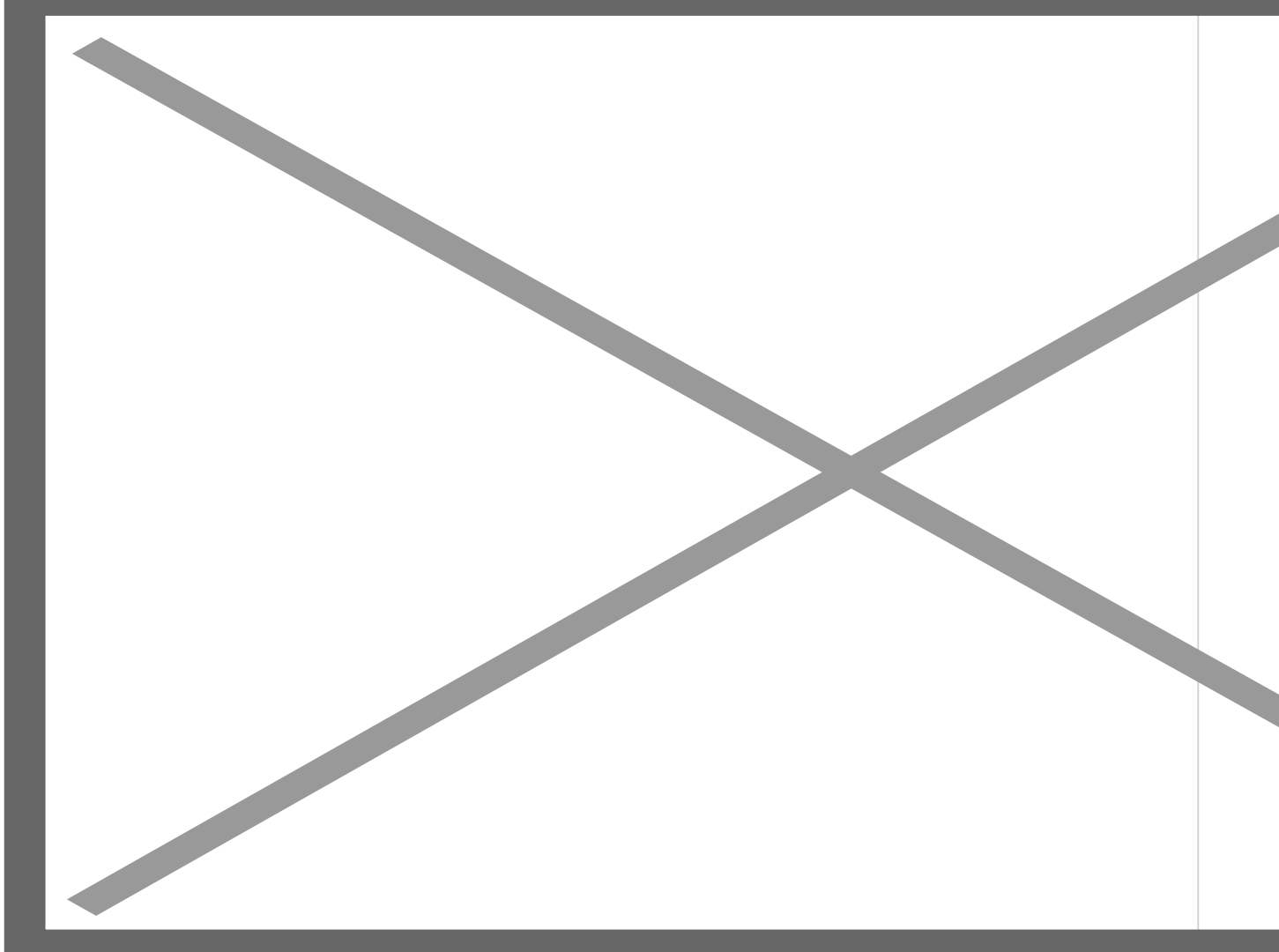


Israel seizes nearly 2000 acres of Palestinian land in occupied West Bank

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This file picture shows a general view of the Israeli settler enclave of Nof Zion in the occupied

East al-Quds. (Photo by Reuters)

Tel Aviv, March 23 (RHC)-- Israel has announced to seize hundreds of acres of more Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank to expand settlements. It is viewed as one of the regime's biggest land-grab schemes. Israel's Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich announced on Friday to grab 800 hectares (1,977 acres) of more land in the occupied West Bank after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Israel for talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The minister emphasized the regime's determination to press ahead with settlement building in the occupied West Bank, despite growing international outcry. Smotrich said that "we promote settlement through hard work and in a strategic manner all over" Israel.

The Israeli regime has before also denominated land of 300 hectares (740 acres) in the Jordan Valley as state land in the Maale Adumim area of the West Bank. This is although even Israel's ally the United States said last month that Israel's expansion of settlements in the West Bank was inconsistent with international law.

Earlier this month, UN Human Rights Chief Volker Turk said, "The establishment and continuing expansion of settlements amount to ... a war crime under international law."

More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East al-Quds. While all Israeli settlements are illegal under international law, Israel has stepped up settlement expansion in blatant violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions. Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent state with East al-Quds as its capital.

Palestinian authorities condemned the land seizure and expansion of illegal settlements.

The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs called the latest move a "crime" that is part of an "official policy racing against time to annex the West Bank and eliminate the possibility of creating a Palestinian state."

"There are no morals, values, principles or international resolutions that can stop the extremist right," the ministry said. "The international failure to protect our people is complicity and cover for Israel's ongoing evasion of punishment," it added.

The United Nation's human rights top brass, Volker Turk says the Israeli regime is expanding its illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories by unprecedented amounts, posing a significant threat to the viability of a future Palestinian state.

The Palestinian Authority has called on all countries to put individuals tied to settler organizations or companies investing in settlement construction across the occupied Palestinian territories on their terror lists. The United Nations has already published a list of companies with business ties to Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Palestinians have called for serious international intervention to force the regime to stop the settlement expansion. The UN is concerned about the surging violence perpetrated by Israeli settlers in the West Bank, terming it "terrorism" against the Palestinians.

The Israeli regime has escalated its acts of aggression against the Palestinians across the West Bank since October 7, 2023, when it began the campaign of death and destruction in the besieged Gaza Strip.



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