

Is Israel's Annexation of the West Bank Underway?

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Global Research, November 13, 2024

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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Since 75% of the settlers are ultra-orthodox (over 500,000), in recent years a dangerous symbiosis has developed in the occupied territories of Palestine between the political leaders of the settlers and the rabbis who have for decades preached their opposition to any territorial commitment to the Palestinians. They have tried to give a religious justification to the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.

Operation “Annexation of the West Bank” was reportedly launched after the bloody Hamas attack on 7 October and nearly 700 Palestinians have already died as a result of Israeli army operations and attacks by Israeli settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

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For his part, the new Minister of Defence, **Israel Katz**, last August proposed “**to temporarily evacuate the West Bank in order to thwart terrorist infrastructures by taking all necessary measures, including forced displacement,**” of the Palestinian population settled in the West Bank.

After Katz’s appointment as Minister of Defence, the plan was taken up again by the Israeli extreme right and the settler movement that try to take advantage of the inertia in Gaza to advance their objective of occupation of the West Bank which for them would be the “Area of Judea and Samaria” within the atavism of Greater Israel.

In this context, the State of Israel declared in 2023 more than 2,300 hectares in the occupied West Bank as “state land” and at the end of May, the Israeli army ceded important legal powers in the occupied West Bank to settler officials led by Smotrich. The transfer was described by legal experts as “a de facto annexation.”

The existence of the West Bank annexation plan would be corroborated by Israel’s Finance Minister, **Bezalel Smotrich**, who at a recent meeting of his party, the ultra-nationalist

Religious Zionism, stated that “both Gaza and the West Bank will be taken from the Palestinians forever” while he indicated that “2025 is the year of sovereignty in Judea and Samaria”, not being a new nakba to Jordan that would mean de facto the disappearance of the Palestinian state.

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