

Ben-Gvir says Israeli rights trump Palestinian freedom of movement

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Tel Aviv, August 24 (RHC)-- Israel's far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has openly admitted that his right to move around unimpeded is superior to the freedom of movement for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, sparking outrage.

“My right, the right of my wife and my children to move around Judea and Samaria is more important than freedom of movement for the Arabs,” he said in a Wednesday evening interview with Channel 12 News, using the biblical term for the occupied territory.

Directly addressing journalist Mohammad Magadli, who is a Palestinian citizen of Israel, Ben-Gvir said: “Sorry, Mohammad, but that’s the reality.”

Ben-Gvir, known for being a Palestinian-hating religious far-right provocateur, is in control of Israel’s Border Police’s division in the occupied West Bank. He lives in Kiryat Arba, one of the most radical Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank. Under international law, settlements in occupied land are considered illegal and a huge obstacle to any notion of a two-state solution.

Ben-Gvir has been convicted several times on charges of supporting a Jewish “terrorist organisation” and of incitement to racism against Arabs and non-Jews. He is also known for his anti-LGBTQ activism.

Some Israeli journalists reacted with outrage on social media over Ben-Gvir’s comments, pointing out that he was acknowledging apartheid on air.

Israeli journalist Nir Gontarz said Ben-Gvir’s comments were hardly surprising. “He simply described reality as it is,” Gontarz wrote on X, the site formerly known as Twitter. .

Ahmad Tibi, a Palestinian-Israeli member of Knesset, said: “For the first time, an Israeli minister admits on air that Israel enforces an apartheid regime, based on Jewish supremacy.”

Hansen Majadli, a Palestinian editor and columnist at the Israeli daily Haaretz, berated Ben-Gvir’s “laziness.” “My problem with this creature is not that he is a racist,” she wrote on X. “After all, I have met racists like him and more throughout my life in the only democracy in the Middle East. My problem with him is that he’s just lazy, and lacks style in general.”

MSNBC host Mehdi Hasan blasted the United States for funding and being complicit in Israeli apartheid. “Meanwhile, U.S.-based defenders of Israel get mad if you say the A-word even though an Israeli minister is openly and proudly admitting to it,” he said.

The U.S. gives Israel – the largest cumulative recipient of U.S. foreign aid – an average of \$3.8 billion in military aid annually. The gift -- which comes out to millions every day -- is at the expense of U.S. taxpayers.

In 2021, several leading international, Israeli and Palestinian human rights organisations published detailed reports describing Israel as an apartheid state and holding it accountable for treating Palestinians as an “inferior racial group.” The U.S. and the European Union have defended Israel, with the former passing a resolution last June claiming that Israel is “not a racist or apartheid state”.

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