

# Trump's election emboldens Netanyahu's far-right Israeli government

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Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his cabinet ministers greeted Donald Trump's return to the US presidency with whoops of joy. They are crowing over what they view as the green light for their genocide of the Palestinians to be crowned with the full annexation of the West Bank and building of settlements in Gaza--both occupied illegally since their capture in the 1967 Arab Israeli war.

It is not as though Netanyahu's gang of fascists have been on a tight leash. US President Joe Biden has backed Israel to the hilt. His \$17.9 billion military aid to Israel in the last year has financed Netanyahu's criminal war aimed at driving out and/or starving the Palestinians in Gaza.

Moshe Ya'alon, a former Israel Defense Forces (IDF) chief of staff during the second Palestinian intifada and defence minister under Netanyahu (2013-16), has taken to the TV channels to accuse Israel of committing war crimes and ethnic cleansing in the Gaza Strip. He said, "The path they're dragging us down is to occupy, annex, and ethnically cleanse—look at the northern strip" and settlement building in Gaza.

The arch Zionist, himself having committed war crimes, made his comments following the International Criminal Court (ICC) charging Netanyahu and his former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant with "the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare" and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution and other inhumane acts, issuing warrants for their arrests.

Yet both the Biden administration and now the incoming Trump administration have condemned the ICC decision, vowing to defend Israel and its war criminals. And Trump's nominees for the key foreign policy posts have gone further. They are open and fervent backers of Israel's Jewish Supremacist and expansionist policies, including the annexation of the West Bank, the ethnic cleansing of Gaza and the West Bank, and the lifting of the few US sanctions on settlers.

They include:

- Mike Huckabee as US ambassador to Israel. Huckabee,

having long opposed Palestinian statehood, even denying Palestinian identity, has supported settlement expansion and suggested that annexation could "of course" be feasible under the new administration.

- Pete Hegseth as Secretary of Defence. The Fox News presenter and former army officer, who has denounced the United Nations and supported Israel's sovereignty over the West Bank, has called for the building of a third Jewish temple on the Al Aqsa Mosque compound and publicly endorsed Israel's wars in Gaza and Lebanon.

- Marco Rubio as Secretary of State. He also opposes a two-state solution, has rejected calls for a ceasefire in Gaza and when asked if Hamas could be stopped without causing massive civilian casualties in Gaza, replied that Israel cannot coexist "with these savages.... They have to be eradicated."

- Elise Stefanik as ambassador to the United Nations. She infamously denounced university presidents for their insufficient efforts to suppress protests against the Gaza genocide, and helped spark a wave of repression on university campuses, including suspensions, expulsions and the arrest of thousands of pro-Palestinian students and supporters. Stefanik has dismissed the UN as a "cesspool of antisemitism" for condemning the killings of Palestinian in Gaza.

As for Trump himself, on Monday, the Israeli military said an Israeli-American soldier Omer Neutra, believed to be a captive, had in fact been killed last October. Trump responded on his Truth Social account with the declaration, "Everybody is talking about the hostages who are being held so violently, inhumanely, and against the will of the entire world, in the Middle East—but it's all talk, and no action!"

"If the hostages are not released prior to January 20, 2025, the date that I proudly assume office as President of the United States, there will be ALL HELL TO PAY in the Middle East, and for those in charge who perpetrated these atrocities against humanity. Those responsible will be hit harder than anybody has been hit in the long and storied History of the United States of America. RELEASE THE HOSTAGES NOW!"

Bezalel Smotrich, leader of the Religious Zionism party, Finance Minister and de facto ruler of the occupied West Bank, has declared that 2025 will be “the year of [Israeli] sovereignty in Judea and Samaria [the West Bank]”. He has pushed for Israel to occupy Gaza and “encourage” half of the 2.2 million Palestinians to emigrate within two years, saying “it won’t cost too much money” and “occupying Gaza is not a dirty word.”

