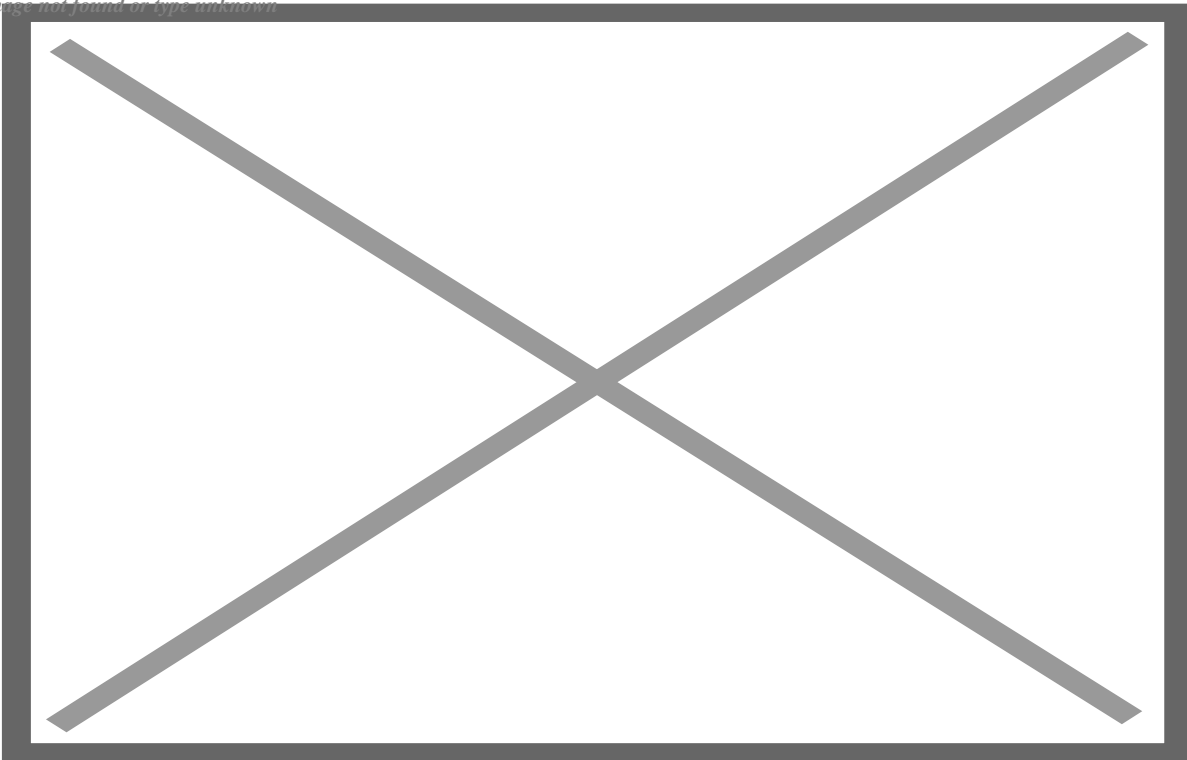


Outrage grows over Israeli minister's ethnic cleansing proposal for Gaza

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Bezalel Smotrich, Israel's far-right finance minister

Tel Aviv, November 15 (RHC)-- More than five weeks into Israel's relentless bombardment of the Gaza Strip, the regime's finance minister has proposed a controversial plan for "ethnic cleansing" of the population of the besieged Palestinian territory.

Bezalel Smotrich, Israel's far-right finance minister, called for Palestinians in Gaza to voluntarily leave their homeland and migrate to Western countries. He made the remarks after two Israeli lawmakers published a commentary in *The Wall Street Journal* on Monday, calling for the Gaza population to be moved to countries that will accept them.

“We simply need a handful of the world’s nations to share the responsibility of hosting Gazan residents,” the article said. “Even if countries took in as few as 10,000 people each, it would help alleviate the crisis.”

Smotrich wrote on Facebook on Tuesday, “I welcome the initiative of members of Knesset... on the voluntary immigration of Gaza Arabs to the countries of the world.” He said Israel “will no longer be able to put up with the existence of an independent entity in Gaza.”

The Palestinian Authority’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs denounced Smotrich remarks as “part of Israel’s colonial, racist plan” for Palestinians. “Ethnic cleansing is a war crime and it is done by bombarding an unprotected civilian population.”

General secretary of the Palestinian National Initiative Mustafa Barghouti also wrote on X that the Israeli minister “revealed the real policy and intentions” of the occupying regime.

The latest remarks by the Israeli minister come one month after the leak of a document that discussed a proposal of forcibly sending the Gaza Strip’s 2.3 million population to Egypt’s Sinai peninsula.

According to the paper, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu lobbied European leaders to help him persuade Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to take in refugees from Gaza. Israel’s Ministry of Intelligence has also called for the “evacuation” of all Palestinians from Gaza to Egypt.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said Tuesday that his country rejected any attempt to justify or encourage the displacement of Palestinians outside the Gaza Strip. He said that the plan proposed by the Israeli minister is “an expression of the Israeli government’s policy that violates international laws.”

The Gaza Strip, one of the most densely populated places in the world, has been under the regime’s relentless air and ground strikes for the past 39 days.

According to the Gaza-based health ministry, 11,255 Palestinians, including 4,630 children and 3,130 women, have been killed and more than 29,000 others injured in the Israeli strikes. The United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), says that more than 700,000 children have been displaced in the coastal enclave.

The latest remarks by the Israeli minister and the leaked paper have raised fears of yet another “Nakba” or “catastrophe,” which refers to the occupying regime’s violent expulsion of about 750,000 Palestinians from their homeland when it proclaimed its illegal existence on May 15, 1948.

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