

Outgoing Israeli general condemns settler violence in occupied West Bank

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Tel Aviv, July 11 (RHC)-- An Israeli general has condemned the government's decision to expand settlements in the occupied West Bank and criticised rising levels of settler violence in the region, according to Israeli media reports.

Major General Yehuda Fox, the outgoing head of Israel's central command, said at a departure ceremony on Monday that Israeli settlers have engaged in "nationalist crime" through violence in the

occupied West Bank, which he said has “sowed chaos and fear in Palestinian residents who did not pose any threat.”

“This is not Judaism in my eyes. At least not the one I grew up with in my father and mother’s house. This is not the way of the Torah. It is adopting the ways of the enemy,” Fox said.

Israeli forces and settlers have increased increased raids on Palestinian towns and villages in the occupied West Bank since Israel’s war in Gaza began in October. Since October, at least 553 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces and settlers in the territory, and 9,510 have been detained, according to Palestinian officials.

Fox’s comments come just days after Israel’s government approved 5,295 new housing units in a host of illegal settlements across the occupied West Bank.

About 3 million Palestinians live in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, and more than 500,000 Israelis reside in more than 100 settlements across the territory. The expansion of settlements remains a major roadblock to since-halted plans outlined in the Oslo Accords that promised the gradual transfer of Israeli-controlled areas to Palestinians.

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, himself a settler, has overseen a major escalation in settlement expansion under Prime Minister Netanyahu’s leadership.

Fox acknowledged that it was his responsibility as the chief of the command in charge of the occupied West Bank region, “to act” and tackle this settler expansion and violence but regretted that he “did not always succeed.”

“The Central Command’s ability to fulfil its tasks also depends on the existence of a functioning and strong Palestinian Authority, with effective security mechanisms that maintain law and order. Proactively undermining the security reality on this front endangers the security of the State of Israel,” Fox added.

On Tuesday, the Israeli Army Radio reported that 340 settler attacks against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank have been recorded since the beginning of 2024.

The Israeli army says its actions are an attempt to root out activities of Palestinian armed groups with whom Israeli soldiers have often exchanged fire during their incursions.

Fox said that the Central Command has managed to ensure the violence in the occupied West Bank does not escalate and become “a main front” amid a war in Gaza which continues to rage.

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