

US “deeply concerned” about new Israeli settlements

By Pietro Lombardi, AU – November 12

WASHINGTON – The United States is “deeply concerned” about Israeli decision to build 200 new homes in east Jerusalem.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki said on Wednesday that this decision will not help reach an agreement over the two-state solution between Israel and Palestine, which she said is the only possible solution for the U.S. and its allies.



“We are deeply concerned about this decision particularly given the tense situation in Jerusalem,” Psaki said.

Increasing tensions

Israel on Wednesday [approved](#) the construction of 200 new houses in Ramot, a Jewish neighborhood of east Jerusalem. The Associated Press, citing Israeli officials, said that additional 174 homes were approved in an Arab neighborhood. This decision came just a few hours after a mosque was set on fire in the West Bank,

in a village between Ramallah and Nablus. Palestinian security forces blame extremist Jewish settlers.

Two days before Palestinians stabbed two people to death – a settler in the southern West Bank and an Israeli soldier in Tel Aviv.

The decision to expand construction, Psaki said, has the potential to exacerbate the difficult situation on the ground and will not contribute to the effort to reduce tension.

"Most importantly they are contrary to Israel's own stated goal of achieving a two-state solution because they make it more difficult to do that," Psaki said.

The new tensions led U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry to fly to Jordan to meet with King Abdullah. According to the Department of State, Kerry will also meet Palestinian President Mahnmoud Abbas to talk about the situation in Jerusalem. No mission to Tel Aviv is scheduled in the next weeks, although Psaki said that American and Israeli leaders talks almost every day.

A contended holy city

Israel occupied and annexed Jerusalem in 1967. About 20.000 Jewish Israeli live the east part of Jerusalem. The Ramot development, for example, houses 70,000 people. Palestinians want east Jerusalem to be their capital and consider the Israeli construction illegal.