

Israel to freeze some settlement projects

by UPI

JERUSALEM -- Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert bowed to U.S. demands and directed all construction activity in Judea, Samaria and parts of Jerusalem to stop. IsraelNationalNews.com on Friday cited an Israeli Army Radio report that said Olmert and the Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni tried to persuade the U.S. government during the Annapolis, Md., peace talks that construction projects slated for Har Homa in southeast Jerusalem shouldn't be included in the bans on housing projects. The United States and the Palestinian Authority refused this position and Olmert fell into step. "Israel will not take any new steps that will have ramifications on that which is being done on the ground," Olmert said. The Israeli Army Radio report indicated Olmert reached no official decision on the construction freeze in the Palestinian territories but noted Israel's obligation to the mandates outlines in the "road map." Olmert's decision is contentious in Israel as the right-wing parties Shas and Yisrael Beiteinu threatened to quit the government in response. The "road map" is a peace plan proposed by the European Union, Russia, the United Nations and the United States detailing steps to create an independent Palestinian state existing alongside Israel. U.S. President George Bush is to visit Israel on Jan. 9.

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