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Shalom Achshav Peace Foundation**

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## NEWS

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### PEACE NOW CONDEMNS ISRAEL'S PLANS FOR 73,300 NEW HOMES IN WEST BANK

TORONTO--[March 3, 2009]

Plans by the Israeli government to build more than 73,300 new housing units in the West Bank are a serious obstacle to the resumption of meaningful Palestinian and Israeli negotiations and should be condemned by the Canadian and other Western governments, Canadian Friends of Peace Now said today.

The plans by Israel's Ministry of Housing and Construction were revealed in a report issued yesterday by Peace Now in Israel. The report is based on data available on the Israeli government Website. According to the report, approval has already been given for the construction of 15,000 housing units, while final approval is pending for a further 58,000 units. A total of 5,722 of the planned housing units are to be built in East Jerusalem.

"A new right-wing government under Prime Minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu holds out the prospect of "expanding settlement growth at a rapid pace... with the clear intention of destroying the possibility of a two-state solution," said Dr. Steve Scheinberg, President of CFPN, Montreal. "This is totally unacceptable."

"Mr. Netanyahu has already made clear his opposition to peace negotiations aimed at a two-state solution," said Sheldon Gordon, President of CFPN, Toronto. "While he has said that a Likud-led government would not build new settlements, it would allow natural growth in the existing settlements. Yet, according to the data, 17,000 units are planned for the Gush Etzion area, near Bethlehem, and would be constructed beyond existing settlements.

If all the plans are realized, the number of settlers in the Occupied Territories will be doubled (an addition of approximately 300,000 persons, based upon an average of four persons in each housing unit). The report notes, too, that some 19,000 of the planned homes would be built beyond the route of the separation barrier, including in Kiryat Arba in Hebron and Ariel.