



Israeli officials have taken the highly controversial step of creating the first university in a settlement in the West Bank. A higher education council for the occupied territory decided in favour of the upgrade for the college in Ariel, after it was recommended by Israel's education minister.

It is being seen as a significant victory for the settler movement. However many Israeli academics and the Palestinians have condemned the move.

Settlements are considered illegal under international law although Israel disputes this. Ariel is one of the largest settlements in the West Bank.

The change in status for Ariel University Centre of Samaria is seen as giving it greater legitimacy and further permanence.

"Today should be a celebration day," the mayor and founder of Ariel, Ron Nachman, told the BBC. "Another university is born. Thirteen-thousand students will become students of a new university. Ariel is a university city."

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