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## PM to head ministerial committee on settlement affairs

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<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4238903,00.html> <sup>[1]</sup>

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In a move meant to placate right-wing ministers, Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#)<sup>[2]</sup> said Wednesday that he will head a new ministerial committee that would deal with settlement affairs.

The announcement was made hours before the Knesset convened to vote on a bill aiming to legalize homes built on contested land in the West Bank.

The formation of the committee would essentially rescind authority over settlement matters granted almost exclusively to Defense Minister [Ehud Barak](#)<sup>[3]</sup>. The prime minister's bureau said that Barak was privy to the decision.

The government is expected to discuss the structure and responsibilities of the committee early next week.

[Likud](#)<sup>[4]</sup> lawmakers have been calling for the replacement of the defense minister, accusing Barak and [Kadima](#)<sup>[5]</sup> of pulling their party to the Left.

### Bibi's solution

Meanwhile, Attorney General Yehuda Weinstein has submitted his review of the legal implications of the [prime minister's plan](#)<sup>[6]</sup> to remove five homes built on contested land in [Ulpana](#)<sup>[7]</sup>, a neighborhood located in the West Bank settlement of Beit El. Netanyahu's bureau said Wednesday that Weinstein's recommendations are in line with the prime minister's demands.

The Knesset plenum is expected to vote on Wednesday on the [settlement regulation bill](#)<sup>[8]</sup> – a legislation that is meant to circumvent the High Court of Justice's ruling that calls for the removal of the Ulpana homes.

The bill stipulates that unless a Palestinian owner appeals alleged illegal construction on his land within four years of its discovery, the buildings in question are to be left as they are. The legislation is to apply to neighborhoods built in the West Bank that consist of at least 20 housing units.

Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said Wednesday morning that [Yisrael Beiteinu](#)<sup>[9]</sup>'s ministers and Knesset members will oppose the legislation, and will accept the prime minister's plan instead. [Shas](#)<sup>[10]</sup> legislators are not expected to attend the Knesset session.

Netanyahu, who opposes the legislation, proposed his plan as an alternative. As per the plan, the contested homes are to be relocated to a military zone within Beit El. The leader expressed concern that the settlement regulation bill will draw international criticism and warned that anyone who votes in favor of the bill will be fired. "The solution we found empowers the settlements and preserves the rule of law," he said.

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