



**Statement by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process,
Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, on Israeli settlement expansion in occupied West Bank**

Jerusalem, 25 July 2016

I strongly condemn the recent decision by Israeli authorities to advance plans to build some 770 housing units in the settlement of Gilo, built on the lands of occupied Palestinian towns and villages between Bethlehem and East Jerusalem.

I am also concerned about repeated efforts by a number of families to rebuild the Israeli outpost of Mitzpeh Avichai near Hebron in the occupied West Bank.

Such moves raise legitimate questions about Israel's long-term intentions. They come against the backdrop of statements by some Israeli ministers that there should never be a Palestinian state or calls for the full annexation of the West Bank.

This decision to expand Gilo comes only three weeks after the United States, the Russian Federation, the EU and the UN, as part of the Middle East Quartet, jointly called on Israel to cease the policy of settlement construction and expansion.

I reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law and urge the Government of Israel to cease and reverse such decisions.

Continuing on the current trajectory entrenches a one-state reality of perpetual occupation and conflict that is incompatible with realizing the national aspirations of both peoples.

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