

Israel approves largest West Bank settlement construction in 25 years

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Israel has greenlighted plans for over 8,000 new homes in the West Bank, with over a third for “immediate” construction, the defense minister revealed on Sunday, making it the largest expansion of Jewish settlements in the area in 25 years.

According to Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman, 3,651 settlements were approved last week, Haaretz reports. The minister [noted](#) that *“What we’ve approved on June 6 and 7 is the maximum that can be approved.”*

Plans for 8,345 new housing units have been approved by the Israeli authorities so far this year, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency [writes](#), citing Liebermann. Out of these, 3,066 have been given final approval and will soon be built.

[@RT.com](#) [#Israel](#) pushes to legalize West Bank settlements as [#Trump](#) arrives in Tel Aviv <http://on.rt.com/8cas>



*“The numbers for the first half of 2017 are the highest since 1992,”* Lieberman said, as [cited](#) by local media and news agencies.

The defense minister also praised Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government for its aggressive stance on expanding Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

*“There was no better government in terms of settlement construction,”* he [said](#), according to Haaretz.

For some, however, the plans appear to fall short of expectations.

Read more [Israel plans construction of 15,000 new settlements in E. Jerusalem](#)



*“I respect the defense minister very much but unfortunately the numbers he mentioned aren’t correct,”* Yossi Dagan, the head of the Samaria Regional Council, said, according to the newspaper. According to Dagan, most of the approved units *“are counted five or six times,”* essentially putting the *“real number”* under 2,000 housing units.

However, according to Lieberman, pushing for more would *“stretch the rope beyond its limit, and thus put the entire settlement enterprise at risk.”*

Nearly 400,000 Jewish settlers are estimated to be living in the West Bank along with 2.8 million Palestinians. Another 200,000 Israelis live in East Jerusalem, an area [claimed](#) by Palestinians.

The construction of settlements in the region is considered illegal under international law. The international community has long voiced concerns over the controversial constructions while condemning the deteriorating security situation between Israelis and Palestinians.

The government of Israel stopped building official settlements in 1992, according to Israeli monitoring group Peace Now. That, however, did not stop the construction of unauthorized settlements in the West Bank.