

## 'Gaza is ours, forever'

### Israel's 'strategy' of ethnic cleansing in Gaza

By Ramzy Baroud  
Journalist, author

OPINION

Under the slogan 'Gaza is Ours, Forever', a large number of Israeli extremists and right-wing politicians met in the settlement of Be'eri, near the Gaza border region, on October 20–21. The group represented the who's who in the Israeli right, far right, and ultranationalists. They included Israeli Ministers Itamar Ben-Gvir, May Golan, and Bezalel Smotrich, as well as

ten MKs of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party. The event, entitled "Preparing to Resettle Gaza", was organized by one of Israel's most extreme settler movements, Nachala, led by the notorious Daniella Weiss.

To appreciate how extremist this 79-year-old settler is, consider this: on June 27, the Canadian government, though one of the most stalwart supporters of Netanyahu and his wars, imposed sanctions on her, due to her "role in facilitating (...) acts of violence by Israeli extremist settlers against Palestinian civilians."

The hate-filled conference, however, was but a culmination of a year-long effort to build a case of why Israel should ethnically cleanse Palestinians in the Strip and re-establish illegal settlements.

The story, however, does not start on October 7. In 2005, Israel decided to redeploy its forces out of the tiny coastal region. That was the start of the hermetic Israeli siege on the Strip, which led to multiple wars and, ultimately, the October 7 events and the ongoing genocide.

Although the number of Jewish settlers who were evacuated from the dismantled 15 illegal settlements was fairly small — 8,500 — the sense of betrayal felt by the settlers created deep divisions throughout Israeli society.

Chaotic scenes of settlers being forcefully removed from the Gush Katif settlements bloc in Gaza created a national crisis in Israel and was compared to the forceful evacuation of the illegal Sinai settlement of Yamit, which Israel dismantled in April 1982 as part of a previous agreement with Egypt. But, why the crisis?

the war, October 7, 2023, Netanyahu made his intentions clear: "I say to the residents of Gaza: Leave now because we will operate forcefully everywhere."

On October 17, a position paper introduced by the Israeli Misgav Institute for National Security & Zionist Strategy called for the "relocation and final settlement of the entire Gaza population". The report saw in the war "a unique and rare opportunity to evacuate the whole Gaza Strip" into the Sinai desert. Later that same month, the Israeli intelligence ministry itself became involved, with the Israeli news outlet Calcalist publishing a document "recommend(ing) the transfer of Gaza residents to Sinai."

On November 14, far-right Minister Smotrich spoke of 'voluntary migration'. In December, media reports said that Netanyahu himself had told Likud party members that Israel's real challenge is finding "countries that are willing to absorb them", meaning the people of Gaza. Conferences began to be organized to gather support around the idea of ethnically cleansing Palestinians. The first major conference was held by a coalition of settler movements last December. "A house on the beach is not a dream", an advertisement for the gathering proclaimed. The 'beach' here is a reference to the Gaza beach.

Even Jared Kushner, Donald Trump's son-in-law,



Israelis dance during a demonstration calling for Jewish resettlement of the Gaza Strip, near the border with Gaza on October 21, 2024.  
● TSAFRIR ABAYOV/AP

Israel is a settler-colonial society, which has linked its colonial expansion to religious diktats and prophecies. So, the forced departure from Gaza, to most of these settlers, must have appeared to represent both national treason and a sacrilegious act.

This is why resettling Gaza became the immediate rallying cry for Israeli settlers. Compared to their limited political share of power during the redeployment of 2005, current extremists are now effectively the decision-makers.

While the army remains unclear regarding its strategic objectives in Gaza, the settlers have always been aware of the nature of their mission: the ethnic cleansing of all Palestinians from Gaza and the rebuilding of the settlements.

Thus, quickly, the likes of Weiss and many of her supporters began calling on Israelis to join the recolonization campaign. "Register, register, you'll be in Gaza," Weiss told an audience of supporters last March, joyfully declaring that 500 families had already signed up, according to a CNN report.

Weiss and Nachala are not acting independently from the overall objective of the country's leading politicians. For example, on the first day of

jumped on the opportunity. In March, he spoke of Gaza's "very valuable ... waterfront property," which required Israel to remove the civilians and "clean up the Strip".

The ongoing so-called General's Plan, aimed at the extermination and ethnic cleansing of northern Gaza, is but the military component of the settlers' vision, that of 'Gaza is ours, forever'.

But if Israel has failed to sustain its settlements in the rebellious Strip under more manageable circumstances in the past, will it succeed now? The settlers are already aware of the challenge at hand. This is why they constantly link their colonization of Gaza with the ethnic cleansing of the Strip's Palestinian inhabitants.

