



EU condemns latest Israeli land grab

Description

EU : The EU issued a statement on 24 March firmly condemning Israel's recent plans to confiscate over 800 hectares of occupied Palestinian land in the West Bank, the largest confiscation since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich announced the confiscation on Friday, declaring the 800 hectares (1,976 acres) as "state lands" to open them to Jewish settlement.

Israel plans to build hundreds of settlement units on the stolen land, in addition to an area designated for industry, trade, and employment.

Smotrich made the announcement on the day US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Israel for talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Continued settlement building goes against official US policy as it is illegal under international law, but US leaders take little action to prevent it.

The EU statement added that "Settlements are a grave breach of international humanitarian law" and urged "Israel to reverse these decisions."

Further, "the EU will not recognize changes to the 1967 borders unless agreed by the parties."

At the same time, the EU affirmed that it is determined to support Israel "by continuously condemning Hamas in the strongest possible terms and through sanctions and other measures."

The 800 hectares of land in the Jordan Valley were designated as state land following a similar confiscation in February of 300 hectares (740 acres) of Palestinian land near the Maale [Adumim](#) settlement in the West Bank, which land is crucial for the establishment of a future independent state.

A long-time settler activist, Smotrich became Finance Minister after his Religious Zionism party joined Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's governing coalition following elections in November 2022.

He assumed new powers over the occupied territory and quickly moved to approve thousands of new settlement homes, legalize previously settlement outposts that were unauthorized under Israeli law,

and pass measures to accelerate the demolition of Palestinian homes and to prevent new Palestinian homes from being built.

The moves came as part of Smotrich's broader effort [to ethnically](#) cleanse and annex the West Bank to enable Jewish settlement in the Palestinians' place.

The Associated Press reported in September that "As the first government minister to oversee civilian life in the West Bank, his role amounts to a recognition that Israel's 56-year military occupation is not temporary but permanent, observers say."

"If Smotrich keeps this position for four years, we will be at a point of no return," said Ilan Paz, former head of Israel's Civil Administration, a military body overseeing civilian affairs in the West Bank.

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