

Opinion | Haaretz Editorial

Editorial | Israel Wants to Turn the West Bank Into Rubble, Just Like Gaza

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It turns out that some people believe “we are living in an era of miracles” regarding not only to Gaza, but also the West Bank. While most Israelis view October 7 as the greatest disaster in the country’s history, some on the right see in it an opportunity, and even the beginning of the redemption.

A Palestinian woman sits next to a damaged road, following an Israeli military raid, in Tul Karm, in the West Bank, in December. Credit: Mohamad Torokman/Reuters

On Tuesday, the day after a [deadly terror attack](#) near the settlement of Kedumim, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich met with the chair of the Yesha Council of settlements, Israel Ganz, Yesha Council CEO Omer Rahamim and the heads of the local West Bank settlements councils.

[Smotrich](#) told them that at his request, the meeting of the security cabinet scheduled for later that day would address measures to eradicate terrorism in the territories.

“In Judea and Samaria, as in other arenas, we must move from defense to offense and launch extensive operations inside the terrorism nests until the weapons and the terrorists are completely destroyed,” Smotrich said.

He added that after the attack, he drafted a plan that would make the Palestinian towns of “Al-Funduq, Nablus and Jenin look like Jabalya,” in northern Gaza, “so that Kfar Sava [a few miles from the West Bank] doesn’t become Kfar Azza,” the Gaza-border kibbutz that was devastated in the [October 7 massacre](#).

Defense Minister Israel Katz visited the scene of the attack, where settlers told him a new front should be opened in the war. The head of the Kedumim Local Council, Ozel Vatik, told Katz: “The Israeli government must immediately declare a state of war in Judea and Samaria as well, and allow the IDF to crush terror anywhere and at any time without mercy.”

Members of Israeli forces patrol a street during a military operation in the West Bank refugee camp of Nur Shams, Tul Karm, last year. Credit: Majdi Mohammed/AP

The settlers in the West Bank see what’s happening in Gaza, and are envious. They demand the government and the army do there what they did in the Strip. “We saw what a war on terror looks like in Gaza and southern Lebanon,” said Ganz, who also serves as the head of the Binyamin Regional Council. “We saw what villages look like after terror is uprooted. Here, they settle for silk gloves and a doctrine that doesn’t align with the risks.”

“I call on the IDF and the Israeli government to have a profound change of perception,” said Ariel

Mayor Yair Shtebon - that is, a massive military operation in the West Bank like the one in 2002, "that destroys the refugee camps in Judea and Samaria, in Tul Karm, in Jenin, in Nablus and wherever there is a threat to residents of Israel."

Likud lawmakers are expressing similar sentiments. MK Avichay Buaron, for example, called in a radio interview Tuesday to "disarm" the Palestinian Authority "of its weapons and political capabilities."

While the Netanyahu government is advancing a permanent military and perhaps civilian presence in Gaza, the settlement enterprise and its arms in the military and the government are working to obscure the differences between the West Bank and Gaza, with the goal of reversing the 2005 disengagement and the Oslo Accords.

To the settlers in Judea and Samaria, "uprooting terrorism" means expelling residents and demolishing homes and infrastructure. The goal: to impose Greater Israel apartheid in the occupied territories. If they succeed, they will put an end to any future possibility of a two-state solution and sustainable life in the region.

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P.S.

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The above article is Haaretz's lead editorial, as published in the Hebrew and English newspapers in Israel.