

Palestinian cabinet not consulted on U.S.-led Bahrain summit



Ramallah, May 21 (RHC)-- Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh says his government has not been consulted about an economic conference that the United States will hold in Bahrain next month.

The White House has announced that the first part of President Donald Trump's so-called "peace plan," which is spearheaded by his son-in-law Jared Kushner, will be unveiled in Bahrain's capital, Manama.

The U.S. will host the economic conference on June 25th and 26th to purportedly encourage investment in the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. "The cabinet wasn't consulted about the reported workshop, neither over the content, nor the outcome, nor timing," Shtayyeh told Palestinian ministers in the presence of reporters on Monday.

Relations between the Palestinian Authority and the U.S. took an unprecedented dip in late 2017, when Washington recognized Jerusalem as Israel's "capital." The Trump administration has said that its secret plan, which has been dismissed by Palestinian authorities even before being unveiled, would require compromise by both sides.

The Palestinian Authority is facing steep aid cuts. Since being shunned by Palestinians, Trump's administration has slashed hundreds of millions of dollars to humanitarian organizations. "The financial crisis the Palestinian Authority is living through today is a result of the financial war that is being launched

against us in order to win political concessions," Shtayyeh said. "We do not submit to blackmail and we don't trade our political rights for money," he added.

Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. However, Israel insist on maintaining the occupation of Palestinian territories.

Also reacting to news of the upcoming conference, Bahrain's main opposition group, the al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, has described the U.S. "deal of the century" as a plan to sell Jerusalem al-Quds and Palestine, slamming it as "high treason," the Arabic-language Lualua television network reported.

Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE have been exerting "immense pressure" on Palestinians to accept "the deal of the century," a senior Fatah official says. The group criticized the ruling Al Khalifah regime for hosting the conference, saying that is a departure from all national, Islamic and humanitarian principles.

Al-Wefaq further said the Bahraini people are opposed to the "desecration" of their country and efforts for converting it into a "station" to sign a new version of the Balfour Declaration - the document that led to Israel's creation.

The group noted that the Al Khalifah regime's move to host the "disastrous project" is no surprise, adding Manama's recent rapprochement with the Israeli regime comes as it "lacks popular legitimacy" and seeks international support in an attempt to sustain its legitimacy.

Al-Wefaq called on all Bahraings and "free governments" to reject the initiative and stop the "dangerous development" from going forward.

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