

Russia warns Israel's plan to annex occupied West Bank risks outburst of regional rage



Moscow, July 10 (RHC)-- Russia has warned that the Israeli regime's contentious plans to annex large parts of the occupied West Bank and strategic Jordan Valley risk the outburst of violence across the Middle East region.

Speaking at a weekly press briefing in Moscow Thursday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova described the impending move as a unilateral implementation of US President Donald Trump's controversial proposal for "peace" between the Tel Aviv regime and the Palestinians, dubbed "the deal of the century," and reiterated the need for an international consensus to reject Israel's plans.

The deal of the century envisions Jerusalem al-Quds as "Israel's undivided capital" and allows the Tel Aviv regime to annex illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank and Jordan Valley. The plan also denies Palestinian refugees the right of return to their homeland, among other controversial terms.

The annexation move will also put an end to the prospect of the so-called two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Zakharova added. She further noted that Russia shares the same position as that of the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) vis-à-vis such an attempt.

Zakharova highlighted the need to restart negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians under the auspices of the United Nations and the Quartet on the Middle East -- the United States, the European Union, the United Nations and Russia -- to work out a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the issue.

The last round of Israeli-Palestinian talks collapsed in 2014. Among the major sticking points in those negotiations was Israel's continued settlement expansion.

More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East Jerusalem al-Quds.

The UN Security Council has condemned Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions.

Less than a month before Trump took office, the United Nations Security Council in December 2016 adopted Resolution 2334, calling on Israel to "immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem" al-Quds.

Many Palestinians believe the Israeli plan to annex one-third of the already illegally occupied West Bank, including parts of the strategic Jordan Valley, is only a formality and a de facto Israeli occupation of their land has been under way for many years.

"Israel's annexation plan has been in process since 1967," said Salah Khawaja, coordinator of an anti-occupation campaign called the Popular Committee to Resist the Wall and the Settlements.

"Israel has since built settlements and the wall. And so, annexation has been ongoing for a long time," he added.

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