

# *Israeli Minister Calls For Ethnic Cleansing of 300,000 'Arabs' from West Bank Area*

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Tel Aviv, June 9 (RHC)-- Uri Ariel, Israel's Minister of Agriculture, told the Times of Israel that Tel Aviv should annex the so-called "Area C" of the West Bank since "there are no Arabs at all" living there. The Israeli minister said he wants to expel the estimated 300,000 Palestinians from the largest area of the West Bank and annex it, since they "do not constitute a significant numerical factor."

Responding to Ariel's statements, the press director for Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, said: "This is not the first time that Israeli officials have indulged in demeaning, racist and dehumanizing rhetoric against Palestinians." The press director emphasized: "Palestinians must be treated as a people with rights and freedoms to be respected; not as an obstacle in the way of Israeli politicians' nationalistic ambition who seek to justify Israel's 'Jewish character' at the expense of the indigenous population."

Several ministers have proposed annexing Area C, which includes 60 percent of the West Bank and is largely made up of Israeli settlements. Israel controls the area's law enforcement, planning and construction, leading U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry to say it "is effectively restricted for any Palestinian development." Earlier, Israel's Minister of Judiciary Affairs Ayelet Shaked said that Israeli law

should be applied to the area.

Ariel did not mention what should happen after "transferring Arabs" besides pumping \$2.6 billion USD into the area in the next 10 years to "invest in economic projects that benefit" the Israeli settlers. He had previously said that the Palestinians living there should be granted permanent residence in what would then be Israel.

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