

Israelis 'building 600 new homes in West Bank'

AP

Monday, 25 October 2010

- [Share](#)
- [Print](#)
- [Email](#)

Work has begun on up to 600 new homes in West Bank settlements since Israel lifted its curb on such construction, a senior settler official said.

The figure mirrors recent findings from other sources, including the Israeli watchdog Peace Now.

Foundations are already being dug for at least 350 apartments, while construction of another 200 to 250 homes is in more preliminary stages, the official said yesterday.

A second settler official said he believes some of the construction is already more advanced and out of the total being built, 400 to 500 apartments have reached the stage of foundation work.

Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they are not authorised to release figures on the delicate topic, which has stalled US-led peace talks.

Assessing the extent of post-freeze construction is difficult because Israel's government has declined to release information and settlement officials generally do not provide detailed data.

Peace Now, which is conducting an extensive survey of building activity, has reported that work has begun on at least 600 new homes since restrictions, which Israel imposed in November 2009 for 10 months, were lifted on September 26.

A count by the Associated Press found that - as of early last week - work had begun on at least 544 apartments.

The count was based on visits to 16 settlements and interviews with several settlement mayors who were asked about housing starts in their areas.

The building spurt of the past weeks compares to a total of just under 1,900 settlement housing starts in all of 2009, or 36 per week, as reported by the government.

Peace Now researcher Hagit Ofran said she estimates that the pace is at least two and up to four times faster than before.

Part of the difficulty in nailing down the comparison to official data is that the government provides only delayed and periodic updates and does not start counting until construction progresses from levelling land to digging foundations.

Ofran said she believes construction tends to proceed very quickly from preliminary stages to foundation work because settlers and contractors are concerned about the possibility of a renewed freeze.

When building restrictions were imposed last November, contractors were allowed to continue building settlement houses whose foundations had already been poured. In this way, and by allowing "exceptions" to the freeze, construction proceeded at a fairly brisk rate throughout the moratorium.

Ofran said that during that time, settlers had prepared well for the resumption of construction. "It is not a surprise, because we knew this was coming," she said. "Unless the government imposes a freeze, the settlers will continue to build."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said any new construction would be kept to a minimum. Settler leaders have complained that the government is holding up several major construction projects.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas says he will only resume talks once building restrictions are reimposed, arguing there is no point negotiating while Israel continues to build on land the Palestinians want for a future state.

About 300,000 settlers already live among 2.5 million Palestinians in the West Bank, and another 200,000 Jews live in east Jerusalem - both of which Israel captured in the 1967 war and are claimed by the Palestinians for their state.

[Recommend](#) 42

8 retweet

[Sponsored Links](#)

Ads by Google

20% Better With Betfair

Want Better Odds on Sports & RacingBet With Betfair. Sign Up Today!
www.Betfair.com.au

308 Special Edition

308 Sportium from \$32,990 d/a withloads of extras. Limited time only.
www.peugeot.com.au

\$100 Free Bet As You Join

Join Sportingbet now, deposit \$30 &receive \$100 free bet. Join now!
www.sportingbet.com.au

How To Make Electricity :

Why pay for electricity when youcan make it simple & cheap at home.
Power4homepro.com

@independent.co.uk [Terms & Policies](#) | [Email newsletter](#) | [RSS](#) | [Contact us](#) | [Syndication](#) | [Advertising Guide](#) | [London Careers](#) | [Subscriptions](#) | [Jobs](#)