



[U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem Offers Consular Services in Illegal West Bank Settlements](#)

This week, an announcement that the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem will offer passport and consular services at an illegal Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank has drawn condemnation as a blatant violation of international law. Analysts and international legal experts have outlined the wrongful nature of the move and how it sets a dangerous precedent, given that it de facto legitimizes unlawful Israeli control over these areas – blurring the lines between occupied land and sovereign territory. Further eliciting alarm was the embassy’s unveiling of plans for consular services to be provided in the coming months inside another illegal settlement as well as other locations.

Regrettably, the decision did not come as a total surprise to many. While the Trump administration has publicly voiced opposition to the idea of Israeli annexation of the occupied West Bank, it has not taken any measures to halt continued illegal settlement activity and other Israeli violations – which have been on the rise since Trump retook office last year. In fact, the U.S. has continued to use its global sway to shield Israel from being held accountable for its repeated breaches of international law – including illegal settlement expansion – and as a result, the recent announcement from the embassy was not a shock for many critics and rights advocates. These entities have highlighted how the move is highly problematic because it normalizes unlawful settlement expansion – essentially supporting the legitimacy of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank despite the fact that the global community considers these to be illegal. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention stipulates that an occupying power cannot transfer its civilian population into occupied territory. However, in total breach of this, Israel has done just that and consolidated control over what is universally acknowledged as Palestinian territory.

The scale of Israeli human rights violations and breaches of international law are immense and extend beyond illegal settlement activity and expansion. Various rights groups have documented an array of unlawful activities including the destruction of property, illegal seizure of land, the targeting of civilians, war crimes, arbitrary detentions, and torture of prisoners. All of this has prompted the issuing of arrest warrants for Israeli officials and the filing of genocide cases at the world’s highest courts and tribunals such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC). Yet despite the alarming and growing evidence of Israeli transgressions, the Trump administration has not only shielded Israel from mechanisms

of accountability, but it also has – in the case of the recent embassy announcement of the offering of consular services at an illegal Israeli settlement – rewarded Israel for its unlawful behavior. Ultimately, it is moves like these that regrettably only serve to embolden and enable repeated Israeli violations, while at the same time preventing concrete international forms of accountability from being initiated which could deter this from continuing to take place.

The enabling of Israeli breaches of international law is especially problematic in the current global climate given that worldwide perception of Israel has grown increasingly critical in recent years. Much of this has been fueled by Israel's devastating Gaza War and undeniable evidence of war crimes and human rights violations – both in Gaza and the West Bank. While the world has been largely fixated on what has transpired in Gaza since late 2023, human rights advocates have sought to draw attention to increasing Israeli violations in the occupied West Bank as well. This has seen an unprecedented rise in illegal settlement expansion and settler violence during this same period of time. Rather than initiate policies and actions which push back against these unlawful activities, recent decisions like the one to provide consular services in illegal Israeli settlements instead encourage further violations. As observers have outlined, the move is not only an administrative one, but a political one as well. It signals that the Trump administration is endorsing the continued unlawful expansion of Israeli settlements in occupied territory – much to the detriment of the upholding of international law and the prospects of long-term peace and stability.