

# *Israeli Ministerial Committee Passes Draft Bill Legalizing Settlements*

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Tel Aviv, November 14 (RHC)-- Israel's ministerial committee for legislation has approved draft legislation aimed at legalizing Jewish settlements constructed on private Palestinian land.

The bill, passed unanimously on Sunday, states that the Tel Aviv regime can order the confiscation of privately owned Palestinian land in exchange for compensation. The draft legislation still has to go through three readings in parliament and requires ratification in the Israeli Supreme Court.

The vote has received censure from various rights groups, including Israeli anti-settlement Peace Now group. Hagit Ofra, one of the group's directors, stressed that it is "a shame Israel is backing "a law that will allow the confiscation of privately owned Palestinian land in order to build settlements."

According to Americans for Peace Now, the number of Israeli settlements has grown dramatically over the past 20 years, with the construction of 11,000 new settler units authorized under Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Over half a million Israelis live in more than 230 illegal settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation

of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. All Israeli settlements are illegal under international law. Tel Aviv has defied calls to stop the expansion of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Israel's settlement expansion has been among the main reasons behind the collapse of the last round of the so-called Middle East peace talks in 2014.

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