

UN Chief Slams Israeli Prime Minister's Support for Settlement Expansion in West Bank



United Nations, September 16 (RHC)-- UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has slammed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over his support for the Tel Aviv regime's expropriation of Palestinian territories and expansion of illegal settlements across the occupied West Bank.

Ban Ki-moon addressed the Security Council during a meeting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He said that Israel's construction of settlement outposts on land earmarked for a future independent Palestinian state is illegal, and the Israeli military's control over Palestinian territories must be brought to an end.

The UN chief said: "Let me be absolutely clear: settlements are illegal under international law. The occupation, stifling and oppressive, must end." Ban Ki-moon further noted that the settlement of around a million Israelis in Palestinian territories is "diametrically opposed to the creation of a Palestinian state."

Last week, Netanyahu claimed in a video posted on his Facebook page that the settlements built across the occupied West Bank do not constitute "obstacles to an eventual peace agreement with the Palestinians, and that he has "always been perplexed" about the related criticisms.

The Israeli prime minister went on to allege that the Palestinian leadership sought a Palestinian state on the condition that it was "a state without Jews," and that this could be described as "ethnic cleansing."

The presence and continued expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in occupied Palestine, however, have created a major obstacle to the establishment of such a state. More than half a million Israelis live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

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