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Israel's approval of new West Bank settlements condemned by 13 European countries and Japan

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Israelis look at troops standing guard during a weekly settlers' tour in Hebron, in the ...



the month to approve 19 new Jewish settlements in the Occupied West Bank saying the move harmed the prospects for long term peace and security in the region.

"Such unilateral actions, as part of a wider intensification of the settlement policies in the West Bank, not only violate international law but also risk fueling instability," they said **in a joint statement**.

The Israeli cabinet **approved the legalization** and establishment of 19 settler outposts on December 11, according to an Israeli source familiar with the matter. Far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, himself a settler, announced the move in a **social media post** on Sunday.

The decision authorizes 19 outposts across the West Bank, including two that were evacuated in the 2005 disengagement plan, and it comes at a time when Israeli settler violence there towards Palestinians has surged.

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Wednesday's joint statement was issued by the states of Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom.

"We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the Two-State solution in accordance with relevant UN Security Council resolutions where two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, live side-by-

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Israel's Foreign Minister rejected the statement, asserting Jewish people have the right to establish a national homeland extending over the entire territory of "Mandatory Palestine."

"Foreign governments will not restrict the right of Jews to live in the Land of Israel," he said in a post on X.

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The West Bank, which lies west of the Jordan River between Israel and Jordan, has been occupied by the Israeli military since 1967 and is home to more than 3.3 million Palestinians.

Israeli leaders have become ever more explicit in their rejection of a future Palestinian state in the leadup to and since the October 7 Hamas attack, despite international calls for a negotiated solution to the decades-long occupation.

"We are blocking on the ground the establishment of a Palestinian terror state. We will continue to develop, build, and settle in the land of our forefathers' inheritance, with faith in the justice of our path," Smotrich said in his statement announcing the settlement expansion.

Surging settler attacks on Palestinians



Israeli bulldozers are seen working in the abandoned Jewish settlement of Sa'anur, south of Jenin in the West Bank, in preparation for the return of Jewish settlers, following the Israeli government's approval of their return, on December 23, 2025. (*Nasser Ishtayeh/SOPA Images/LightRocket/Getty Images*)

Israeli settlements overall are considered illegal under international law. Outposts, in addition to being illegal under international law, are also illegal under Israeli law.

Settlers establish outposts with the goal of receiving authorization for the illegal buildings in the future. Many of the newly authorized settlements are deep within the West Bank.

In May, Israel announced it would establish 22 new settlements in what Israeli settlement watchdog organization Peace Now said was the largest expansion of settlements in more than 30 years.

Israel's current right-wing government has established dozens since its term began in 2023, marking a dramatic acceleration and expansion of settlement activity.

At the same time, Israel has also been conducting **military operations and Palestinian home demolitions** in the occupied West Bank, leading to widespread dislocation with UN and Palestinians officials warning the moves amount to forced displacement.

Meanwhile Jewish settler attacks on Palestinians and their properties have surged this year, particularly during the olive harvest season in October and November.

Dozens of videos filmed by Palestinian farmers and activists have shown masked Israeli settlers carrying clubs and sticks and sometimes wielding rifles while attacking Palestinians and Israeli-Jewish activists standing in solidarity with them.

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Other videos have shown settlers acting with soldiers nearby, often supporting them.

least 201 attacks in October, the largest number since the UN began tracking incidents in 2006. The repeated attacks have marred this year's olive harvest.

The UN has urged Israel, as the occupying power, to prevent further attacks in the West Bank.

"The failure to prevent or punish such attacks is inconsistent with international law," the UN Humanitarian Relief Chief Tom Fletcher warned. "Palestinians must be protected. Impunity cannot prevail. Perpetrators must be held accountable."



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