

UN Security Council strongly condemns Trump's support for Israeli settlements



United Nations, November 21 (RHC)-- The European Union, Russia, China and other members of the UN Security Council have strongly opposed the U.S. announcement that it no longer considers Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank to be a violation of international law.

Nickolay Mladenov, the UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, opened the Security Council meeting, expressing “regret” at the U.S. action and reiterating the UN position that settlements under a December 2016 council resolution “are a flagrant violation under international law.”

Indonesian Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani, whose country has the world's largest Muslim population, called the U.S. announcement “irresponsible and provocative,” saying it “incontrovertibly constitutes a de facto annexation and is a barrier to peace efforts based on the two-state solution.”

Following the Security Council meeting, ambassadors from the 10 non-permanent council members who serve two-year terms stood before reporters while Deputy German Ambassador Jurgen Shultz read a critical joint statement. “Israeli settlement activities are illegal, erode the viability of the two-state solution and undermine the prospect for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace” as affirmed by the 2016 council

resolution, the statement said. It also called on Israel to end all settlement activity and expressed concern at calls for possible annexation of areas in the West Bank.

Kuwaiti Ambassador Mansour al-Otaibi, the Arab representative on the council, then told reporters that 14 countries agreed in the private session on the press statement.

Palestinian Ambassador Riyad Mansour also said he was grateful to the 14 council nations and their commitment to international law, saying that all 193 UN member nations are required to implement all Security Council resolutions, including on the illegality of all settlements.

"The U.S. administration once again makes another illegal announcement on Israeli settlements in order to sabotage any chance to achieve peace, security and stability in our region and for our people," Mansour said. "We strongly reject and condemn this unlawful and irresponsible declaration; we consider it to be null legally, politically, historically and morally."

Before the meeting, British Ambassador to the UN Karen Pierce had told reporters that "all settlement activity is illegal under international law and it erodes the viability of the two-state solution and the prospects for a lasting peace." She was speaking on behalf of Germany, France, Poland, Belgium and Britain, the EU's current Security Council members.

The meeting was held just days after an announcement by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo reversed a four-decade-old U.S. position on illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. The move was welcomed by Israel but drew condemnation from Palestinians and Arab leaders. The shift has been widely interpreted as a green light for Israeli settlement building in the occupied West Bank.

Meanwhile, several Palestinian organisations in Jerusalem al-Quds, including a television channel, were closed by Israeli authorities on Wednesday, according to media reports. The offices of Palestinian Authority-funded Palestine TV and an office of the Palestinian Ministry of Education were given orders to close for six months. The director of the al-Araz production company that hosts Palestine TV was also temporarily arrested, while a correspondent for the channel was summoned for questioning.

Israel occupied the West Bank as well as East Jerusalem al-Quds during the Six-Day War in 1967. It later annexed the Palestinian city in a move not recognized by the international community. Israel lays claim to the whole city, but the Palestinians view its eastern sector as the capital of their future sovereign state.

Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem al-Quds as the Israeli "capital" in December 2017 and moved the American embassy from Tel Aviv to the ancient city in May 2018, sparking global condemnation.

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