



## Top Israeli Ministers Reject Palestinian Statehood as Part of Post-war Plan

Top ministers in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government dismissed the idea of Palestinian statehood on February 15, following a *Washington Post* report that Israel's main ally, the United States, was advancing plans to create a Palestinian state.

"We will in no way agree to this plan, which says Palestinians deserve a prize for the terrible massacre they carried out against us: a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital," Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich declared.

"A Palestinian state is an existential threat to the state of Israel, as was proven on October 7," he said, adding that he will demand the security Cabinet adopt a clear position against Palestinian statehood.

*The Washington Post* reported on February 15 that the United States was working with some Arab countries, including Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia — with which Israel has long sought to establish diplomatic ties — on a post-war plan for the region that would include a firm timeline for the creation of a Palestinian state.

The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said any political initiative that did not begin with a Palestinian state as a full member of the United Nations was "doomed to failure."

Reiterating Smotrich's views in separate remarks were National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, Diaspora Affairs Minister Amichai Chikli, Education Minister Yoav Kisch and lawmaker Matan Kahana, a member of the National Unity Party headed by main Netanyahu challenger Benny Gantz.

"This is a catastrophe, to reward the Palestinians after Oct 7 by establishing a state," Chikli of Netanyahu's Likud party told Army Radio.

The latest Gaza war broke out on October 7, 2023, when Hamas led an attack on southern Israeli towns in which the Israeli authorities claim 1,200 people were killed and 253 taken hostage.

In its attempt to eradicate Hamas, Israel has thus far killed more than 28,600 Palestinians, based on Palestinian health authorities, in an air, land, and sea offensive that has devastated much of Gaza and displaced most of its 2.3 million population.

Millions of Palestinians live under various degrees of Israeli rule, but only a fraction are Israeli citizens.

For years, the Palestinian Authority has urged for an end to Israel's occupation and settlement expansion in the West Bank — among territories Israel captured in the 1967 Six Day war — where it wants to form a state that includes East Jerusalem and Gaza.



AP Images  
Bezalel Smotrich



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Most Palestinians and the international community deem the Israeli settlements in the West Bank to be illegal.

Israel disputes this, quoting historical, biblical, and political links to the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Israeli troops on February 15 stormed Al Nasser hospital in southern Gaza, the largest still-functioning health facility in the besieged enclave, per both the Israeli military and officials from the Hamas-run Palestinian health ministry.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) proclaimed in a statement issued through its spokesperson Daniel Hagari that it had received “credible intelligence” to support claims that Hamas “held hostages at the Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis.”

The IDF also stated that it believed Hamas militants to be hiding inside the facility, though it did not immediately publish evidence to support the claim. A spokesperson for Hamas dismissed the IDF statement as “lies.”

Aid group Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) said in a statement that it had been informed by hospital staff of a “chaotic situation” within the hospital, “with an undetermined number of people killed and injured.”

The February 15 raid came hours after the IDF issued an order for thousands of displaced civilians who had been seeking shelter in or around the medical facility to evacuate the area. Fire on February 14 directed at the hospital killed one patient and wounded seven more, hospital surgeon Dr. Khaled Alserr told Euronews.

Palestinian health ministry spokesperson Dr. Ashraf Al Qedra told the BBC that the IDF military operation had compelled hospital administrators to “keep intensive-care patients without medical equipment.” Al Qedra added in a statement that early February 15 evacuations of the hospital of patients and medical staff had been carried out “under bombardment and threats.”

Israel has frequently slammed Hamas for trying to use hospitals to hide its fighters, and claims that Hamas has set up command centers beneath medical facilities. The Israeli military said on February 15 that its forces had apprehended an unspecified number of suspects at Al Nasser.

Israel admitted on Tuesday to using stock footage of a Moldovan refugee camp in a video it posted on X touting its claims that it has provided tens of thousands of tons of humanitarian aid to Gaza during the war.

The country’s official X account deleted the video that included the offending photo, which it insisted had been used “for illustrative purposes only,” and promised to “ensure transparency” in subsequent visuals.

BBC reporter Shayan Sardarizadeh exposed the fraudulent clip on Monday, posting side-by-side screenshots of Israel’s video, which claimed West Jerusalem had sent “23,000 tons of tents and shelter equipment” to Gaza, and the original image on the stock photo service iStock.

The photo’s description read, “Land arranged on the territory of Moldova with tents near the border of Ukraine for refugees coming from the war in Ukraine.”

Israel claimed in the video that it had deployed 11,000 aid trucks into Gaza since declaring war on Hamas in October, including 140,000 tons of food, 1,000 water trucks, and 17,000 tons of medical supplies, apart from the shelter equipment purportedly sent.



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While the UN estimates that two million Palestinians in Gaza — almost all of the territory's 2.3 million residents — are presently dependent upon such humanitarian aid, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society last month noted a sharp decline in aid deliveries since the war began.

The organization said it received an average of just 94.5 aid trucks per day during the last three months, as opposed to the 500 that entered daily before October 7, even as Israel has continued to claim there is no limit on humanitarian aid entering Gaza.

Many commenters on X questioned why, if Israel was truly providing the Palestinians with such a humanitarian bounty, it did not use photographs of its own aid deliveries.

West Jerusalem last month explicitly lambasted 13 employees of the UN's Palestinian refugee aid agency, UNRWA, for aiding Hamas during the October 7 raid, causing more than a dozen countries to pull hundreds of millions of dollars in funding without an investigation.

The accusation came days after the International Court of Justice's preliminary ruling in South Africa's genocide case against Israel. West Jerusalem was forced to increase aid deliveries to remedy the humanitarian catastrophe plaguing Gaza's Palestinian population, most of whom are experiencing famine, as per the UN.



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