

War on Gaza: Here's What Israeli Officials Say Should Happen to the Palestinian Enclave

Several Israeli ministers spoke at a conference promoting resettling Gaza while attendees chanted 'death to Arabs'

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Global Research, January 31, 2024

[Middle East Eye](#) 29 January 2024

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

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Law and Justice](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

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Thousands of [Israeli](#) ministers, rabbis, public figures and parliament members attended a [conference on Sunday](#) in Jerusalem, calling for the resettlement of Gaza and making statements widely deemed to be genocidal.

The event, entitled "[Conference for the Victory of Israel](#) – Settlement Brings Security: Returning to the Gaza Strip and Northern Samaria," was centred around rebuilding Israeli settlements in Gaza, and calling for Palestinians to be expelled from the besieged enclave.

Participants presented details of proposed future settlements, maps, stages of preparation, and called for decision-makers to back resettlement plans.

The conference came just days after the [International Court of Justice \(ICJ\) ruling](#) on South Africa's genocide case against Israel, for which it heard evidence earlier this month.

The court gave Israel six orders regarding the siege and bombardment of Gaza. One of those was that Israel "must take measures within its power to prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to commit genocide in relation to the members of the Palestinian groups in the Gaza Strip".

The court also cited a series of statements made by Israeli leaders as evidence of incitement and dehumanising language against Palestinians, including comments made by Israeli President Isaac Herzog.

The "victory of Israel" event was attended by 11 cabinet ministers and 15 coalition

members of parliament. Below are some of the statements made at the conference, which could violate the ICJ's orders.

'Encourage' Palestinians to Leave, Says Ben Gvir

Israel's far-right National Security Minister [Itamar Ben Gvir](#) called for Palestinians to be "voluntarily encouraged to leave" the Gaza Strip.

In response to calls from the audience for Palestinians to be transferred from Gaza, Ben Gvir responded by saying:

"You are right, voluntary encouragement, let them go from here.

"We must return to Gush Katif and northern Samaria... if you don't want it to happen again for the seventh or tenth time, we must return home and control the territory, encouraging immigration, and the death penalty for terrorists," he added.

Gush Katif was a bloc of 17 Israeli settlements in southern Gaza. At the conference, Ben Gvir, along with other ministers, signed a petition for "victory and renewal of the settlement in Gaza" during the event.

The document said that signatories pledged that they would "grow Jewish settlements full of life in Gaza".

Afterwards, attendees were filmed celebrating the move by waving the Israeli flag and cheering. Following Ben Gvir's speech, people could be heard chanting "death to Arabs".

Some of the statements made at the conference have led to a backlash, with some pointing out that they could violate the ICJ's orders.

Itay Epshtain, an Israel-based special advisor for the Norwegian Refugee Council, [shared a video](#) in which Ben Gvir and Finance Minister [Bezalel Smotrich](#) could be seen arm-in-arm, dancing together at the conference.

[#Israeli](#) Ministers (including [#Smotrich](#) and [#BenGvir](#)) dancing at the conference would form part of the compelling evidence of noncompliance with the [#ICJ](#) order. pic.twitter.com/TQWDxWe0lu

— Itay Epshtain (@EpshtainItay) [January 28, 2024](#)

The human rights lawyer said that the image "would form part of the compelling evidence of noncompliance" with the ICJ's recent order to take all measures within its power to prevent acts of genocide and to punish acts of incitement.

Smotrich Calls for Return of Settlers

Smotrich echoed Ben Gvir's statements, calling for Israeli settlers to go to Gaza.

"Many of our children who were evicted from Gaza must return as fighters, we need to make sure we return as settlers," he said.

Israeli politician and tourism minister, Haim Katz, made similar statements at the conference.

“Today, after 18 years, we have the opportunity to stand up and build and expand the land of Israel,” he said.

Support from Housing Minister

Yitzhak Goldknopf, the minister of housing and construction, called the return of Jewish settlements in Gaza a “correction of historical injustice”.

“I will support this as minister of housing if the government decides,” he said. “The land of Israel belongs entirely to the people of Israel. Giving up the land of the State of Israel not only does not bring security, but leads to the bloodshed of Jews.”

‘Don’t Give Them Food’

Daniella Weiss, the far-right former mayor of the settlement Kedumim in the occupied West Bank, also called for Palestinians to be starved in order to force them into leaving Gaza.

“The Arabs will move... we don’t give them food, we don’t give the Arabs anything, they will have to leave. The world will accept them,” she told a reporter at the conference.

Ben Gvir Says ‘We Will Initiate Conflict’

During the conference, Ben Gvir called for a dual approach when it comes to Gaza, which includes promoting the departure of the current inhabitants, as well as simultaneously facilitating and encouraging the influx of Israeli settlers into the area.

“We will initiate conflict to prevent further uncertainty and aimlessness,” he said.

“It is essential to reclaim and assert control over the territory in the south. We must also devise a solution for the populace that is moral, rationally coherent and advantageous,” he added.

He ended by saying that “encouraging emigration from Gaza is a necessity”.

Israel’s communications minister, Shlomo Karai, reiterated Ben Gvir’s comments saying that Israelis have an “obligation to act for our own sake...even if this war turns voluntary migration into a situation where it is forced, we must settle Gaza with security forces and settlers.”

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