

Israel Okays New West Bank Settlement Construction

An Israeli official says Israel has approved the construction of 3,000 new housing units in West Bank settlements.

Friday's announcement comes a day after the United Nations recognized "Palestine" as a non-member observer state.

The Palestinians say U.N. recognition of a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem will help resume moribund Middle East peace talks. Peace negotiations have been frozen for the past four years as the Palestinians have refused to negotiate while Israeli settlement construction continued.

Israel fiercely denounced the U.N. bid. It says peace can only come from direct negotiations and not unilateral moves.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the decision.