



Yesh Din

Volunteers for Human Rights

Renewing Settlement of Title (Land Registry) in the West Bank

Yesterday, May 11, 2025, the Political-Security Cabinet approved the proposal by Finance Minister and additional Minister in the Ministry of Defense Bezalel Smotrich (and by the former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant) to resume the land registration process in the West Bank. The process aims to formalize land tenure in hundreds of thousands of dunams of land and will consequently violate the human rights of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who are at risk of losing title to their plots. Simultaneously, it will prioritize settlers and grant them yet another channel through which to take over Palestinian lands.

Settlement of title is a process designed to make definitive, decisive, and conclusive findings with respect to land title in every unit of land in order to settle title claims and determine state ownership in the remaining lands. Ownership is established following complex examinations and inquiries into the history of title in the unit. Settlement of title procedures in the West Bank began during the British Mandate and continued under Jordanian rule in the area. By the time Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967, settlement of title had concluded with regard to approximately one-third of all West Bank land. One of the first acts carried out by Israel's Military Commander of the Area was the suspension of settlement of title.

The decision to resume the process must be seen alongside other Israeli measures aimed at expanding Israeli control in the West Bank while erasing Palestinian presence and rights. The current government is advancing a range of steps that entrench systematic discrimination, particularly in land allocation, and deepening the annexation. Settlement of title—shaped by Israeli officials with ideological agendas and without Palestinian participation—will deepen this inequality, accelerating the dispossession of Palestinians from Area C and the transfer of land to Israeli hands.

According to this unprecedented and dramatic decision, registration by the Palestinian Authority in Area C will not be recognized, and its products—including documents, maps, records, and approvals—will have no legal validity or standing in any official proceeding in the State of Israel. In addition, the Israeli security establishment will be instructed to act to prevent the continuation of any land registration procedures by the Palestinian Authority, including preventing the entry of professionals into area C, blocking foreign assistance for land registration, and issuing a direct demand to the Palestinian Authority to cease its activities in this domain. An inter-ministerial team will be established to complete the professional, legal, and budgetary preparations to implement the decision within 60 days.

The decision to renew settlement of title is, effectively, an implicit declaration of sovereignty, as it is an irreversible act that is characteristic of a permanent regime and, therefore, an indirect instrument for the application of Israeli sovereignty. Exercising this dimension of sovereignty constitutes annexation in breach of international law. Moreover, renewing settlement of title would negate the property rights of hundreds of thousands of West Bank residents who became absentees following the 1967 war and are not physically present in the West Bank and consequently cannot protect their property. The potential harm is compounded given the fact that, by their own admission, the Israeli authorities

operating in the West Bank lack complete information about the status of land registration in many areas and villages. This renders settlement of title impracticable and, should it proceed, a breach of international law, which prohibits making changes to the occupied territory and requires the occupying power to safeguard private property. In 2021, Yesh Din published a position paper explaining the procedure and analysing its illegality and expected ramifications on human rights.

[**Read our position paper on settlement of title**](#)

A precedent for the problematic implications of lifting the freeze on the settlement of title process is reflected in East Jerusalem, where in 2018, Israel resumed the process. The vast majority of land for which the settlement process was completed in Jerusalem serves the interests of the state and/or the settlement enterprise. According to a report by *Bimkom* and *Ir Amim*, as of November 2024, no single land parcel had been fully registered in the name of Palestinian landowners. The process itself is not sufficiently clear, transparent, or accessible to the public. Moreover, many Palestinians refrain from participating in the process out of fear of losing their land, as the process threatens to undermine their claims to the lands and gradually push them beyond the city's borders.

[**Read the report by Bimkom & Ir Amim**](#)

Tomorrow, May 13, the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee is expected to hold a second discussion in preparation for the first vote in the Knesset on the proposed law to “Eliminate Discrimination in Land Acquisition,” which recently passed a preliminary vote. The proposed bill aims to ease the

purchase of land in the occupied territory by settlers and to expand the settlement enterprise.

It cannot be stressed enough how dangerous the combination of these two decisions is. Both resuming the settlement of title process and passing a law that will enable any Israeli citizen to individually purchase lands in the West Bank are direct acts of annexation, which will have far-reaching, long-term ramifications for the legal and political future of the West Bank.

Yesh Din has presented the committee with our position paper, explaining the opposition to this bill for the following reasons:

1. The bill directly contradicts the provisions of international law as it constitutes an act of annexation of occupied territory to the State of Israel and the application of Israeli sovereignty to this territory through legislation in an area that is not part of the State of Israel.
2. The bill contradicts the obligations of the military commander under international law and places the military commander at risk of committing violations of international humanitarian law.
3. The very act of legislation by the Israeli Knesset beyond the borders of the State of Israel, concerning real estate and the rights of individuals who are not citizens of the State of Israel and are prevented from participating in the legislative process, is unconstitutional and illegitimate and itself constitutes an act of annexation.
4. The legislation contradicts the provisions of public international law and seeks to promote long-term changes in the occupied territory aimed at entrenching Israeli ownership of land located outside the borders of the State of Israel.

5. The result of implementing this legislation would be the deepening of discrimination against Palestinians and the entrenchment of Jewish supremacy in land ownership in the West Bank.
6. The bill in effect seeks to repeal the former military order, intended to ensure security oversight over land acquisitions and the establishment of property rights in territory under belligerent occupation, thereby removing the oversight of the military and the Civil Administration over the legality of such transactions.

Join Our WhatsApp Group for Diplomatic Updates

We invite you to join our WhatsApp group for diplomatic updates, in which we send periodic updates on important developments in the West Bank easily and conveniently. It is a 'silent' group, meaning only the administrators can post messages, and there are no conversations or debates. You are welcome to join and share the link with colleagues.

Join Yesh Din's new WhatsApp group

Follow Yesh Din on Twitter

For more information contact: Yahav Erez || Yahave@yesh-din.org || +972 (0)54.759.2456

For media inquiries contact: Uri Cirlin || +972 54-559-6178

Yesh Din is required by law to make the following statement:

Yesh Din is mostly funded by foreign governmental entities - through grants devoted to the provision of humanitarian assistance and the promotion of human rights. A list of our donors is available on the Israeli Associations Register's website and on Yesh Din's website.

Yesh Din is proud to be funded by States that are committed to the rule of law, that believe the occupation is not an internal Israeli matter, and that support the defense of international humanitarian law and human rights.



Copyright © 2025 Yesh Din, All rights reserved.

You are receiving this email because you signed up through our website

Our mailing address is:

Yesh Din
PO Box 50304
Tel Aviv 6150201
Israel

[Add us to your address book](#)

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#)
