

## **US, UK, UN condemn Israel's move to build 'illegal' settlement in West Bank**

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**Washington:** In an unusual sharp rebuke, the United States has accused Israel of betrayal of trust over later's plans to build hundreds of new settlement homes deep in the West Bank.

### **Israel planned 300 homes and establish an industrial zone in the West Bank**

The Obama administration in its statement on Wednesday said that Israel's move profoundly hurts efforts to forge a two-state solution to the long-running conflict.

The State Department lashed out at a proposal announced last week to construct a significant new settlement of up to 300 housing units and establish an industrial zone in the West Bank.

Both Israel and the Palestinians responded quickly with statements accusing each other of being the real obstacle to peace.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest said every U.S. administration since 1967 has opposed Israeli settlement activity in the occupied territories, and the Obama administration has publicly restated that view because of the concern that settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem undermines the goal of a two-state solution.

“The actions of the Israeli government in announcing this settlement undermine the pursuit of peace,” White House spokesman Josh Earnest said. He added that the U.S. had also received public assurances from the Israeli government that contradicted the settlement announcement.

“I guess, when we're talking about how good friends treat one another, that's a source of serious concern as well,” he said.

At the State Department, spokesman Mark Toner said moving ahead with the project would be “another step toward cementing a one-state reality of perpetual occupation that is fundamentally inconsistent with Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state.”

“Such moves will only draw condemnation from the international community, distance Israel from many of its partners, and further call into question Israel's commitment to achieving a negotiated peace,” he said.

Tobias Ellwood, the UK Foreign Office minister, said the planned construction of up to 300 new homes for Jewish settlers was a violation of international law

Mr Ellwood said the British Government condemned the plans as “the latest example of a series of worrying new settlement announcements in recent months”.

He added: “Settlements are illegal under international law. As underlined in the July report of the Middle East Quartet, settlement activity undermines trust and makes a two state solution much harder to achieve.”

A spokesperson for the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, said he was concerned “the establishment of a new settlement near Shilo will make the prospect of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state more remote”.

**“The Secretary General urges Israel to halt and reverse such counterproductive decisions in the interests of peace**

and a just final status agreement,â€œ he added.

- AP inputs