

'Copy-paste the West Bank to Gaza': Hundreds join Gaza resettlement event

Friday 25 October 2024, by [ZIV Oren](#) (Date first published: 22 October 2024).

In a closed military zone near Gaza, Israeli settlers, ministers, and MKs called to ethnically cleanse and annex the Strip — an idea that is growing mainstream.

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"We came here with one clear purpose: to settle the entire Gaza Strip." That was the declaration of Israeli settler leader Daniella Weiss at a gathering of hundreds of right-wing Israelis near Gaza on Monday, where they celebrated the Jewish festival of Sukkot by calling to erect settlements inside the besieged enclave.

This was not the biggest event of the past year to promote that demand: in January, thousands of Israelis attended a [major conference](#) in Jerusalem, including several government ministers and Knesset members; and in May, thousands [marched](#) in the city of Sderot and held a rally on a hill overlooking the Strip. It was also not the most forceful: back in March, right-wing activists [broke through Erez Crossing](#) and established a symbolic "outpost" before the army evicted them.



Daniella Weiss (left) at the settlement event near Gaza, October 21, 2024. (Oren Ziv)

But this well-organized, calm, and joyous gathering — which was approved and held against all logic in a closed military zone near the border, and was attended by several senior figures in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party — marked a new step in the effort to mainstream the idea of resettling Gaza with Jewish Israelis.

And while the Israeli government has repeatedly denied to U.S. officials that the army is implementing the so-called ["Generals' Plan"](#) to besiege, starve, and expel the residents of northern Gaza before annexing the territory to Israel, it was evident that participants in Monday's event were counting on such a plan to cleanse the area for Jewish settlement. According to the UN, there are hundreds of thousands of Palestinians still in northern Gaza — but several participants spoke as if the area were nearly empty.



Right-wing activists at the settlement event near Gaza, October 21, 2024. (Oren Ziv)

“The solution is for us to settle there instead of our enemies, Hamas and their supporters,” Noam Toeg, a 35-year-old from Givatayim who introduced himself as a spokesman for the “New Gaza” movement, told +972. “Everything else that has been tried in the last 80 years has failed. It is already happening: as of today, almost all the residents of northern Gaza are gone.

“We are the next stage of the Generals’ Plan,” he continued. “Settlements will bring security for the long term.”

Shlomo Ahronson, a 54-year-old from the notoriously violent West Bank settlement of Yitzhar, said he lived in the Jewish settlement of Netzarim in Gaza until the 2005 “disengagement,” when Israel evacuated its settlements in the Strip. “When [the Israeli authorities] expelled us from there, it was clear to us that one day we would return, because it is God’s will,” he said. “Ultimately, [Gaza] is part of Judah’s inheritance [the land the Torah says God apportioned to one of the ancient Israelite tribes].”

Ahronson believes that resettling Gaza is not only divinely ordained, but also practically feasible. “It is certainly no less realistic than settling in Hebron, or any place in [the West Bank] where there are settlements amid Arab areas. I belong to the group which, God willing, is supposed to establish a settlement called Oz Chaim on the coast. There are people [here] who want to settle in Gaza City, which is also feasible but will take more time.

“In the end, the Arabs, whose sole purpose is to destroy the State of Israel, are not supposed to be inside the State of Israel,” Ahronson continued. “We are not moving any residents, we settle where there is room and wait for developments — just as they established kibbutzim in the Galilee or the Negev when there were Arabs around. Ashkelon was an Arab city, Ashdod was an Arab city. God arranges, reality settles, there are wars, it’s not in our hands.”



Right-wing activists at the settlement event near Gaza, October 21, 2024. (Oren Ziv)

Nor does Ahronson see international pressure as an obstacle. “If there is a large section of the public that wants to settle in Gaza, Netanyahu will have to tell Biden, ‘Look, this is what the people of Israel want, and I have no other way to make sure Gaza is [no longer] Arab’. He will of course say it’s about the ‘security situation,’ but little by little [Gaza will be resettled].”

‘The Arabs in Gaza have lost the right to be here’

After morning prayers, attendees participated in various workshops and set up Sukkahs (small huts for the festival of Sukkot) for each “nucleus” of settlers planning to establish a new Jewish community in Gaza. There were stands representing Netanyahu’s Likud party and National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir’s Otzma Yehudit party, as well as one run by Bentzi Gopstein, the leader of the extremist group [Lehava](#).

In one workshop, a guide with a military rifle slung across his back handed out maps of Gaza, and explained that annexing Gaza would add another 40 kilometers to Israel’s coastline. “That’s no small part of the State of Israel, and it’s in our hands — we just need to take it,” he said.

Rina Kushland, a 76-year-old participant in that workshop from the central Israeli city of Modi’in, said that as far as she’s concerned, settling Gaza is “the solution for Israel’s security. And it’s also ours, ‘To you I gave this land, from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt,’ it is written [in the Torah]. There may be fatalities. I have children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren; if blood needs to be spilled, I’m ready for it to be me.”

At the main panel, as is customary in such events, the star was Daniella Weiss, a resident of the Kedumim settlement in the West Bank and chair of the major settler organization Nahala. “We have faith in God and the experience that we have acquired over many years of settlement — more than 850,000 Jews beyond the Green Line [in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem],” she told the audience. “What we’re doing here is a copy-paste to Gaza. It’s not for nothing that we went through 50 years of effort and came out successful.”