He and his support base, the ultra-nationalist settlers, have vowed to bring down the coalition if Israel withdraws. They have been pushing for the re-establishment of settlements in Gaza. Last October, some 500 settlers set up a camp near the border demanding the occupation of Gaza and the expulsion of its Palestinian residents.

*Haaretz* reported satellite images of the Gaza Strip showing that the military has demolished hundreds of buildings, widened roads, built substantial outposts and set up cellular antennas, water, sewage and electricity networks. It quoted one officer serving in Gaza as saying “The IDF won’t withdraw before 2026”.

Itamar Ben Gvir, leader of Jewish Power and National Security Minister, has declared, “This is the time for sovereignty” in the West Bank. This last year has seen a marked ramping up of the IDF’s campaign of raids and mass arrests in the West Bank since the onset of the Gaza war, while armed settler gangs have carried out near daily attacks on Palestinians, their homes and farms under the protection of the military.

The IDF has, according to the United Nations office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), demolished more than 1,500 Palestinian buildings in the occupied West Bank since the start of the year, displacing 3,637 people and affecting nearly 164,000 others. The worst affected areas were the Tulkarm, Nur Shams and Jenin Refugee Camps and Jericho.

In the last month, Ben Gvir has ordered home demolitions in East Jerusalem and the destruction of a Bedouin village in the southern Negev desert to make way for an Orthodox Jewish community. This was in defiance of last July’s landmark ruling by the UN’s International Court of Justice declaring Israel’s decades-long occupation of Palestinian land unlawful and calling for the evacuation of all settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

A report by the Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem focuses on one facet of this violence—incidents of severe abuse of Palestinians by Israeli soldiers in Hebron throughout the summer of 2024. It cites 25 testimonies describing acts of violence, humiliation, and abuse directed by soldiers at men, women, teenagers and children that included beatings, whipping, burning with cigarettes, blows to their genitals, injection of an unidentified substance,

prolonged binding and blindfolding, threats, insults and more. The violence was carried out openly and, in some cases, filmed by the soldiers. None of the victims were suspected of any offense or prosecuted but were selected arbitrarily.

Within Israel, Netanyahu has used the US-financed and directed war of extermination on Gaza to silence his critics, bolster his government’s powers and curb dissent, taking aim at the media, the legal system and elections.

Last week, the Knesset introduced a bill to privatise the radio and TV channels of Israel’s public broadcaster, Kan. This follows the government’s decision to boycott the liberal daily *Haaretz* and impose economic sanctions and ban the use of public funds for advertising or subscription.

Other bills seek to grant politicians the power to shut down media outlets that “endanger the security of the State of Israel.” Netanyahu has already closed all Al Jazeera’s offices in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank, as well as Associated Press’s live feed broadcast on Gaza because Al Jazeera used its footage.

Netanyahu and his cronies brand TV channels that offer even the mildest of criticism of his government as “Al Jazeera” or “poison channels”. His supporters have attacked journalists and TV crews physically and on social media when they reported on: a right-wing invasion of the Sde Teiman military base where soldiers had tortured and sexually abused Palestinian prisoners; Haredi demonstrations against being drafted into the IDF; anti-government demonstrations calling for a Gaza ceasefire and hostage deal; and Netanyahu’s ongoing criminal trial for well-documented cases of corruption involving attempts to manipulate media coverage in his favour.

The Knesset has introduced a law requiring political parties to demonstrate “patriotism” and “nationalism”, widening the criteria for disqualifying Arab candidates from municipal elections if they support, via statements or actions, armed action by an enemy state or terrorist entity against Israel. A few weeks ago, the Knesset voted—after failing to impeach him by four votes—to suspend Ofer Cassif, a member of the Stalinist Communist Party Hadash and an opponent of Zionism, for six months for describing the war in Gaza as “genocide” and supporting South Africa’s case against Israel at the ICJ.



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