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Pakistan Condemns Israel Settlement Expansion

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ISLAMABAD / JERUSALEM – Pakistan has strongly condemned Israel’s plans to expand settlements in the occupied West Bank, a move the United Nations human rights office has described as a breach of international law and a potential war crime.

In a statement issued Friday, Foreign Office spokesperson Ambassador Shafqat Ali Khan said remarks by Israeli officials promoting the idea of a “Greater Israel” and the forced

displacement of Palestinians violated international law, the UN Charter, and binding Security Council resolutions.

The condemnation followed an announcement by Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who revealed that construction would begin on a long-delayed settlement project east of Jerusalem. Known as the E1 project, the site has drawn international criticism for decades. Critics say development there would divide the West Bank and sever access to East Jerusalem, undermining the possibility of a contiguous Palestinian state.

International Law Concerns

The UN human rights office reiterated its longstanding position that all Israeli settlements in the West Bank are illegal under international law. A spokesperson warned that transferring Israeli civilians into occupied territory contravenes the Geneva Conventions.

“It is a war crime for an occupying power to transfer its own civilian population into the territory it occupies,” the UN statement said, adding that the project could fragment Palestinian areas into isolated enclaves.

Most world powers, including European governments, have opposed settlement activity, arguing it threatens the viability of peace and erodes the chances of a two-state solution. Israel maintains that the West Bank is disputed territory rather than occupied and cites historical and biblical claims to justify its position.

Currently, an estimated 700,000 Israeli settlers live in communities across the West Bank and East Jerusalem, alongside about 2.7 million Palestinians.

Pakistan's Response

Khan urged the international community to reject moves he described as provocative and destabilizing. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to supporting a Palestinian state based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

“Such unilateral measures undermine peace efforts and pose a grave threat to regional stability,” Khan said in his statement.

Reports of Resettlement Discussions

Alongside settlement concerns, reports emerged this week that Israel and South Sudan were discussing a proposal to relocate Palestinians from Gaza to the African nation. According to Reuters, no formal agreement has been reached, though preliminary discussions were said to be taking place.

Palestinian leaders rejected the idea outright, labeling it a form of modern-day displacement akin to the 1948 Nakba, when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced from their homes. South Sudan's foreign ministry also denied the reports, calling them baseless.

Regional leaders joined the rejection, stating that transferring Gaza's population abroad would be unacceptable and in violation of international norms.

Rising Casualties in Gaza

The UN human rights office reported that at least 1,760 Palestinians have been killed while seeking humanitarian aid since late May, a sharp increase from the 1,373 deaths recorded in early August.

Gaza's civil defense agency said 23 more civilians were killed on Friday during Israeli airstrikes, including 12 people waiting near an aid distribution point. The Israeli military said it was reviewing the reports.

Humanitarian organizations warned that conditions in Gaza remain dire, with shortages of food, medicine, and shelter worsening as the conflict extends into its second year.

Ongoing International Attention

The settlement plan and reports of displacement proposals have heightened global concern about the region's stability. Diplomats and rights organizations continue to call for restraint and renewed negotiations to prevent further escalation.