

UN condemns Israeli settlement expansion in sensitive area

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United Nations, November 17 (RHC)-- The UN's Middle East peace envoy has decried an Israeli plan to expand a settlement in a sensitive area of East Jerusalem al-Quds, calling on Tel Aviv to "reverse this step."

The Israeli anti-settlement group Peace Now reported that Israeli authorities had opened up tenders for 1,257 new units in the settlement of Givat Hamatos. "If built, it would further consolidate a ring of settlements between Jerusalem [al-Quds] and Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank," Nickolay Mladenov, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, said in a statement on Monday.

"It would significantly damage prospects for a future contiguous Palestinian State and for achieving a negotiated two-state solution based on the 1967 lines, with Jerusalem [al-Quds] as the capital" of the Palestinian state.

Mladenov also urged Tel Aviv to stop constructing settlements. "Settlement construction is illegal under international law and I call on the authorities to reverse this step," he said.

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. All Israeli settlements are illegal under international law as they are built on occupied land.

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