorities to declare as so-called 'state land' nearly 1,000 acres of land in the Bethlehem area of the West Bank," the spokesman stated. "The seizure of such a large swath of land risks paving the way for further settlement activity, which -- as the United Nations has reiterated on many occasions -- is illegal under international law."

On Sunday, Israeli military sources said that about 400 hectares of land at the settlement of Gevaot in the southern city of Bethlehem are "declared as Israeli land." The land appropriation has been described as the biggest by Israel since the 1980s.

The Palestinians criticized the decision and called for international action against Tel Aviv. Even the United States, which hardly ever has criticized its ally, called the Israeli move counterproductive to peace efforts.

The international community -- with the almost sole exception of the United States -- regards all Israeli settlements built on occupied Palestinian land as illegal.

Tel Aviv's expansionist policies have long been considered as an obstacle in the so-called peace talks between Israel and Palestine.

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