

Pompeo Issues Historic Policy Reversal: Israeli West Bank Settlements ‘Not Illegal’

In a major, if entirely expected, complete reversal of Obama-era policy on the Middle East, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced Monday the Trump administration is **reversing the official US stance on the illegality of Israeli settlements in the West Bank**.

“After carefully studying all sides of the legal debate, this administration agrees with President Reagan,” Pompeo said in reference to Reagan’s view that settlements were not inherently illegal. **“The establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the West Bank is not per se inconsistent with international law,”** Pompeo said.

“The Trump administration is reversing the Obama administration’s approach towards Israeli settlements. U.S. public statements on settlement activities in the West Bank have been **inconsistent over decades.**”



AFP/Getty Images

This came after the State Department’s legal office was ordered to conduct a year-long review of the official US policy on the expanding settlements in the West Bank, according to *The Jerusalem Post*.

This will further widen the gap on the issue between Washington its own European allies and international institutions, and among most UN members, given the US already often votes alone over and against much of the world on Israeli-Palestine related issues.

The EU court, for example, earlier this month moved to require all EU countries to specially label any product made in illegal Israeli West Bank settlements, something US Congressional leaders are attempting to lobby EU officials against, according to reports.



Evan Hill@evanchill

Pompeo will repudiate the State Department's 41-year-old legal opinion that Israel's West Bank settlements are illegal, paving the way for further annexation and occupation<https://apnews.com/3da4fb3671004679a91a7d4ae9ab4e57> ...



“In 1978, the Carter administration categorically concluded that Israel’s establishment of civilian settlements was inconsistent with international law,” Pompeo explained. “However, in 1981, President Reagan disagreed with that conclusion and stated that he **didn’t believe that the settlements were inherently illegal.**”

“The hard truth is that there will never be a judicial resolution to the conflict and arguments about who is right and who is wrong as a matter of international law will not bring peace,” Pompeo said further.



Expansion at the Jewish settlement of Neve Yaakov. West Bank expansion of Israeli settlers has reportedly occurred at unprecedented pace under Netanyahu over the past years. Image source: AFP

“This is a complex political problem that can only be solved by negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians,” America’s top diplomat added.

It will also likely inflame tensions and protests in Gaza and the West Bank, after last year the US moved its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and controversially issued formal recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

Read More: [UN Security Council rebukes US on Israeli settlements](#)

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