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RECENT ISRAELI ACTIONS ARE CONTEMPTUOUS AND DESTRUCTIVE TO ALL EFFORTS TO REVIVE THE PEACE PROCESS

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Chief Palestinian Negotiator Dr. Saeb Erekat condemned recent Israeli orders to confiscate more portions of Palestinian land between East Jerusalem and the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim.

On the 24th of September 2007, the Israeli military issued an order to confiscate more than 1,100 dunums of Palestinian land in Abu Dis, Sawahreh, Nabi Mousa and al-Khan al-Ahmar in the Jerusalem Governorate for the construction of an “alternate” road for Palestinians linking Bethlehem to the eastern West Bank. The route of the road will roughly run parallel with the southern and eastern sections of the Adumim Wall *outside* the Adumim “bloc”.

The road reinforces and facilitates Israel's settlement expansion east of East Jerusalem, particularly the massive E-1 Plan, and the isolation of Palestinian East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. It will serve to eventually prohibit Palestinians from using Road #1 that passes through the E-1 area and the Adumim “bloc”, thus pushing Palestinian traffic further to the east and away from East Jerusalem.

The E-1 Plan calls for the construction of 3,500 housing units (approximately 14,500 settlers), ten hotels, an industrial estate and entertainment facilities atop Palestinian village lands. Already, some 35,000 illegal Israeli settlers live in Ma'ale Adumim and its satellite settlements. If completed, the Wall will incorporate some 35,000 illegal settlers living in Ma'ale Adumim and its satellite settlements to Israel, and effectively annex some 61 km² of Palestinian land, thus completing the encircling of East Jerusalem and severing the West Bank in half.

The road is part of Israel's broader plan to replace territorial contiguity with “transportational contiguity” by artificially connecting Palestinian population centers through an elaborate network of alternate roads and tunnels and creating segregated road networks, one for Palestinians and another for Israeli settlers, in the West Bank. The “Roads and Tunnels” Plan includes a series of 24 tunnels and 56 roads for Palestinians. Meanwhile, Israel continues to construct a separate highway network to link settlements (colonies) on both sides of the Wall with each other and with Israel. Such transportation networks serve to facilitate settlement expansion throughout the Israeli-occupied West Bank while limiting any future Palestinian development.

Dr. Erekat described this recent Israeli move as “destructive to all the efforts led by the international community to revive the peace process and to realize the two-state solution by having a viable contiguous Palestinian state.”

“Such unilateral Israeli measures demonstrate yet again Israeli intentions to consolidate and expand Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem, and effectively take Jerusalem off the negotiating table,” commented Dr. Erekat. He also noted that construction was on-going in the E-1 area to Jerusalem’s east, despite repeated assurances from the Israeli government to the United States that it would not construct there. He said that these settlement activities in and around East Jerusalem, including in E-1, mean that “time for ‘two-state solution’ may soon run out.”

He stressed that the Metropolitan East Jerusalem area, which extends from Ramallah in the north to Bethlehem in the south, historically accounted for 35% of the Palestinian economy in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip combined. By fragmenting that metropolitan unit and severing East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, he explained, “the Jerusalem-area Wall and settlements mean that there will be no viable Palestinian state, and hence no viable two-state solution.”

“The timing of this confiscation order is particularly outrageous,” Dr. Erekat stated, noting that it coincided with the first meeting between Israeli and Palestinian negotiating teams working on a draft agreement addressing core permanent status issues in advance of the US-sponsored international meeting scheduled for November. “At a time when we should be finding ways to enforce and monitor a freeze on all settlement activity and re-build confidence between the two sides, Israel is creating facts on the ground that will ultimately foreclose the two-state solution and kill all chances for peace.”

Dr. Erekat concluded by saying that this current situation is “untenable.” “Israel is faced with one question today: Does it want a viable two-state solution? By continuing to expand its settlements and expand its illegal Wall, the answer to this question seems to be a resounding “no”.”

For further information on the E-1 Plan and related issues, please visit:

- <http://en.bpnpc.org/issues/OngoingColonyExpansionBackground.pdf>
- <http://en.bpnpc.org/issues/2016.html>
- <http://en.bpnpc.org/issues/2017.html>

For an updated information/map on Israel’s new route of the wall and related issues, please visit:

- <http://en.bpnpc.org/issues/REVISEDWALL.pdf>
- <http://en.bpnpc.org/issues/wallmapoct07.pdf>
- <http://en.bpnpc.org/issues/2015.html>

For updated information on the November Conference, please visit:

- <http://en.bpnpc.org/novemberconference.html>

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