



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will approve the construction of hundreds of new housing units in Israeli settlements in the West Bank in the coming days as a prelude to a building freeze of six to nine months aimed at restarting peace talks with the Palestinians, senior Israeli officials said on Friday.

The plan is an attempt to ease pressure on Mr. Netanyahu from within his own Likud Party, which **wants settlements to continue unimpeded**, and from Washington, the Palestinian Authority and the rest of the Arab world, which want a total halt to such construction.

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