Foreign Ministry: Israeli official guarantees for himself war criminal classification at ICC

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The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates said yesterday that it was taking very seriously plans by Israeli Defense Minister Naftali Bennett to enable colonialist settlers to register “looted” Palestinian lands located in West Bank areas classified as C in the Land Registry in the Israeli Ministry of Justice, stressing that this plan would guarantee Bennett the classification of a war criminal in the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Reports said Bennett intends to allow the settlers to register the land in the Justice Ministry instead in the so-called civil administration, an arm of the Israeli military government that runs the occupied territories. The reports said Bennett, one of the top far right-wing officials in Israel, has instructed his ministry staff to study changing the existing legal system in the occupied territories and deal with the lands in the illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank in the Land Registry department of the Ministry of Justice in order to treat the settlers on equal footing as the rest of the citizens of Israel.

The Foreign Ministry said in a statement that “while it strongly condemns these colonialist expansionist instructions and orders, it holds the Israeli government and the occupying power fully and directly responsible for their results and repercussions.”

It warned that these instructions come within the framework of a colonial scheme aimed at annexing large parts of the occupied West Bank and imposing Israeli law on them in clear violation of international law.

It said that this plan shows a deliberate Israeli scorn of the ICC, which last week decided to open an investigation into Israeli settlement activities in the occupied territories on the ground that they could be considered as a war crime that could lead to the prosecution of top Israeli officials, a deliberate defiance of the international community, the United Nations and its resolutions, and the entire world order.

It called on the international community and the UN to officially denounce this move and to stop dealing with Israel as a country above the law.

The Foreign Ministry also called on the UN High Commissioner to make public the list of companies operating in the illegal settlements so that they will be held accountable for their action according to international law, and on the ICC to add Bennett’s name to the list of Israeli officials who persist in committing war crimes against the Palestinians.

“Bennett should not believe for a moment that he is protected from international legal accountability no matter what he does,” said the Foreign Ministry. “His fate is going to be the same as previous war criminals.”