

New Israeli Regime Moves Toward “Cleansing” All Palestinians From Palestine

Israel’s new fascist government has increased the collective punishment of Palestinians — a war crime.

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Important article by Prof. Marjorie Cohn first published on February 15, 2023

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s religious Zionist coalition, which was sworn in on December 29, 2022, [declared](#) in its manifesto that Jews have the “exclusive and inalienable right to all parts of the Land of Israel.” To that end, in a little over a month, the Israeli regime has killed Palestinians, demolished their homes, mounted incursions into occupied Palestinian territory and endeavored to change laws and policies to accelerate the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians from Palestine.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the *Nakba* — the Arabic word for “catastrophe.” In 1948, Israel [assumed control](#) over more than three-quarters of Palestine. Upwards of 700,000 Palestinians were driven from their homes or forced to flee and Israel confiscated much of their land.

Now, Israel’s new extremist regime — the most [anti-Palestinian](#) in Israeli history — aims to [finish the job](#) by incorporating all of the occupied Palestinian territories into Israel.

Many people in the new government want an “out-of-state solution” in which Palestinians would be forcibly transferred (or in desperation, leave) to nearby Arab countries, “dispossessing them of their homeland,” Michel Moushabeck, a Palestinian American writer and publisher, [wrote](#) at *Truthout*.

Bezalel Smotrich, head of the Religious Zionism Party, is the new minister of finance. In 2021, he [told](#) Arab members of the Israeli Knesset that they were “here by mistake because Ben Gurion didn’t finish the job and throw you out in 1948.”

In its effort to “Judaize” the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, Israel may be trying to

cleanse the [Palestinians](#) from them.

“The new Israeli government is the culmination of decades of apartheid subjugation of the Palestinian people in their own homeland,” Richard Falk, former UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, wrote in an email to *Truthout*. “The long game of the Zionist Project was openly proclaimed in the 2018 Basic Law of Israel confirming the intention of maintaining Jewish supremacy and exclusive rights of self-determination in the entire territory stretching from ‘the river to the sea.’”

Israel Wants to Take Over Occupied Palestine

The “Green Line,” drawn in 1948 to separate Israel from the occupied Palestinian territories, set the boundaries at the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Nearly [15 million people](#) live between the river and the sea. Jews make up 7.454 million — or 49.84 percent. Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line, including Gaza, encompass 7.503 million — or 51.16 percent, a majority. Between 59 and 65 percent of people living between the river and the sea [oppose the Israeli occupation](#).

Israel’s “undisclosed Zionist Long Game,” Falk [wrote](#) at Just World Educational, “aims at extending Israeli sovereignty over the whole of Occupied Palestine, with the possible exception of Gaza.”

“Gaza, with its 2+ million Palestinians, is not part of the traditional Jewish conception of the promised land, and thus not integral to the Zionist conception of an Israeli one-state solution,” Falk told *Truthout*. “It is rather perceived by Israeli leadership as a dangerous ‘demographic bomb,’ hence a security threat, if it is incorporated into the Zionist vision of a solution to the underlying conflict. Israel would prefer that Gaza is administered by Jordan or Egypt, as before 1967, or even as an independent mini-state neighbor.”

In 1967, Israel (falsely [claiming self-defense](#)) attacked Egypt, Jordan and Syria and seized the Palestinian territories of the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem, as well as the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. Palestinians call this the *Naksa* (“setback” in Arabic). It ushered in Israel’s prolonged occupation of Palestinian territory. But [UN Security Council Resolution 242](#), passed in 1967 and reaffirmed in 2016, stipulates “the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war.”

Israel’s Collective Punishment of Palestinians Constitutes a War Crime

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) has [documented](#) killings, house demolitions and incursions by the Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF) against Palestinians since the beginning of 2023. Forty-three Palestinians, including nineteen civilians (seven of whom were children) were killed by the IOF. Three Palestinians were killed by settlers, allegedly in retaliation for shooting and stabbing attacks. And dozens were injured in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

The Fourth Geneva Convention forbids the punishment of people in an occupied territory for offenses they didn’t personally commit. Israel’s reprisals against families and the community for actions they did not take constitutes collective punishment, which is considered a war crime.