Israel's success and failure, however, will ultimately be determined by this maxim: as long as the Palestinian people are fighting back, Weiss and her fellow extremists will not find safety in Gaza.

Indeed, the native population of Gaza has subsisted in that historical land for thousands of years. If genocide has not forced them off their land, nothing else will.

The article first appeared on The Palestine Chronicle.

## 'True brutality' of ethnic cleansing now underway in Gaza

By Jake Johnson  
Reporter

OPINION

Much alarm has been raised over the so-called "Generals' Plan," an ethnic cleansing proposal for northern Gaza that has reportedly garnered attention in the highest reaches of Israel.

But Israeli scholar Idan Landau argued in a column published in English by +972 Magazine that what the Israeli military is actually doing in northern Gaza "is even more appalling" than the plan

outlined by a group of retired generals. Landau argued that focus on the details of the Generals' Plan has served to obscure the "true brutality" of Israel's deadly operations in northern Gaza, which has been rendered a hellscape of death and destruction by the military assault and siege. Landau, a professor of linguistics at Tel Aviv University, opened his column — first published in Hebrew on his blog — by pointing to two photos: one showing a celebratory event at a camp built by an Israeli settler organization just outside of the Gaza Strip, and the other showing displaced Palestinians lined up at gunpoint amid the ruins of northern Gaza.



On the left, Israeli settlers gather at an event celebrating Sukkot near the Gaza Strip. On the right, displaced Palestinians line up at gunpoint in the ruins of Jabalia refugee camp.  
● +972 MAGAZINE

"These photos tell a story that is unfolding so rapidly that its harrowing details are already on the brink of being forgotten," wrote Landau. "Yet this story could start from any point during the past 76 years: the Nakba of 1948, the 'Siyag Plan' that followed it, the Naksa of 1967. On one side, displaced Palestinians with all the belongings they can carry, joyful Jewish settlers, sanctifying the new land that the army has cleared for them."

The Israeli military's dehumanization of the people of Gaza, Landau wrote, "cannot help but trigger our associations with scenes depicting the Nazis loading Jews into cattle cars".

Landau wrote that what the Israeli army has been implementing in northern Gaza in recent weeks is "not quite" the Generals' Plan, which entails giving Palestinians still in the region a week to leave before declaring the area a closed military zone — and designating everyone who remains a militant who can be denied humanitarian assistance and killed.

The actual strategy Israeli soldiers have been deploying in northern Gaza is "an even more sinister and brutal version" of the Generals' Plan "within a more concentrated area".

"The first, most immediate distinction is the abandoning of provisions for reducing harm to civilians, i.e. giving residents of northern Gaza a week to evacuate southward," Landau wrote. "The second departure concerns the real purpose of emptying the area: while portraying the military operation as a security necessity, it was, in fact, an embodiment of the spirit of ethnic cleansing and resettlement from day one."

"As opposed to the picture painted by the army, implying that residents in the northern areas were free to move south and get out of the danger zone, local testimonies presented a frightening reality: Anyone who so much as stepped out of their home risked being shot by Israeli snipers or drones, including young children and those holding white flags," Landau noted. "Rescue crews trying to help

the wounded also came under attack, as well as journalists trying to document the events."

The scholar cites one "particularly harrowing video" in which a Palestinian child is seen "on the ground pleading for help after being wounded by an air strike; when a crowd gathers to help him, they are suddenly hit by another air strike, killing one and wounding more than 20 others."

"The Israeli Air Force usually bombs at night while the victims are sleeping, slaughtering entire families in their homes and making it more difficult to evacuate the wounded. And on October 24, rescue services announced that the intensity of the bombardment left them with no choice but to cease all operations in the besieged areas."

The deadly military assault, Landau stressed, has been accompanied by a "starvation policy" that has severely hindered the flow of humanitarian assistance to northern Gaza.

The heads of prominent United Nations agencies and human rights organizations warned recently that conditions on the ground in the region are "apocalyptic" and that "the entire Palestinian population in North Gaza is at imminent risk of dying from disease, famine, and violence."

Landau noted that on October 16, following pressure from the Biden administration, the Israeli cabinet reportedly allowed 100 aid trucks to enter northern Gaza.

"But journalists in the north were quick to correct the record: Nothing at all had entered the besieged areas," Landau wrote. "On October 20, Israel denied a further request by UN agencies to bring in food, fuel, blood, [and] medicines. Three days later, in response to a request for an interim order by the Israeli human rights group Gisha, the cabinet admitted to the High Court that no humanitarian aid had been allowed into northern Gaza up to that point. By this time, we are already talking about a three-week-long food siege."

The full article first appeared on Common Dreams.



Palestinians queue for bread at the only open bakery in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, on October 24, 2024.  
● ABED RAHIM KHATIB/FLASH90