



Press Release

17 November, 2020

Canberra, Australia

Israel advances plans to escalate strategic settlement expansion in the occupied East Jerusalem

The recent decision by Israeli authorities to escalate settlement expansion through the construction of an entirely new settlement in the Occupied East Jerusalem lands, is deeply alarming.

On 15 November 2020, the Israeli Ministry of Construction and Housing and the Israel Lands Authority called for tenders for 1257 settlement units, to expand developments on the existing settlement of Givat Hamatos.

The significance of this location lies in its strategic positioning between East Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Certainly, the construction of these settlement units would consequently surround the Palestinian neighborhood of the town of Beit Safafa and seal it off from the occupied East Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Indeed, denying Palestinians freedom and access to their lands and creating further obstacles in establishing a viable and contiguous Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Undoubtedly, this is a very dangerous development in Israel's continuing de facto annexation processes and will subsequently make the viability of a just two state solution unattainable. It is of deep concern and fear that Israel intends on escalating and accelerating its illegal settlement expansion in the short period before President-elect Joe Biden assumes the role of President of the United States on 20 January 2021. In this context, Dr Mohammad Shtayyeh, the Prime Minister of the State of Palestine, tweeted: "We warn the unprecedented dangerous developments in Israeli colonial project that seem to be an escalated and intense attack plan for the ten weeks to impose new status quo before Trump leaves office".

The General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific kindly calls on the Australian government to uphold its support to UN Resolutions and International Law, in particular Security Council resolution 2334 and other relevant UN resolutions, by condemning Israel's illegal expansionist policy and continuous annexation processes. In addition, to recognize, without further delay, the State of Palestine on 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital in order to save a viable two-state solution.

For more information, please contact the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific: ph. 62869193.

