

Former Israeli minister calls for ethnic cleansing, telling Palestinians to go to tent cities

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Tel Aviv, October 15 (RHC)-- Former Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon has told Al Jazeera that people in Gaza should evacuate their residences and relocate to the Sinai Desert in Egypt, where

temporary tent cities could be established for them, amid the ongoing fighting between Israel and Hamas.

The interview has been shared widely on social media, with Ayalon receiving widespread criticism for his comments, which many said were a call for “ethnic cleansing”.

“We told the Gazan people to clear the area temporarily, so we can go and take Hamas out, and then, of course, they can come back,” said Ayalon, speaking to Marc Lamont Hill on an episode of UpFront that aired on Friday. “We don’t tell Gazans to go to the beaches or drown themselves ... No, God forbid ... Go to the Sinai Desert. There is a huge expanse, almost endless space in the Sinai Desert just on the other side of Gaza.”

“The idea is for them to leave over to the open areas where we and the international community will prepare infrastructure ... tent cities, with food and with water, just like for the refugees of Syria,” Ayalon added.

Moreover, the former deputy foreign minister said everything will be “restored” in Gaza, if there is an “immediate surrender, unconditional surrender of Hamas”, which Lamont pointed out was a “textbook” definition of collective punishment.

On October 9, Israel announced a total blockade of the Gaza Strip, including the stoppage of fuel and gas deliveries, two days after fighters from Hamas carried out deadly attacks inside Israel.

The decision to cut basic supplies to Gaza, which has already been under an Israeli siege for 16 years, was condemned by the United Nations, which said it was an act of “collective punishment” and prohibited under international law.

“Danny Ayalon is actually advocating for ethnic cleansing in front of the global public, secure in the knowledge that there’s little to stop him in terms of international pressure or rebuke,” Marc Owen Jones, an associate professor at Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Qatar, posted on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Another user said that based on Ayalon’s remarks, Israel’s goal was seemingly the “repurposing of Gaza into settlements while banishing what remains of the local population into refugee camps in the desert”.

Others said Ayalon was calling for a second “Nakba” or “catastrophe.” The “Nakba” refers to the ethnic cleansing of Palestine and the near-total destruction of Palestinian society in 1948. Zionist military forces expelled at least 750,000 Palestinians from their homes and lands and captured 78 percent of historic Palestine. The remaining 22 percent was divided into what are now the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Lamont Hill also spoke on the episode with Osama Hamdan, a Hamas senior spokesperson. Hamdan avoided answering questions about whether the killing of Israeli civilians was justified, and instead referred back to the ongoing occupation of the Palestinian people.

Speaking about Hamas’s attack on October 7, Hamdan said: “The Israelis were shocked, these [were] the main troops attacking Gaza for the last 10 years ... They want to get back the image of the Israeli army.”

In the first seven days of the war, approximately one million residents of Gaza have been forced to leave their homes, as reported by the United Nations agency assisting Palestinian refugees. Humanitarian organisations have described the conditions in the besieged coastal enclave as “dire” or “catastrophic”.

Israeli air attacks have claimed the lives of more than 2,329 Palestinians, with 724 of them being children. Meanwhile, more than 1,300 Israelis, including 286 soldiers, have been killed.



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