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TOP EU DIPLOMAT WANTS EUROPEAN STRATEGY FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

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Criticizing the US Middle East peace plan, the EU's foreign policy chief said the bloc needs a strategy to end unrest between Israelis and Palestinians. He said he hopes both sides could accept the EU as a mediator.

In light of US President Donald Trump unveiling of his Middle East peace plan in January, the European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, said the bloc needs to formulate a European initiative to facilitate the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians.

"I would like to talk to the EU foreign ministers about what ideas the Europeans have and what initiative we could take to move the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians forward," Borrell said in an interview with German newspaper Die Welt on Friday.

However, he acknowledged that the bloc was far from united on the Middle East peace process, and both Israelis and Palestinians would have to accept the EU as mediators. "All this will be difficult, but it is not impossible," Borrell said.

Concerns of annexation

Borrell also reiterated his opposition to Trump's plan, which would give Israel control over Jewish settlements on the West Bank and Jordan Valley and call for a Palestinian state. The EU foreign policy chief said he was "particularly concerned that Israel could annex the Jordan Valley and other parts of the West Bank on the basis of this plan."

"This would be contrary to international law and UN Security Council resolutions," Borrell said. "It is not enough for the plan to be agreed with one country on the acquisition of new territories."

United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, passed on November 22, 1967, called for the exchange of land for peace. Since then, many of the attempts to establish peace in the region have referred to 242. The resolution was written in accordance with Chapter VI of the UN Charter, under which resolutions are recommendations, not orders.

Borrell reiterated that the EU is in favor of a two-state solution with an equivalent exchange of Israeli and Palestinian land. He said, from the EU's point of view, the goal must be for Israel and an independent, democratic and viable state of Palestine to live side by side and in mutual recognition.

Trump hailed his proposed solution as "the deal of the century," but the plan received a largely lukewarm response in Europe. Palestinian leaders rejected the US proposal both prior to and after its unveiling.

Palestinians are seeking an independent state, demanding all territories seized during the 1967 Six-Day War, including East Jerusalem and the West Bank. They also want 700,000 Israeli settlers to leave from these regions.

Kaynak/Source: