



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: MINISTERS BEZALEL SMOTRICH AND ITAMAR BEN-GVIR

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FINANCE MINISTER BEZALEL SMOTRICH:

1) Smotrich is driving the Netanyahu government's "stealth annexation" of the West Bank.

- Smotrich leads the far-right, pro-settlement Religious Zionism Party and openly calls for "winning and ending" the battle to prevent a two-state solution through "victory by settlement." As Finance Minister and a minister in the Defense Ministry, he has used the vast governing responsibilities in the West Bank, [transferred](#) to him in May by the IDF, to pursue "[stealthy](#)" annexation.
- Smotrich has [seized](#) the largest amount of Palestinian land in 30 years and ramped up Palestinian home demolitions. He has also approved plans to [legalize](#) outposts and [construct](#) thousands of new settlement homes.
- Smotrich co-founded the pro-settler organization [Regavim](#) in 2006, "[half the people](#) he has brought into the Defense Ministry are from Regavim," including the [head](#) of the Settlement Administration.

2) Smotrich incites settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank.

- Smotrich called to "[wipe out](#)" the West Bank Palestinian town of Huwara following a [settler pogrom](#) in February 2023 which left one Palestinian dead, more than 100 injured, and the town ablaze.
- Smotrich has threatened to turn the West Bank "[into ruins](#)," and labeled claims of settler violence an "[antisemitic lie](#)."

3) Smotrich is waging financial war on the Palestinian Authority and West Bank economy.

- Smotrich has leveraged his position to deliberately [weaken](#) the Palestinian Authority (PA) and [West Bank economy](#) – thereby [bolstering](#) Hamas, which he called an "asset" in delegitimizing Palestinians and undermining a two-state solution. These steps include [withholding](#) Palestinian tax revenues and threatening to [cut off](#) Palestinian banks from Israel's financial system.

4) Smotrich supports permanent Israeli control of Gaza, rebuilding settlements there, forcing the transfer of Palestinian civilians, and withholding humanitarian aid.

- Smotrich [supports](#) permanent Israeli occupation of Gaza and the "[voluntary emigration](#)" of Palestinian civilians from the Strip. In January, Smotrich [attended](#) a far-right conference in support of the resettlement of Gaza.
- Smotrich [blocked](#) a US-funded shipment of flour from entering Gaza, and also [defended](#) the leader of the [US-sanctioned](#) Tzav 9 group, which led attacks on humanitarian aid convoys en route to Gaza.

5) Smotrich was jailed in 2005 for attempting to blow up a highway while protesting Israel's disengagement from Gaza.

- Smotrich was arrested on suspicion of "[endangering human life](#)," and dubbed a "[Jewish terrorist](#)" by the then-deputy head of the Shin Bet.

6) Smotrich is considered a religious extremist within Israel.

- Smotrich, a [self-described](#) "fascist homophobe," organized a Kahanist "[Beast Parade](#)" in 2006, marching with goats and donkeys to protest the Pride Parade in Jerusalem.
- Smotrich supports a [halakhic state](#) in which Israel is governed by Torah law. Accordingly, he has [derided](#) non-Orthodox Jews, [discriminated](#) against Arabs, and [opposed](#) women serving in the IDF and legislation to combat violence against women.

NATIONAL SECURITY MINISTER ITAMAR BEN-GVIR:

1) Ben-Gvir is a chief inciter of settler violence in the West Bank.

- Ben-Gvir, who leads the ultranationalist Jewish Power Party has defended violent settlers as “sweet kids,” [shielded](#) them from accountability, and downplayed their deadly violence as mere “graffiti.” The chief of Israel’s Shin Bet intelligence service has called out Ben-Gvir for fuelling “[Jewish terror](#).”
- Ben-Gvir has [armed](#) violent settlers in the West Bank with 10,000 assault rifles, and the settlers who carried out the latest pogrom in the Palestinian town of Jit reportedly [identified](#) themselves as “Ben-Gvir’s gang.”

2) Ben-Gvir supports West Bank settlement expansion and annexation.

- Visiting the illegal West Bank outpost of Evyatar in June 2023, Ben-Gvir [told](#) settlers to “run for the hilltops, settle them.”
- Responding to the recent International Court of Justice [ruling](#) on the illegality of West Bank occupation, Ben-Gvir called for [annexing large parts](#) of the territory.

3) Ben-Gvir’s inflammatory violations of the status quo on the Temple Mount could further destabilize the region.

- Ben-Gvir is pushing to [change](#) the long-standing status quo on the Temple Mount to allow for Jewish prayer and build a synagogue atop the Muslim holy site.
- Ben-Gvir’s visits to the Temple Mount in [May](#) and [July](#) were roundly condemned, including by the Jordanian custodians of the Temple Mount and the State Department, as “[counterproductive](#) to achieving peace and stability.”

4) Ben-Gvir incited violence before Rabin’s murder and was convicted by an Israeli court for supporting terrorism.

- Shortly before the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, Ben-Gvir [threatened](#) the prime minister on live television. In 2008, Ben-Gvir was [convicted](#) for supporting the Kahanist terrorist organization, Kach, and was [deemed unfit](#) for military service.
- Ben-Gvir [displayed](#) a portrait in his living room of Kahanist terrorist Baruch Goldstein, who in 1994 killed 29 Palestinian Muslim worshippers at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron.

5) Ben-Gvir wants to stop aid to Gaza, expel Palestinian civilians, and resettle the Strip.

- Ben-Gvir [ordered](#) his police force to stop providing security for humanitarian aid convoys en route to Gaza, and advocated for [cutting](#) all humanitarian aid to the Strip.
- Ben-Gvir [attended](#) a Gaza resettlement conference alongside Smotrich, and has also [called](#) for the “voluntary departure of Gaza’s residents.”

6) Ben-Gvir is weaponizing the police against Israeli hostage families and pro-democracy protesters within Israel, and against Palestinians in the West Bank.

- Ben-Gvir has ordered a violent [crackdown](#) on Jewish and non-Jewish protesters, including [family members](#) of hostages still in Gaza, leading to widespread injuries and mass arrests.
- Ben-Gvir has [encouraged](#) Border Police to shoot any “terrorist” even if they do not pose a threat and purposely [worsened](#) prison conditions for Palestinians.