Right-wing activists at the settlement event near Gaza, October 21, 2024. (Oren Ziv)

In English, for the benefit of the foreign press that had arrived to cover the event, she added: “The goal is to establish settlements throughout the Gaza Strip, from north to south. There are thousands of people ready to move to Gaza now. At the same time, I say clearly, wars bring the terrible thing that is refugees. If it wasn’t for October 7, we would not be here. But October 7 changed history. As a result of the brutal massacre, the Arabs in Gaza have lost the right to be here ever. They will go to different countries of the world. They will not stay here.

“The IDF will put an end to Hamas and Hezbollah, and at the same time we will continue with our plan to settle in the area,” Weiss continued. “We are also talking about Lebanon, but it takes time to physically prepare people for the move. We will fill the areas that will be liberated with Jewish communities. Maybe at the beginning, we will be in military camps — civilians and soldiers [together] as happened in many places in Judea and Samaria.”

The arrival of several Knesset members from Likud aroused great interest as to whether the prime minister’s party would adopt the call for settling Gaza as official policy. MK Tali Gottlieb scolded a foreign journalist in Hebrew for asking her about civilians in Gaza: “As far as I’m concerned, anyone who remains after evacuation notices in the northern Gaza Strip is not only knowingly a human shield, but is interfering with our fighters’ efforts to restore security to the citizens of the State of

Israel.”

Another Likud MK, Osher Shekalim, told the foreign media that “there is no such thing as a Palestinian people, there are only people who have gathered in a certain area and are demanding a Palestinian state only because the State of Israel exists. Before that, there were no claims on this land from any other party.” He then added: “It’s not a people, it’s a collection of murderers.”

‘This is a historic moment’

It wasn’t until around 3 p.m., when some attendees had already made their way to the parking lot to leave, that the most high-profile guests began to arrive: Social Equality and Women’s Empowerment Minister May Golan of Likud, followed by National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir of Otzma Yehudit, and finally Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich of the Religious Zionist Party. [Ben Gvir danced](#) with some of the attendees before taking the stage. He wished Netanyahu, who was not present, a happy birthday, and then told the crowd that Israel’s “change of conception” since October 7 is bearing fruit.



*National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir at the settlement event near Gaza, October 21, 2024.
(Oren Ziv)*

“When the people of Israel want it, Nasrallah, Sinwar, and Haniyeh are gone,” he said. “When the people of Israel want it, we enter the north [Lebanon] and do whatever we want there. True, there are losses, but when a people behaves like the lord of the land, you see the results.

“We can do one more thing: encourage migration [of Gazans],” he continued. “The truth is, this is the most moral, correct, and non-coercive solution: to tell them that we give you the opportunity to go to other countries; the Land of Israel is ours.”

Later on, Ben Gvir complimented the authorities for allowing the event to take place in a closed military zone. “The army and police helped us — this is a historic moment,” he said, before turning to Daniella Weiss. “You don’t know, Daniella, how many admirers you have among the police officers.”

Nearby, several dozen protesters had also gathered, including family members of hostages, chanting “settling Gaza murders hostages.” Their presence only highlighted the fact that the hostages were barely mentioned in the settler event. Weiss, for example, when asked by a foreign reporter about the hostages, snapped back, “What have you and your country done for them?”

“They are declaring settlements on my son’s living grave,” Yehuda Cohen, whose son Nimrod was kidnapped on October 7, told +972. “Instead of making a ceasefire, instead of ending the heinous war, they are stoking it in order to be able to settle in Gaza. We won’t let them.”

Oren Ziv

P.S.

- +972 Magazine. October 22, 2024:

<https://www.972mag.com/gaza-israeli-resettlement-event-sukkot/>

A version of this article was first published in Hebrew on Local Call. Read it [here](#).

- Oren Ziv's articles in +972 Magazine:

<https://www.972mag.com/writer/orenziv/>

- Our team has been devastated by the horrific events of this latest war – the atrocities committed by Hamas in Israel and the massive retaliatory Israeli attacks on Gaza. Our hearts are with all the people and communities facing violence.

We are in an extraordinarily dangerous era in Israel-Palestine. The bloodshed unleashed by these events has reached extreme levels of brutality and threatens to engulf the entire region. Hamas' murderous assault in southern Israel has devastated and shocked the country to its core. Israel's retaliatory bombing of Gaza is wreaking destruction on the already besieged strip and killing a ballooning number of civilians. Emboldened settlers in the West Bank, backed by the army, are seizing the opportunity to escalate their attacks on Palestinians.

This escalation has a very clear context, one that +972 has spent the past 13 years covering: Israeli society's growing racism and militarism, the entrenched occupation, and an increasingly normalized siege on Gaza.

We are well positioned to cover this perilous moment – but we need your help to do it. This terrible period will challenge the humanity of all of those working for a better future in this land. Palestinians and Israelis are already organizing and strategizing to put up the fight of their lives.

Can we count on your [support](#)? +972 Magazine is the leading media voice of this movement, a desperately needed platform where Palestinian and Israeli journalists and activists can report on and analyze what is happening, guided by humanism, equality, and justice. Join us.

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