In addition, the IOF rendered 33 families homeless (a total of 229 individuals, including 43

women and 108 children). This was the result of IOF demolitions of 34 houses. Six were forced to demolish their own homes and three were demolished in an exercise of collective punishment. The “IOF also demolished 39 other civilian objects, razed other property, and delivered dozens of notices of demolition, cease-construction, and evacuation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem,” PCHR reported.

The IOF conducted 1,449 incursions into the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem, since the beginning of the year. During these incursions, 638 Palestinians were arrested, including 11 women and 61 children.

Moreover, 2022 was the [deadliest year](#) for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank in 18 years. The IOF killed at least 146 Palestinians, including 34 children.

New Israeli Government Seeks to Weaken Supreme Court and Annex West Bank

Israel’s new religious Zionist [coalition government](#) has begun the process to prevent the Israeli Supreme Court from overruling legislation passed by the Knesset (parliament). There are proposals for the coalition to select judges and replace professional legal advisers with political appointees.

The new regime has also withheld nearly \$40 million in [Palestinian tax revenues](#) and plans to divert that money to victims of Palestinian attacks.

Meanwhile, guidelines [published](#) by the government call for more construction of Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank, legalization of illegal outposts and eventual full annexation of the West Bank.

Jewish Settlements on Palestinian Land Violate the Geneva Convention

The Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits an occupying power from transferring “parts of its own civilian population into the territories it occupies.” It is illegal for Israel to directly or tacitly support the building of Jewish settlements on Palestinian land.

In 2016, the UN Security Council adopted [Resolution 2334](#), which condemned Israel for the establishment of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. It says that the building of settlements “has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law.”

Approximately 650,000 Jewish settlers live in 164 settlements and 116 outposts in the occupied West Bank.

Settlers who illegally build settlements on Palestinian territory have been emboldened by the new regime, which includes leaders of the settler movement among its key ministers.

Resistance to Israeli Regime Repression

“The resistance in Gaza is doing its duties and defending our people in Gaza,” Hazem Qassem, spokesperson for Hamas, [said](#) in a statement. Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, declared that Israeli warplanes would be met by anti-aircraft and ground-to-air defense.

Additional Palestinian factions expressed support for an armed Palestinian response to the January 26 attack in Jenin, when Israeli forces killed 9 Palestinians in a “[massacre](#).” The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine said that Palestinian factions in Gaza have the right to respond accordingly. Lion’s Den, an armed Palestinian resistance group in the occupied West Bank whose members are considered heroes by many Palestinians, has mounted [dozens of attacks](#) against Israeli troops and civilians during the past six months.

Under international law, the Palestinians have a right to resist Israel’s occupation of their land, including by armed struggle. In 1982, the [UN General Assembly](#) “reaffirmed the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for independence, territorial integrity, national unity and liberation from colonial and foreign domination and foreign occupation by all available means, including armed struggle.”

The day after the Jenin massacre, 21-year-old Khairy Alqam killed seven people outside a synagogue in East Jerusalem in [retaliation](#) for the killing of his young relative by Israeli forces two days before. After the synagogue attack, Alqam was shot and killed by police and, in an act of collective punishment, his family’s home was demolished.

Tens of thousands of [Israelis](#) from different ideological perspectives demonstrate every Saturday night against the new right-wing government.

“The Israeli government is slaughtering Palestinians every night, massacring people in their homes, schools, and hospitals,” Jewish Voice for Peace Executive Director Stefanie Fox said in a [statement](#). “There are no sidelines. Jewish tradition commands action in the face of grave injustice, and the time to rise in solidarity with Palestinians is now.”

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