

# *Germany Criticizes Israel Over Settlement Expansion*

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Berlin, January 26 (RHC)-- Germany has strongly criticized Israel over the regime's new plans for the construction of thousands of more settlements. Martin Schaefer, a spokesman for the German Foreign Ministry, said Israel's recent announcement to build 2,500 more settlements in the occupied West Bank was even inconsistent with Israel's own pace of ignoring international calls for a halt in settlement activities.

Schaefer said the announcement went "beyond what we have seen on it in the last few months both in terms of its scale and its political significance," adding that Berlin has started to doubt the genuineness of Israeli claims for reaching peace with the Palestinians.

Germany is known for maintaining strong relations with Israel, a policy Berlin says is needed to compensate Nazi Germany's way of treating the Jews. Israel has also benefited from Germany's military and financial support over the years, with regime leaders calling the Western European country as one of their main allies.

Israel announced plans for building more settlements right after US President Donald Trump took office on January 20, a sign that the regime in Tel Aviv was anticipating Trump to show a more welcoming stance toward the settlements than his predecessor Barack Obama.

The Obama administration, in its last days in office, abstained from a vote in the United Nations Security Council condemning the expansion of Israeli settlements. The historic move drew huge ire in the occupied territories, with Israelis vowing to do whatever possible to revise the course during the reign of Trump.

In an address to the Israeli parliament on Wednesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the regime would face no restrictions on the expansion of settlements. "We can build where we want and as much as we want."

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