

Israel expropriates more private Palestinian land in occupied West Bank

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This file picture shows the Israeli settlement of Kiryat Arba in the occupied West Bank city of al-Khalil. (Photo by European Pressphoto Agency)

Ramallah, April 24 (RHC)-- Israeli authorities have seized thousands of square meters of more private Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank, as the Tel Aviv regime goes ahead with land expropriation and settlement construction policies in blatant defiance of international law and UN Security Council resolutions.

Hassan Bureijja, head of the Committee against the Wall and Settlements in Bethlehem, said Israeli officials grabbed 147 dunam (147,000 square meters) of Palestinian-owned land west of Bethlehem, situated about 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) south of Jerusalem al-Quds, on Thursday, Palestine's official WAFA news agency reported.

Bureijja added that the seized Palestinian land lies in Basin 3 of Thaher al-Mitrasiba area of Nahalin village, which lies southwest of Bethlehem, as well as Basin 5 in Khallet as-Saraweel and Shu'ab al-Beesh areas of Husan town, located nine kilometers west of Bethlehem.

He highlighted that Israeli authorities, through confiscation of the land, aim to construct 560 new illegal settler units in Beitar Illit settlement and build needed roads. "Already, during the first three months of 2021, more than 210 settler violent incidents were recorded, with one Palestinian fatality." Bureijja also said his committee plans to lodge a complaint before Israeli courts against the land confiscation.

Additionally, the Israeli so-called High Court of Justice this week rejected a request put in by the municipality of the southern occupied West Bank city of al-Khalil that demanded a freeze on the construction of an elevator for Jewish settlers at the Ibrahimi Mosque.

On May 3rd last year, Israel's minister for military affairs, Naftali Bennett, gave the final green light to expropriate Palestinian-owned land and property in al-Khalil, situated 30 kilometers (19 miles) south of Jerusalem al-Quds, to construct an elevator and a ramp to facilitate the entry of Jewish settlers to the Ibrahimi Mosque.

According to Israeli media outlets, the so-called Higher Planning Council of the Civil Administration -- the Israeli body that handles agricultural and building permits, roads, water and electricity issues in the West Bank -- was ordered to complete all relevant procedures immediately and without delay once judicial authorities, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and then foreign minister Israel Katz approved the plan.

Israeli authorities have begun the construction of new illegal settler units in the northern Jordan Valley. The Palestinian land near the Ibrahimi Mosque will be confiscated from the Palestinian Islamic Waqf, which is a trust in charge of religious endowments.

In 2017, UNESCO recognized the Ibrahimi Mosque as an endangered Palestinian heritage site.

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