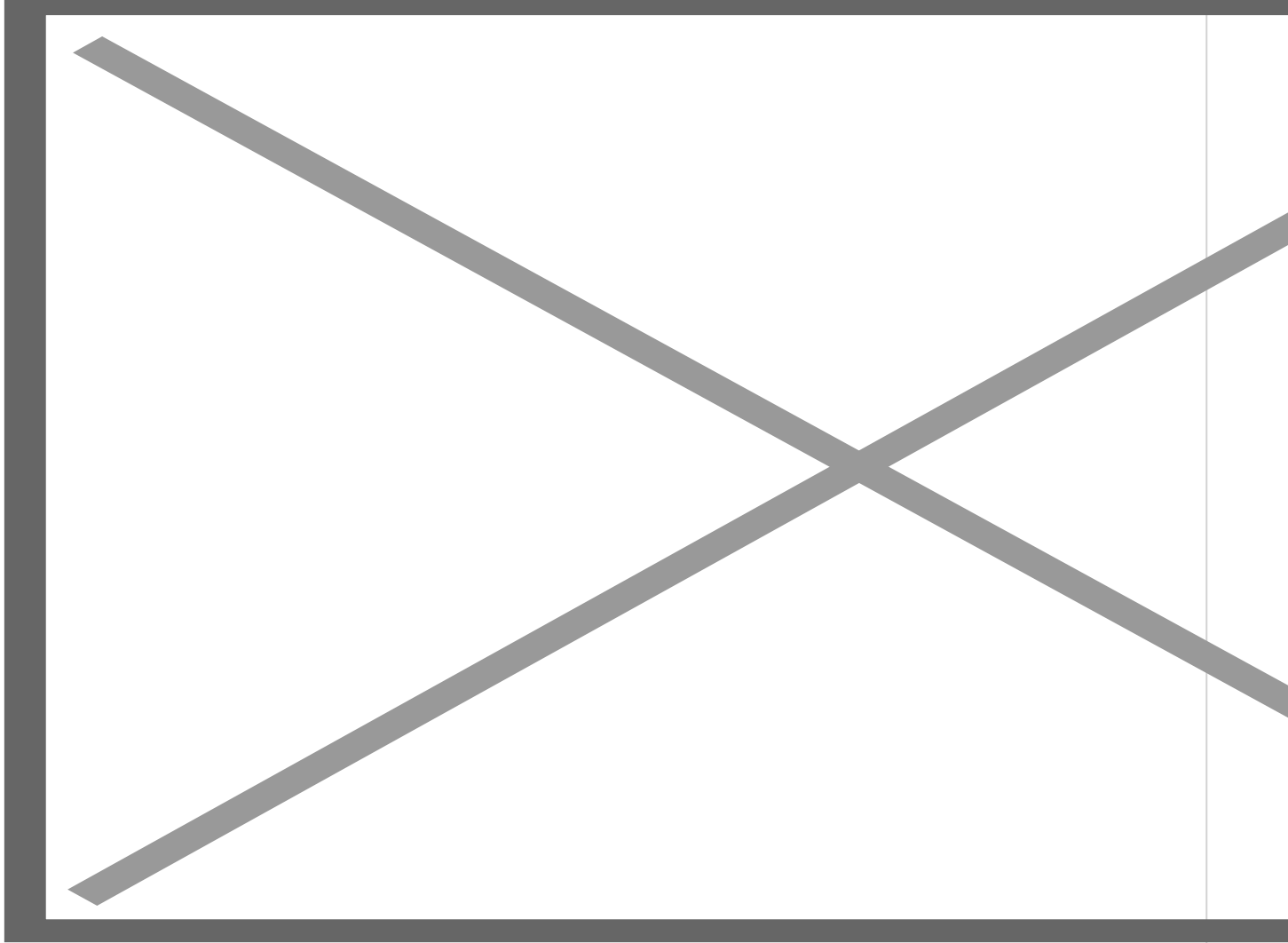


Israeli far-right minister urges full control of Gaza, West Bank settlement expansion

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Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu gets advice from far-right finance minister Bezalel Smotrich

Tel Aviv, December 10 (RHC)-- Israeli far-right finance minister Bezalel Smotrich has urged the regime to take “control” of the Gaza Strip and adopt an “offensive” approach in the occupied West Bank to expand illegal settlements and block the creation of a Palestinian state.

Smotrich in his latest remarks during a meeting of the extremist Religious Zionist Party (RZP) on Monday said that following the recent collapse of the Syrian government, Israel is looking forward to achieving its goal of destroying Hamas and "occupying" Gaza.

Pointing to the recent developments in Syria, he claimed that the Israeli regime has made significant progress and is close to achieving its primary objective, calling for a push towards a definitive victory.

Smotrich also expressed his opposition to any ceasefire agreement with Palestinian resistance group Hamas, even if such a deal could result in the release of some captives currently held in Gaza.

“Instead of discussing partial deals that leave many hostages behind, compromise the war's achievements, and diminish the chance of victory, we must press forward. We must stop fearing our own shadows and do what is necessary,” he said.

Regarding the occupied West Bank, Smotrich called for an increase in illegal settlements and the establishment of “facts on the ground” to ensure that a Palestinian state would never come to fruition.

“[We] must end the policy of containment and defense and shift to initiative and offense. We must ... strengthen Jewish settlements, and create facts on the ground that prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state and remove this possibility from the agenda once and for all,” he added.

These remarks come as Smotrich declared the confiscation of 24,000 dunums (5930.5 acres) of the occupied West Bank over the weekend. “This process creates a settlement sequence, builds land reserves for Israel to develop settlements, infrastructure and roads, and guarantees that we will continue to strengthen the settlements, and we are here to stay,” he said.

Smotrich has consistently repeated his proposal of expanding Israeli settlements within the West Bank and other occupied territories.

Moreover, Israel has started the push to expand its occupation of Syria, after foreign-backed militants, led by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), announced the fall of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government.

Recent reports indicate that the Israeli military has occupied several villages south of Damascus, with its tanks now being stationed around 20 kilometers from the outskirts of the Syrian capital.

Israeli forces also seized the buffer zone that separates the occupied Golan Heights from the rest of Syria in violation of a 1974 disengagement agreement between the Tel Aviv regime and Syria. They also captured the strategic Mount Hermon in Golan, which provides high ground for the entire area.

Israel's exploitation of the current chaotic situation to deploy its occupation forces to Syria has drawn condemnations from regional countries.

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