

## **Israel passes law legalising thousands of settlement homes on Palestinian lands**

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**Jerusalem:** Despite international condemnations and warnings that the law is "unconstitutional", the Israeli Parliament on Monday passed a law to retroactively legalise wildcat Jewish outposts built on private Palestinian lands.

### **File pic - Benjamin Netanyahu**

The measure is expected to trigger international outrage and a flurry of lawsuits against the Israeli government's move.

The explosive law is the latest in a series of pro-settler steps taken by Israel's hard-line government since the election of Donald Trump as US President. He is seen as more sympathetic to Israel's settlement policies than his fiercely critical predecessor, and the Israeli government has approved plans to build thousands of new homes on occupied territory since Trump took office.

Critics say the legislation enshrines into law the theft of Palestinian land, and it is expected to be challenged in Israel's Supreme Court.

The Knesset (Parliament) approved the "Regulation Bill" in a 60-52 vote in a late-night session. According to the law, Palestinian landowners would be compensated either with money or alternative land, even if they did not agree to give up their property.

The outposts were erected by ultra-right settlers without permits from the Israeli authorities but the governments often have turned a blind eye to their construction. There are additional 120 settlements that Israel considered as legal.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Attorney General has called the Bill unconstitutional and said that he won't defend it in the Supreme Court.

Critics have warned it could drag Israel into a legal battle at the International Criminal Court at The Hague, Netherlands, which is already pursuing a preliminary examination into settlements.

Palestinians condemned the law.

"This is an escalation that would only lead to more instability and chaos. It is unacceptable. It is denounced and the international community should act immediately," said Nabil Abu Rdeneh, a spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

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