

UK Condemns Israeli Settlement Plan as Threat to Two-State Solution

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The United Kingdom has strongly condemned Israel's latest settlement expansion plan, warning that it undermines the possibility of a future Palestinian state and breaches international law.

Foreign Secretary David Lammy said on Wednesday that Israel's Higher Planning Committee approved the E1 construction project, a longstanding and contentious plan to

build housing and infrastructure between East Jerusalem and the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim.

Lammy said the E1 project “would divide a Palestinian state in two, mark a flagrant breach of international law and critically undermine the two-state solution.”

The UK government urged Israel to reverse the decision, stressing that the international community has long opposed construction in the E1 zone due to its detrimental impact on future peace negotiations. The Foreign Secretary argued that such actions threaten not only Palestinian territorial continuity but also Israel's long-term security and stability.

The E1 area, short for “East 1,” has been a flashpoint for nearly three decades. Successive Israeli governments have considered building there to link Jerusalem with Ma'ale Adumim, one of the largest settlements in the West Bank. Critics argue that such development would physically split the West Bank, cutting off the north from the south, making the establishment of a viable Palestinian state almost impossible.

Israel insists that expanding settlements is a domestic planning issue and claims that construction is necessary to meet housing demands. However, international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, prohibits the transfer of an occupying power's civilian population into occupied territory. Most of the international community, including the United Nations, the European Union, and now the UK government, maintains that Israeli settlements in the West Bank are illegal.

The UK's statement aligns with the positions of other Western governments that have raised concerns over settlement activity. The European Union has repeatedly warned Israel against building in the E1 corridor, while the United Nations has described such projects as a severe obstacle to peace.

Washington has also expressed unease in the past, with several US administrations urging restraint over the E1 plan, although policy positions have shifted depending on the political climate in Washington.

Human rights organisations warn that the approval of the E1 plan could lead to further displacement of Palestinian communities living in the affected area. Bedouin families in villages such as Khan al-Ahmar have long faced demolition orders as Israel seeks to clear

land for development. Campaigners argue that forced evictions would violate Palestinians' basic rights to housing and security.

For many Palestinians, the settlement expansion symbolises what they see as an erosion of their right to self-determination. By cutting the West Bank into disconnected enclaves, the plan risks creating conditions that human rights observers say would resemble permanent occupation rather than a path to independence.

The Foreign Office has consistently supported a two-state solution, under which Israel and Palestine would coexist peacefully within secure and recognised borders. London has also provided aid to the Palestinian territories and engaged in regional diplomacy aimed at preventing further escalation of violence.

Lammy's intervention underscores the UK's position that sustainable peace depends on negotiations, not unilateral actions. While the UK remains a strong ally of Israel, it has been increasingly vocal about settlement policies that jeopardise long-term peace prospects.

The Israeli government has not indicated any intention to reverse the E1 approval. With tensions already high in the region, observers warn that the move could trigger renewed unrest and further complicate any future peace talks.

The UK is expected to raise the issue with international partners, including at the United Nations Security Council, where settlement activity is frequently debated. Whether such diplomatic pressure will alter Israeli policy remains uncertain.

For now, London's message is clear: settlement expansion in the West Bank threatens both the credibility of international law and the feasibility of a negotiated two-state solution.