

PEF Statement regarding 'The Heritage Authority in Samaria and Judea Bill, 2026'

The Israeli Cabinet has approved a bill to take direct control of territories within the Occupied West Bank under a new Israeli civil authority, with particular reference to antiquities and cultural heritage sites. The PEF states its deep concern at the passing of this bill which directly contravenes International Law with regard to cultural heritage in occupied territories, and undermines efforts to negotiate peace in the region. The bill has passed to the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) for its first reading.

The bill outlines plans to establish a new statutory authority under the Ministry of Heritage to govern antiquity sites in the West Bank.

All reference to the Palestinian Occupied Territories (West Bank and Gaza) is now removed and it is simply referred to as 'The Area'.

By transferring oversight from a military to a civil authority, this bill effectively moves the occupation toward direct annexation, using archaeology and cultural heritage as the method of transfer.

Additionally, it is proposed that public buildings repairs of the Tomb of the Patriarchs/Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron be transferred from the Palestinian Municipality of Hebron to the Jewish Settlements. This transfer is likely to apply to other heritage sites in the locality.

The passing of this bill by the Israeli cabinet, and its progression towards legislation in the Knesset is happening despite strong objections from legal advisors, the Israel Antiquities Authority and many Israeli academics and academic institutions. We join our colleagues in objecting to this new bill, as it contravenes our guidelines as they pertain to international law regarding the protection of cultural heritage in occupied territories.¹

¹ See our ethical statement [here](#).