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Israeli Housing Minister to permit 1460 new housing units in East Jerusalem settlements

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Saturday May 31, 2008

In another blatant violation of the promise made in Annapolis in September 2007 by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to halt settlement construction, the Israeli Housing Minister Ze'ev Boim announced Friday that he will be issuing permits for 1,460 new housing units in three Israeli settlements built on Palestinian land in East Jerusalem.

The announcement came just days before the Israeli Prime Minister plans to visit Washington to report on the progress of the peace process. After the so-called 'Annapolis Summit', which was a one-day meeting between Israeli and Palestinian factions in Annapolis, MD in the US, Ehud Olmert announced that all new construction in Israeli settlements must be approved by both himself and the Defense Minister. But despite that promise, construction has continued unabated in a number of West Bank settlements.

Housing Minister Ze'ev Boim said in an interview with the Kol Hai radio station on Friday that the permits for the 1,460 new units were meant as a "gift to the city [of Jerusalem] on the 41st anniversary of its emancipation." This is a reference to the creation of the state of Israel on Palestinian land in 1947, and the subsequent disenfranchisement of the hundreds of thousands of indigenous Palestinians living on the land.

The settlements in question are: Har Homa, built on land stolen from the Palestinian residents of Beit Sahour municipality, Pisgat Ze'ev, built on land stolen from the Palestinian village of Hizma, and Beitar Illit, built on land stolen from Palestinians south of Jerusalem. The new units to be constructed will be 120 units in Har Homa, 600 units in the settlement of Beitar Illit and 700 units in Pisgat Ze'ev.

In April, when the permits for the new units gained initial approval, Israeli journalist Uzi Benjamin wrote in the Israeli paper Ha'aretz, "There is no doubt about it: The ultra-Orthodox factions have become the spearhead of the settlement enterprise over the Green Line, and they are busy competing with one another over which of them will lead it...Olmert tries to pretend that his response to their demands is mere small change, but in fact they are dictating the agenda with regard to settlement over the

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Green Line and, in this way, they have an influence over the entire Israeli-Palestinian arena."

In 2006, when these three settlements were widely expanded with the approval of the Israeli government, Palestinians pleaded with Israel to cease the ever-increasing encroachment onto Palestinian land in the West Bank. Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said at the time, "This act of expanding settlements, is a choice for more obstacles and more problems and more violence. I really hope that the new government will stop this." Instead, the government of Ehud Olmert announced a plan to lay down final borders for the Israeli state by 2008.

Over 30,000 Orthodox Jews live in Beitar Ilit alone. All Israeli settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem are in direct violation of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which Israel is a signatory.

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:: ONU - Risoluzione 1514 "L'Assemblea Generale dichiara che: la soggezione dei popoli a dominio straniero, conquista e asservimento costituisce una negazione dei diritti umani fondamentali, è contraria alla Carta delle Nazioni Unite ed è un impedimento alla promozione della pace e della cooperazione mondiali. Tutti i popoli hanno diritto all' autodeterminazione; in virtù di tale diritto essi devono liberamente determinare il loro status politico

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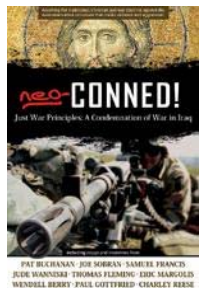
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