

Netanyahu: Israel Won't Back Down

Israel's prime minister brushed off international uproar over a planned new settlement project near Jerusalem, claiming that Israel will keep the area under any future peace deal. Israel's plans to build 3,000 new homes in the corridor east of Jerusalem triggered sharp criticism in Europe—including from Germany, traditionally one of Israel's most stalwart allies.

The move came after the UN General Assembly, (illicitly undermining the Oslo accord agreements), voted to support a Palestinian statehood bid—with Germany abstaining rather than voting against. Netanyahu's tough comments were the latest sign he has no plans to step back from his plans to develop the area.

Palestinians say building homes in the so-called E1 corridor would make it impossible for them to establish a viable state in the West Bank.

"After the decision of the UN General Assembly, every centimeter in Jerusalem and the West Bank is Palestinian land, and every Israeli settlement is illegal," said Nabil Abu Rdeneh, a senior adviser to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Netanyahu offered no indication his government might be prepared to backtrack. The contentious corridor is small, he told reporters, and "successive governments from Yitzhak Rabin on down to my predecessor, Mr. Ehud Olmert, have also said this would be incorporated in a final peace treaty."