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## Israel Approves West Bank Land Registration Amid Criticism



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JERUSALEM, Feb. 15 – Israel’s cabinet has approved new measures to advance land registration in the occupied West Bank, a move officials say will strengthen administrative control and address land disputes, while Palestinians and rights groups warn it could facilitate settlement expansion. The decision marks the first formal land registration process in the territory since 1967, when Israel captured the West Bank in the Middle East war. Israeli ministers said the step would

increase transparency and serve as a security measure. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich described it as part of efforts to reinforce Israel's presence across what he called "all parts of our land," while Defence Minister Israel Katz said it responds to what Israel views as unauthorized Palestinian land registration initiatives.

The West Bank is among territories Palestinians seek for a future independent state. Much of the area remains under Israeli military control, with limited Palestinian self-rule exercised by the Palestinian Authority.

The Palestinian presidency condemned the move as "de-facto annexation" and warned it could entrench occupation through expanded settlement activity. Israeli settlement watchdog Peace Now said the measure could potentially lead to Palestinian dispossession across large parts of the West Bank.

International legal and diplomatic scrutiny continues. In 2024, the International Court of Justice issued a non-binding advisory opinion stating Israel's occupation and settlements in Palestinian territories are illegal and should end, a view Israel disputes.

U.S. President Donald Trump has ruled out formal annexation of the West Bank, though his administration has not moved to halt ongoing settlement construction.