

# *Arab League hails Australia's decision to use term Occupied Palestinian territories*

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Cairo, August 17 (RHC)-- The Arab League has welcomed Australia's decision to resume using the term "Occupied Palestinian territories" to refer to the West Bank and East al-Quds. The General Secretariat of the Arab League said in a statement that the decision will send a message to the Israeli regime to observe international law.

"We welcome Australia's decision to consider Israeli settlements illegal, and we appreciate the Australian government's decision to use the term of Occupied Palestinian territories," to label the West Bank and East al-Quds, the statement said.

"The move is of significant importance as it sends a clear message of the necessity to respect the international legitimacy's decisions and to oblige Israel to comply with these decisions and with the rules of international law," it added.

The Pan-Arab body also hoped that other countries will adopt similar stances, and rejected any measures that "encroach on Palestinians' right to restore their land and to establish an independent country with east al-Quds as its capital."

On Tuesday, Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong said at the Parliament House that Canberra would move to "strengthen the government's objection to settlements by affirming that they are illegal under international law and a significant obstacle to peace."

The Australian government also decided to officially reinstate the term "Occupied Palestinian Territories" to refer to the West Bank. Wong noted that by referring to "Occupied Palestinian Territories," Australia would be bringing itself in line with the terminology employed by multiple other countries, as well as resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.

Since 2014, Australian officials have avoided using the words "occupied" or "occupation" when referring to the West Bank.

More than 700,000 Israelis live in over 279 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East al-Quds.

While all Israeli settlements are illegal under international law, the occupying regime has stepped up settlement expansion in blatant violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions.

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