

Arab League warns of Israeli plans to build thousands more settler units in West Bank

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Cairo, June 14 (RHC)-- The secretary general of the Arab League has strongly denounced Israeli settlement expansion policy following reports that the Tel Aviv regime was preparing to build thousands more settler units in the occupied West Bank.

In a statement released on Tuesday, Ahmed Aboul Gheit said that such plans undermine the so-called two-state solution by gnawing away at the lands on which the future Palestinian state should be established. He made the remarks in reaction to Israeli plans to build more than 4,000 settler units across the occupied territories.

Aboul Gheit also called on the US administration, the main backer of the Israeli regime, to take a firm stance against the Israeli plans in defense of the so-called two-state solution. The Palestinian Foreign

Ministry warned on Sunday that the international community's silence was encouraging the Israeli regime to consolidate the occupation of the West Bank.

Israel has stepped up settlement expansion in defiance of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334, which pronounced settlements in the West Bank and East al-Quds "a flagrant violation under international law."

This comes as the Joe Biden administration has reiterated opposition to Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank, saying it undermines efforts to achieve the so-called two-state solution with the Palestinians.

White House National Security Spokesperson John Kirby on Monday did not confirm if Israel had told the U.S. about plans to announce settlement expansion, but said Washington's policy is consistent in opposing any unilateral decisions to advance Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

"We have long made clear our concerns about additional settlements in the West Bank, that we don't want to see actions taken that are going to make a two-state solution that much more difficult to achieve," Kirby said during the White House press briefing. "We don't want to see steps taken that only increase the tensions and we've been very clear about that. Nothing's changed about our policy."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed in a recent interview with Sky News released on Friday that settlements in the occupied West Bank were not an obstacle to peace with the Palestinians.

The expansion of settlements in the West Bank, among the thorniest issues between Israel and the Palestinians, has continued despite repeated international calls for construction to stop, even from Israel's allies, including the United States.

Analysts believe that Israel's major plans across the occupied territories are essentially aimed at cutting off Palestinian communities from one another and ensuring a Jewish demographic majority.

More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East al-Quds.

All Israeli settlements are illegal under international law. The UN Security Council has condemned Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions.

Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent state with East al-Quds as its capital.

The last round of Israeli-Palestinian talks collapsed in 2014. Among the major sticking points in those negotiations was Israel's continued illegal settlement expansion.

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