

Israel Ruling Party Votes for Push to Annex Parts of West Bank

By enacting civilian law over settlements, move could streamline procedures for their construction and expansion

By [Middle East Eye](#)

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Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party unanimously urged legislators in a non-binding resolution on Sunday to effectively annex Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, land that Palestinians want for a future state.

By enacting civilian law over settlements, the move may streamline procedures for their construction and expansion. That land is currently under military jurisdiction and Israel's defence minister has a final say on building there.

The settlers are subject to Israeli civilian law.

"The time has come to express our Biblical right to the land," **Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan** told a meeting of Likud's Central Committee, according to the Jerusalem Post.

He added that Israel should not miss the opportunity of having in the White House US **President Donald Trump**, who Erdan said does not believe settlers are an obstacle to peace. He downplayed the role of the overwhelming majority of the rest of the international community.

Likud Central Committee votes to unanimously accept resolution calling on party's leaders to formally annex West Bank and increase settlement expansion <https://t.co/H5qHdgXKiW>

— AmericansforPeaceNow (@PeaceNowUS) [December 31, 2017](#)

"We are telling the world that it doesn't matter what the nations of the world say," Erdan told the crowd. "We must recognise this sovereignty."

Jamal Juma'a, Palestinian activist and coordinator of the Stop the Wall campaign, told MEE:

"It's clear that this is part of the consequences of Trump's decision concerning

Jerusalem, this is part of the ongoing process of annexation of the West Bank, it is another slap to international law.”

Netanyahu is not bound to follow the resolution. He did not attend the meeting, which attracted several hundred delegates including ministers, legislators and party officials. The Likud Central Committee is the party’s governing body.

The prime minister says he still supports a two-state solution with the Palestinians, although he has also pushed for Jewish settlement expansion in the West Bank, which has been under Israeli occupation for 50 years.

In October, Netanyahu decided to postpone a vote on a controversial bill that critics say would amount to the de facto annexation of Israeli settlements surrounding Jerusalem.

Deemed illegal

The bill had been expected to be voted on by a ministerial committee in a move that would fast-track its progress through parliament.

Israel occupied the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in the Six-Day War of 1967. It later annexed East Jerusalem in a move never recognised by the international community.

It sees the entire city as its indivisible capital, while the Palestinians want the eastern sector as the capital of their future state.

Israeli settlements are deemed illegal under international law and widely seen as the main obstacle to peace.

More than 600,000 Jewish settlers live in the occupied West Bank and annexed East Jerusalem among 2.9 million Palestinians, with frequent outbreaks of violence.

Likud’s Central Committee counts around 3,700 members, and according to Israeli media about 1,500 were present for Sunday’s vote.

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