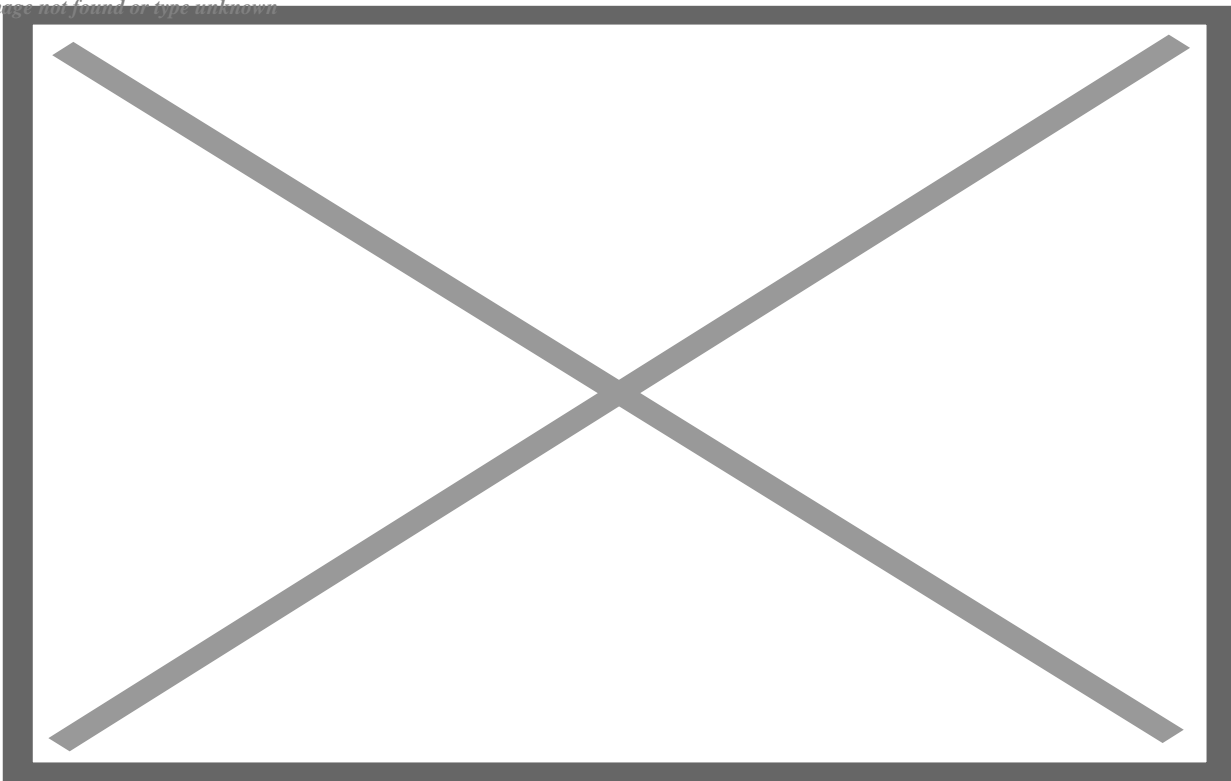


War criminal Benjamin Netanyahu claims occupied West Bank a part of Israel

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Tel Aviv, August 9 (RHC)-- Less than a month after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory is unlawful and must end "as rapidly as possible," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said his country will not relinquish control over the occupied West Bank.

"It's part of our homeland. We intend to stay there," Netanyahu said of the occupied Palestinian land in an interview with TIME Magazine, published on Thursday.

The Israeli prime minister also reiterated his opposition to the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state, suggesting that he supports limited self-rule for the Palestinians while Israel maintains security control over the occupied territory.

His comments stand in stark defiance of the United States, which says it views the two-state solution as the ultimate way to resolve the conflict.

“We don’t rule their land. We don’t run Ramallah. We don’t run Jenin,” Netanyahu said, referring to Palestinian towns in the West Bank. “But we go in and take action when we have to prevent terrorism.”

While the Palestinian Authority has some administrative powers in the West Bank, the territory is actually ruled by Israel, which controls its security, airspace, ports of entry and planning policy.

The Israeli government is also partly responsible for tax collection and the economy in the West Bank. And it has an alternative judicial system for Palestinians in the territory through its military courts.

Leading human rights groups have accused Israel of imposing a system of apartheid against Palestinians in occupied territory.

In his interview with TIME, Netanyahu also said Israel will push on with the war in Gaza until it destroys Hamas’s military capabilities and makes sure the Palestinian group does not run Gaza in the future. The assertion came amid efforts for a ceasefire as part of a U.S.-backed deal that would see the release of Israeli captives in Gaza as well as an unspecified number of Palestinian prisoners held in Israel.

The U.S. Department of State had said on Wednesday that Israel and Hamas were working on “bridgeable” final issues to finalise the agreement.

As Israel stands accused of genocide at the ICJ having launched one of the most destructive military campaigns in modern history in Gaza, Netanyahu played down atrocities against Palestinians. He claimed, without evidence, that the fighters-to-civilians death ratio in Gaza is one-to-one.

Of the nearly 40,000 Palestinians killed by Israel, more than 16,000 are children and 11,000 women, according to the Gaza Government Media Office. Israel has also systematically targeted civilian infrastructure in the enclave, destroying hundreds of hospitals, schools and houses of worship.

Asked about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Netanyahu rejected accusations that Israel is restricting aid to Palestinians. “We’ve gone out of our way to enable humanitarian assistance since the beginning of the war, we enabled some 40,000 aid trucks to come in,” Netanyahu told TIME.

While 40,000 aid trucks may sound like a large number, it marks a drastic decrease in the amount of food entering Gaza. It amounts to about 130 trucks daily.

Approximately 500 trucks entered Gaza before the war began, according to the United Nations.

Last month, UN experts accused Israel of deliberately starving Palestinians in Gaza. “Israel’s intentional and targeted starvation campaign against the Palestinian people is a form of genocidal violence and has resulted in famine across all of Gaza,” they said.

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