Israel approves plans for 2,200 settler homes in West Bank

Tel Aviv, December 27 (RHC)-- Israeli authorities have approved plans for about 2,200 settlement homes in the occupied West Bank, an Israeli anti-settlement group says.

Peace Now, which monitors settlement activity in the West Bank, said in a statement on Wednesday that a committee in the Israeli ministry of military affairs on Tuesday and Wednesday advanced the plans. The approval process consists of various stages.

Some 1,159 housing units were given the final approval prior to the issuance of building permits, while 1,032 were at an earlier stage, the group said.

Settlements are an important political issue in Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing cabinet agreed Monday to dissolve parliament and call for snap elections on April 9.

Earlier, Netanyahu met with settler leaders in Jerusalem. "We'll see an attempt by the left-wing to overthrow our rule with the help of the media and others," he said, speaking of the polls.

"They can't succeed, because if they do, that will pose a clear danger to the settlement movement," he added.

About 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 illegal settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The last round of Israeli-Palestinian talks collapsed in 2014. Among the major sticking points in those negotiations was Israel's continued settlement expansion on Palestinian territories.

Less than a month before U.S. President Donald Trump took office, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2334, calling on Israel to "immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem."

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