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Opinion | The Plan to Subjugate the Palestinians Goes Ahead

Tuesday 12 March 2024, by [HASS Amira](#) (Date first published: 12 March 2024).

Even those who mocked finance minister minister Bezalel Smotrich are participating, or supporting out loud and by their silence, the government's overwhelming use of force against the Palestinians everywhere

Regardless of the low number of seats Bezalel Smotrich is predicted to win, according to polls, Israel is already implementing the finance minister's plan to subjugate the Palestinians and even going beyond the lines and boundaries that he outlined publicly. Smotrich's decisive plan, as he named it, is the twin sister of the judicial overhaul. Their originators, supporters and defenders come from the ever-stronger milieu of religious Zionist settlers.

[A majority of Israelis oppose the coup](#), the crux of which is giving the government unlimited political power and further reducing its involvement in the provision of social services. But a larger majority of Israeli Jews openly – in practice, by implication and on TikTok – agree with this coup government policy applied against all Palestinians. The October 7 massacre was the immediate cause. But in essence it is the same policy of subjugation that [Israel has been pursuing for at least 15 years](#). Smotrich, being straightforward, merely articulated it with precision.

Seven years ago, in the spring of 2017, Smotrich – then still a lawmaker in the Habayit Hayehudi party – [presented in closed religious Zionist circles his plan for one state from the sea to the river, for one people](#). The Jewish people. There were those who concluded that the mass killing of Palestinian children and women was included in his third option: all-out war on Palestinians who refuse to emigrate or to remain and accept the non-realization of their national rights in this country.

In a response to critics of his plan in Haaretz, he refuted entirely the extreme interpretation given to his words, and presumably to the fact that he relied on letters sent by Joshua bin Nun, according to a midrash, to the inhabitants of the land he was about to conquer, according to the Bible (“Haaretz, I didn't call for the wholesale killing of all Palestinians,” June 4, 2017).

Bezalel Smotrich. Credit: RONEN ZVULUN/ REUTERS

[Already in a candid interview he gave to Ravit Hecht over seven years ago](#) (Haaretz, December 3, 2016), Smotrich mentioned Joshua and his letters. “[W]e are deciding the conflict: I am destroying their hopes of establishing a state,” he told Hecht, and when she asked “how,” he replied: “When Joshua entered the land, he sent three letters to its inhabitants: Those who want to accept [our rule] will accept; those who want to leave, will leave; those who want to fight, will fight. ... Those who want to leave, and there will be those who leave, I will help them. When they have no hope and no outlook, they will leave, just as they left in 1948.”

It is no coincidence that from the beginning of the war, Smotrich has been among the cabinet members and politicians who has pointed enthusiastically [at the “humane” solution for noncombatants in Gaza: voluntary population transfer](#). The airstrikes help. Indeed, every day even the greatest patriots in Gaza leave the territory, fleeing from the horrors of destruction and death, if they have the money or the right connections.

Then, back in 2016, Smotrich told Hecht: “Those who do not go will either accept the rule of the Jewish state, in which case they can remain, and as for those who do not, we will fight them and defeat them.” At the time, the young Knesset member focused on the West Bank, and presented its annexation and the expansion of the settlement enterprise and rise in the number of settlers as the main weapon in the subjugation process. Today, defeat and subjugation are the name of the game in all of the regions.

The already-bisected West Bank is further fragmented by roadblocks, checkpoints and locked iron gates at the exits of villages and cities and by the new roads that the settlers have breached. The Civil Administration, the army and ostensibly individual settlers continue to expel Palestinians from their land. Economic measures of revenge, orchestrated by Smotrich, have impoverished the residents to an extent that they haven’t experienced in many years. At the same time, the government is approving more and more housing units for Jews. The end to this bloody war in the Gaza Strip is nowhere in sight.

And inside Israel, Finance Minister Smotrich made sure to cut government allocations to the Arab population even before the war. And the police force belonging to [his friend/rival National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir](#) and the inflammatory public opinion ensure that Palestinian Israeli citizens can’t even express their feelings of pain and shock at the fate of their people in the Gaza Strip.

The spearhead of the battle against the judicial overhaul, namely Brothers and Sisters in Arms, is the spearhead in the flattening of Gaza and the mass killing of its civilians. About a year ago hundreds of thousands of protesting Israelis, opponents of the overhaul, thwarted the dismissal of Defense Minister Yoav Gallant – whose professional incompetence and ministerial failure were exposed by the events of October 7. They are absent from the demonstrations for the release of the hostages.

Even those who mocked the English and the economic literacy of the present finance minister and partial defense minister are participating, or supporting out loud and by their silence, the government’s overwhelming use of force against the Palestinians: in the Gaza Strip, in the West Bank and in Israel itself. Most Israelis were shocked by Smotrich’s unvarnished statements, which frankly reflect the opinion of the government, to the effect that the return of the Israelis abducted by Hamas on October 7 isn’t the most important thing. But most Jewish Israelis aren’t shocked by the killing of over 20,000 women and children in the Gaza Strip, the growing starvation and the danger of death and dehydration of its inhabitants.

When this terrible war ends – who knows when – the majority that opposed the judicial overhaul will discover that it has almost been completed. Judicial review is weaker and more submissive to the regime than ever, the school system is in total consensus and more cowardly than ever before, and the mass media is acting as the army’s spokesman with full enthusiasm. Truly a victory.

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P.S.

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