



[Israel Approves Plans to Build Hundreds of New Settler Homes in the Final Days of the Trump Administration](#)

This week, during the waning hours of the Trump administration, Israel approved plans to build hundreds of new settler homes in the illegally-occupied West Bank. The global community views Israeli settlements as a blatant and harmful violation of international law and as such, many countries and regional organizations from around the world condemned this latest move. Ultimately, Trump leaves behind a legacy of biased policies and actions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. His administration initiated a variety of one-sided moves unjustly in favor of right-wing forces in Israel including reversing the longstanding stance that Israeli settlements in the West Bank are illegal, voicing support for the plans to annex parts of the territory, moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, closing a Palestinian mission in Washington D.C., and halting aid for Palestinian refugees. In doing all of this, Trump overturned decades of U.S. foreign policy and alienated the Palestinians from the peace process. However, with the end of his presidency, analysts are hopeful that the new Biden administration will adopt a fairer approach towards the issue.

The timing of the move is clearly intentional, with it being advanced in the final days of the pro-settlement Trump administration. Some view it as the last benefit, and in ways a parting gift, from the now-departed U.S. administration for embattled Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The prime minister ordered that the plans be advanced, and on Sunday, a government committee gave final ratification for 365 homes and preliminary approval for another 415, according to the Israeli anti-settlement group Peace Now. In recent years, the Israeli government has relied heavily on strong support from the Trump administration, which has baselessly argued that international laws prohibiting construction on land in the illegally-occupied West Bank are no longer valid.

Israel seized control of the West Bank, which the world acknowledges as a Palestinian territory, in 1967 and thus settlement construction in the area is illegal. However, during his time in office, Trump supported Netanyahu's attempts to cement control over it, and also gave the green light for potential Israeli annexation of much of the occupied territory. The spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas condemned the continuation of Israeli settlement expansion, expressing that it hinders a viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and undermines any future conversations regarding the peace process. Similarly, the European Union declared that the plans obstruct the prospects for a two-state solution and also run contrary to standards of international law.

As the Trump era comes to a close, he is set to go down as the most partial U.S. president towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As Netanyahu declared in a past press conference, "The 'Jewish State' has never had a better friend in the White House than this current president." Trump has enacted various biased actions such as the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the declaration of Israeli sovereignty over the disputed Golan Heights. Therefore, the latest move to approve plans for new settler homes can be viewed as one more secured privilege from Trump to Netanyahu in order to appease the latter's right-wing base in Israel. By providing unwavering approval for continued illegal settlement activity, Trump has done nothing to help resolve the conflict and has instead made the prospects for peace that much more difficult to achieve.