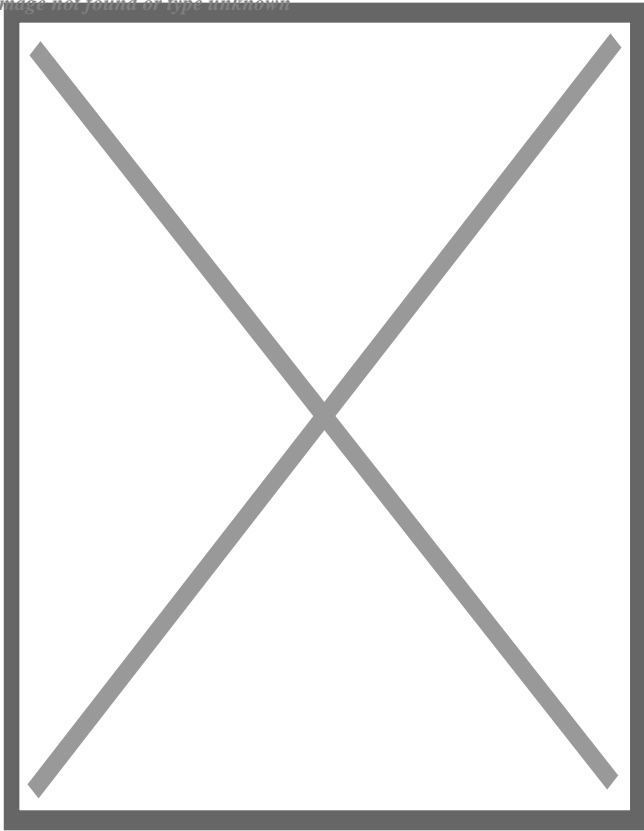


Report reveals U.S. and Israel want to displace Palestinians from Gaza to East Africa

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New York, March 15 (RHC)-- The United States and Israel have discussed with three East African governments the forced displacement of Palestinians from Gaza to Sudan, Somalia and its breakaway region of Somaliland, according to US and Israeli officials quoted by The Associated Press news agency.

Friday's report said officials from Sudan claimed to have rejected overtures from the United States, while officials from Somalia and Somaliland told AP they were unaware of any contacts.

Speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss a secret diplomatic initiative, U.S. and Israeli officials confirmed the contacts with Somalia and Somaliland, while the U.S. officials confirmed Sudan as well.

They said it was unclear how much progress the efforts made or at what level the discussions took place.

The development comes more than a month after US President Donald Trump floated the idea of forcibly displacing Palestinians and “taking over” the Gaza Strip. It was roundly rejected by Palestinians and countries in the Middle East, with many describing it as ethnic cleansing.

Separate outreach from the U.S. and Israel to the three potential destinations began last month, days after Trump floated the Gaza plan alongside Netanyahu, according to the U.S. officials, who said Israel was taking the lead in the discussions.

There was no immediate reaction to the report from the U.S. or Israel. But Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, a longtime advocate of what he calls “voluntary” emigration of Palestinians, said this week that Israel is working to identify countries to take them in. He also said Israel is preparing a “very large emigration department” within its Ministry of Defense.

Tamer Qarmout, an associate professor at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, told Al Jazeera the forced displacement of Palestinians is “a red line that should not be crossed.”

He said governments around the world have a responsibility to stop the “outrageous” proposal and “should not be engaging with Israel on any of these scenarios”, especially the displacement of Palestinians to African countries, “many of which continue to struggle from colonial legacies”.

“Sudan and Somalia are still ravaged by wars due to the colonial legacy. They [the Israeli government] have to be exposed and put on a shame list,” Qarmout added.

In exchange for accepting resettled Palestinians, it is thought that a variety of incentives – financial, diplomatic and security – would be offered to the East African governments.

A U.S. official involved in the efforts confirmed to AP that the US was “having a quiet conversation with Somaliland about a range of areas where they can be helpful to the U.S. in exchange for recognition”.

The U.S. could offer the breakaway region of more than 3 million people international recognition, which is a priority for Somaliland’s new president, Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi.

Meanwhile, it is difficult to understand why Somalia would want to host Palestinians given the country’s strong support for Palestinian self-rule, Sambu Chepkorir, a lawyer and conflict researcher in Nairobi, told AP. “The realignments keep changing, and so maybe there is a hidden agenda in why Somalia,” Chepkorir said.

Two Sudanese officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive diplomatic matter, confirmed the Trump administration has approached the military-led government about accepting Palestinians.

One said the contacts began even before Trump’s inauguration, with offers of military assistance against the RSF paramilitary group, assistance with postwar reconstruction and other incentives.

Both officials said the Sudanese government rejected the idea. “This suggestion was immediately rebuffed,” said one official. “No one opened this matter again.”

[SOURCE: ASSOCIATED PRESS]



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