

# *European Union slams Israeli plans to legalize settlement outposts*

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**Settlements are illegal under international law!**

Brussels, July 1 (RHC)-- The European Union has condemned the announcement by Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich to legalize five outposts in the occupied West Bank as "another deliberate attempt at undermining peace efforts."

In a statement, an EU spokesperson noted that bloc's leaders at a meeting this week had condemned the Israeli government's decisions to further expand illegal settlements and urged it to reverse them.

"In line with its longstanding common position and UN Security Council Resolutions, the EU will not recognise changes to the 1967 borders unless agreed by the parties," it said.

The EU said that steps taken by Israel to weaken the Palestinian Authority (PA) must stop and urged it to release withheld tax and customs revenues owed to the PA “and to take the necessary measures to ensure that correspondent banking services between Israeli and Palestinian banks remain in place”.

With all the news coming out of Gaza, it has been easy to overlook the low-level war that Israel has been waging with Hezbollah, the paramilitary and political group in next-door Lebanon.

But recently, both sides have been ratcheting up the rhetoric – and this bodes badly for the prospects for regional peace. The situation is escalating in multiple areas in the Gaza Strip as the level of bombardment has gone up.

Starting from the central area, at least four Palestinians have been killed after a residence was targeted in the Bureij refugee camp. Bureij has been a centre for evacuees who fled Rafah – now they are taking shelter in central Gaza that has been widely targeted in the past 24 hours.

Israel is also upscaling its military operations in the southern part of Gaza, in Rafah, in an area called al-Mawasi, close to the Shakoush neighbourhood, where Palestinians have generally been taking refuge. Fifteen Palestinians have been killed since dawn today in Rafah and within the past couple of hours, three killed have been brought to hospital after being hit with a drone missile.

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