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Israel defies international law and announces yet more settlements in the Occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem

January 22nd 2017

Israeli authorities approve permits for 566 new settler homes and the construction of 105 Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem. The new settler homes will be built in the areas of Pisgat Zeev, Ramot and Ramat Shlomo.

Jerusalem's deputy mayor, Meir Turjeman, says, "The rules of the game have changed with Donald Trump's arrival as president. We no longer have our hands tied as in the time of Barack Obama. Now we can finally build."

According to Turjeman there are plans for some 11,000 other homes in east Jerusalem.

The announcement comes as the White House says it is 'in the beginning stages' of discussions to fulfil President Trump's pledge to relocate the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, a move that Palestinian leaders have said will mean the end of the two-state solution.

January 24th 2017

Israel approves the construction of 2,500 housing units in the occupied West Bank.

"I agreed with the Defence Minister on the construction of 2,500 housing units in Judea and Samaria," says Prime Minister Netanyahu, using the Biblical name for the West Bank. "We build and continue to build."

January 31st 2017

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Avigdor Liberman announce plans to build a further 3,000 homes in the West Bank, some of them outside settlement blocs Israel has said it hopes to keep in a future peace deal with the Palestinians.

The new settlement homes will include 700 homes in Alfei Menashe, 650 in Beitar Illit, 650 in Beit Arye, 200 in Nofim, 150 in Nokdim (Liberman's home settlement), 100 in Shilo, 100 in Karnei Shomron and 100 in Metsudot Yehuda.

The announcement appears to be an attempt by the government to calm settler anger over the court-ordered removal of the illegal outpost of Amona.

February 1st 2017

A few hundred residents of the Amona outpost in the occupied West Bank are evicted after the Supreme Court had ruled that their homes were built on private Palestinian land. The evictions are broadcast live on Israeli television.

Police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld says about 3,000 members of Israeli security forces were deployed to Amona, with many blocking access to roads to prevent settlers' supporters from joining efforts to resist the eviction. About 600 settlers protest, setting fires and throwing rocks, nails and other debris on the road in an attempt to hinder the security forces' passage.

By Wednesday afternoon, at least four protesters have been arrested and 15 police officers have suffered minor injuries after stones and liquids were thrown at them. Police say one family surrendered a bag containing weapons that had been stashed in their home.

Amid the evacuation, Naftali Bennett - the right-wing Jewish Home party leader and education minister in Benjamin Netanyahu's government - tells his supporters to move beyond the perceived setback of the outpost's clearance. "From the ruins of Amona we will move to build a new settlement. From this mountain we will move towards applying Israeli sovereignty over Judea and Samaria," he says.

February 6th 2017

By 60 votes to 52, the Israeli Knesset passes a controversial bill that would retroactively legalise thousands of settler homes built on privately owned Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank. According to Peace Now, the so-called *Regulation Bill* would apply to 53 outposts as well as to homes within existing settlements recognised by Israel. The bill would retroactively legalise the construction, with the original landowners to be compensated either with money or alternative land even if they do not agree to give up their property. More than 3,800 homes would be 'legalised'.

Shuli Mualem, of the Jewish Home party, dedicates the law to the people evicted from Amona. The new bill is praised, by far right Israeli MK Bezalel Smotrich, who describes the passage of the bill as a "historic day for the settlement movement and for Israel. Today, Israel decreed that developing settlement in Judea and Samaria [the West Bank] is an Israeli interest. From here we move on to expanding Israeli sovereignty [on the West Bank] and continuing to build and develop settlements across the land."

Palestinian cabinet minister for tourism and antiquities, Rula Maayaa, urges the international community to impose sanctions upon Israel in response to the bill. "Nobody can legalise the theft of the Palestinian lands. Building settlements is a crime, building settlements is against all international laws. I think it is time now for the international community to act concretely to stop the Israelis from these crimes."

February 15th 2017

President Trump, who had been widely seen in Israel as sympathetic toward settlements, appears to surprise Netanyahu during a White House visit when he urges him to "hold back on settlements for a little bit."

March 22nd 2017

According to figures released by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics Israel built 2,630 illegal settler homes in the occupied West Bank in 2016, an increase of 40 percent compared with numbers from 2015. Construction in 2016 was at its second highest in 15 years.

Citing the official data, *Peace Now* says 14,017 units have been started since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu returned to office in 2009.

March 24th 2017

The United Nations criticises Israel for not taking any steps to halt settlement building on occupied Palestinian territory, as demanded by *Security Council Resolution 2334*, which reaffirmed long-standing positions of the international community, and was adopted on December 23rd 2016 with 14 votes after the United States abstained.

In his first report to the council on the implementation of *Resolution 2334*, UN Middle East envoy Nickolay Mladenov, says Israel has not taken any steps to halt illegal settlement building on occupied Palestinian territory and instead has authorised 'a high rate' of settlement expansion in violation of international law.

"The resolution calls on Israel to take steps 'to cease all settlements activities in the occupied Palestinian territory including East Jerusalem.' No such steps have been taken during the reporting period," he says.

Speaking to reporters, Palestinian UN envoy, Riyad Mansour, says, "Settlements need to be stopped, not only because they are illegal, but they are the main obstacle in the path of the two-state solution."

March 29th 2017

Settlers' hopes are buoyed by the swearing-in of Donald Trump's bankruptcy lawyer, David Friedman, as the new American ambassador to Israel. Mr Friedman, is a longtime supporter of the Israeli right and has raised funds for building on the settlement of Beit El, well inside the West Bank. Beit El has also received donations from the family of Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, who has been made a senior White House adviser.

March 30th 2017

Israel's security cabinet approves the building of a new settlement in the occupied West Bank for the first time in 20 years. The new settlement will rehouse settlers from Amona to an area called Emek Shilo, 25km (15 miles) north of Jerusalem. The Emek Shilo settlement will be the first since 1999 to be built in the occupied West Bank.

Netanyahu says, "I made a promise that we would establish a new settlement ... We will keep it today."

At the same time, Netanyahu announces new guidelines on the construction of settlements that go beyond the agreement reached in 2002 between the late Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon and George W Bush.

In deference to Trump's request to 'hold back', Netanyahu says, "Israel will take necessary steps to minimise the expansion of developed area beyond the footprint of existing settlements in Judea and Samaria [the occupied Palestinian territories] and exhibit considerable restriction, to allow the progression of the peace process.

"Israel will build within the existing developed area, as much as possible. In areas where this is not possible, Israel will build along the existing development line. In areas where neither of these possibilities are feasible, due to legal, security, topographical or additional concerns, Israel will allow building in proximity as close as possible to the existing development line."

Describing the plan, one unnamed Israeli minister says, "This isn't an agreement with the Americans, but rather unilateral policy by the government of Israel. The Americans said that they don't agree with construction in the settlements in any case, but that they can live with it and there won't be an international crisis over every new home that's built."

Hanan Ashrawi, an executive committee member of the Palestine Liberation Organization, says, "Today's announcement once again proves that Israel is more committed to appeasing its illegal settler population than to abiding by the requirements for stability and a just peace."

The United Nations Secretary-General has said he is "disappointed and alarmed" by Israel's decision to build a new settlement on land the Palestinians seek for a state and has condemned the move.