

Israel's "eighth" domestic front in ever-widening genocide and war

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A Knesset House Committee voted Monday for the expulsion of Knesset member Ayman Odeh, who leads the predominantly Israeli Palestinian Hadash-Ta'al party. If 90 of the 120 lawmakers approve Odeh's expulsion, he will have the right of appeal to the Supreme Court.

In an earlier House Committee session on June 21, Osher Shkalim from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party, told Odeh, "In another country, you'd face a firing squad."

Odeh's crime? His social media post last January in which he expressed his happiness at the release of "hostages and prisoners" and his hope that both Israelis and Palestinians would be free from the occupation.

It is a warning that the Israeli state is preparing further massive repression against Palestinian citizens who constitute 20 percent of its population, and to widen Israel's genocidal offensive even as it prepares further military assaults on Iran.

The first discussion on Odeh's ouster on June 21 was supposed to be limited to his social media posts in January, not to his speech to a 2,000-strong demonstration on May 31 in the mixed port city of Haifa. A second motion for his expulsion submitted in June was ruled out of order for failing to meet the committee's procedural requirements.

Addressing demonstrators in Haifa, Odeh called the US-Israeli war in Gaza a "historic defeat of the right. It was vanquished in Gaza. Gaza has won and Gaza will win."

He appealed to anti-government protesters who have called for a hostage deal to unite with the peace movement, insisting that the government's dictatorial efforts to overhaul the judicial system could only be fought by ending the occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state, he told demonstrators, "You are the overwhelming majority in the world, you're on the right side of history and the future. The Israeli government calls for the annihilation of a people... We'll tell them to their face: This is genocide, this is ethnic cleansing".

Ophir Katz, the Committee chair from the Likud party, said of Odeh, "Your presence pollutes the Knesset. There's no place here for terrorists like you. It's disgraceful that you sit with us. Ayman Odeh is our eighth front... What does it mean

Gaza will win? Who stands behind Gaza? Hamas... Since the October 7 attack, [Odeh] hasn't once called Hamas or Hezbollah a terrorist group. On the contrary, he justifies their actions."

Odeh pointed out in response, "The chair of this committee said that Israel faces seven fronts and called me the eighth. This is incitement to murder, nothing less."

Aida Touma-Sliman, another member of Hadash-Ta'al, said, "I feel this is no longer a process or anything resembling a judicial procedure. The decision has already been made by everyone around the table. They all know it and don't care to listen; they've sealed our fate".

This was a reference to the government's efforts to ban parties representing Israel's Palestinian citizens, with a Bill targeting candidates and party lists that support "lone attackers" against Israeli citizens from seeking election without first seeking Supreme Court approval. In November, the Knesset suspended Ofir Cassif, a Jewish Hadash-Ta'al lawmaker, for his opposition to the genocide and his support for South Africa's case to the International Court of Justice, for a six-month period.

Touma-Sliman added, "What has happened so far isn't just against Knesset Member Odeh, but incitement against the entire [Hadash-Ta'al] faction. When they say that in another country we'd be facing a firing squad, and that we are the eighth front, that is incitement to terror."

Responding to the Committee's vote, Odeh said, "The opposition crossed a red line today. Instead of fighting the Kahanist government, it collaborated with it in crushing the democratic space. Some of them hate us more than they love democracy. This is not an opposition—it's the coalition in disguise". He called on the opposition parties to vote against his expulsion.

Katz's remarks make explicit that the government views its Palestinian citizens as the enemy within and a target in its US-funded war against the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank and Iran and its allies in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iraq. This is part of Washington's plans for a wider war against China for control of the resource-rich and geo-strategically vital Middle East.

Under Israel's "Nation-State" law enshrining de facto

apartheid-style discrimination and segregation, Palestinian Israelis are second-class citizens. Their towns and villages have long been denied equal financing for education, health and welfare and planning permission for housing and public and social infrastructure.

In recent weeks, during Iran's retaliatory strikes, they were left to fend for themselves. A 2018 State Comptroller's report found that 60 of 71 municipalities with Palestinian citizens of Israel, including Tamra with its 35,000 residents, lacked public shelters. Four Palestinians were killed in Tamra, about 25 kilometres east of Haifa, when an Iranian missile struck their residential building. Some of the areas where Palestinians live, particularly in the southern Negev, home to Bedouin villages, are designated "open areas" where Israel's Iron Dome interceptors deliberately allow missiles to fall or detonate interceptors overhead, showering civilians with deadly shrapnel.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) and settlers have redoubled their efforts to expel 2,500 Palestinians living in villages in the southern West Bank region of Masafer Yatta. At the beginning of May, the IDF razed most of Khilet Al-Dabe'. A new military directive, citing the IDF's war preparations against Iran, says the residents of the area must be expelled "using the full range of civilian and security tools at [the army's] disposal", including automatic rejection of all applications for building licences, threatening 12 of Masafer Yatta's 20 villages.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, the fascist leader of the Religious Zionism Party, has consolidated his control over construction in the West Bank by installing allies in key positions. He has said his goal is to "deepen the settlement project across the Land of Israel and prevent the establishment of a [Palestinian] terror state".

Smotrich, along with National Security Minister and Jewish Power leader Itamar Ben-Gvir, was sanctioned a few weeks ago by Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Norway and the UK for "inciting extremist violence" against the Palestinians in the West Bank—a move aimed at deflecting criticism for their unremitting support for the US-Israel genocide in Gaza.

After the demolitions in Khilet Al-Dabe', settlers immediately set up an outpost, harassing those who remained and looting their property until Israeli and international activists forced them to withdraw.

Elsewhere settlers have attacked the village of Kafr Malik, south-east of Ramallah, numerous times, killing a 14-year-old boy on Monday and three Palestinians on Wednesday afternoon, provoking violent confrontations and prompting the military to declare the area a closed military zone. On Friday night, dozens of settlers attacked and tried to ram IDF soldiers with their cars as they headed towards Kafr Malik, leading to the arrest of six settlers.

A few days ago, Israel's security cabinet—at Smotrich's behest—approved five illegal outposts established without prior

approval by the government. It gave the go ahead to expand some existing settlements and impose additional punitive measures against the Palestine Authority in retaliation for the PA's legal action against Israel at international courts and the recent recognition of Palestine's statehood by five European countries.

These measures follow Smotrich's statement last month that Israel was advancing plans to annex the West Bank "without the government being accused of annexing it".

In May, the cabinet voted to take sole responsibility for land registration in Area C of the West Bank, stripping the PA's land registry of its authority in a de facto annexation of the majority of Palestinian land. The move is a violation of international law—last July, the International Court of Justice declared Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory illegal and called for the evacuation of all settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

According to the UN, since 7 October 2023, Israeli settlers and the army have killed over 1,000 Palestinians and wounded over 7,000 in the West Bank, while the Israeli authorities have demolished, confiscated or forced the demolition of 3,844 properties, including 1,376 homes, in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The IDF have emptied three refugee camps in the West Bank, displacing more than 40,000 Palestinians from their homes, and installed hundreds of checkpoints.

Settler attacks, under the protection of the Israeli military, are part of a broader plan by Israel's fascist government to provoke the Palestinians in the West Bank into an attack that can be used, like the 7 October attack, as the pretext for a broader war against the Palestinians.

It has the approval of Israel's financial backers in Washington, with President Donald Trump calling for Netanyahu's long-running corruption trial to be abandoned. He said of this criminal, wanted by the International Criminal Court on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, "Bibi Netanyahu's trial should be CANCELLED, IMMEDIATELY, or a Pardon given to a Great Hero, who has done so much for the State (of Israel)".



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