

# *Israel's anti-Netanyahu coalition leaders pledge there will be no settlement freeze*

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Tel Aviv, June 5 (RHC)-- Opponents of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the prospective new administration have announced that there will not be a freeze in construction of illegal settlements on occupied Palestinian territories, despite international outcry over the Tel Aviv regime's land expropriation policies.

David Elhayani, who heads the Jordan Valley Regional Council and the Yesha umbrella council of settlement mayors, said senior lawmakers in the right-wing Israeli political parties of Yamina and New Hope have stated that they would not form a new governing coalition that would end Netanyahu's 12-year rule in case there will be a freeze. "I ... do not think that this administration will harm the settlement movement," Elhayani said.

And he added: “[New Hope chairman] Gideon Sa’ar, [Yamina chairman] Naftali Bennett and [Yisrael Beytenu chairman] Avigdor Liberman are very committed to the right-wing.”

Elhayani noted that opposition leaders have reached agreements with Yesh Atid chairman Yair Lapid to ensure that in addition to no construction freeze, the so-called Civil Administration’s High Planning Subcommittee – the body affiliated with the Israeli ministry of military affairs and responsible for authorizing settlement construction in the occupied West Bank – will continue to meet on a quarterly basis.

Benny Gantz, who is poised to continue his job as Israeli minister of military affairs in the new administration, suggested earlier this week that he would make the decisions on settlement construction and not Bennett or Sa’ar.

“Only I will decide on settlement construction and negotiate with the Americans on issues pertaining to Judea and Samaria (West Bank),” Elhayani quoted Gantz as having said.

Elhayani highlighted that both Bennett and Sa’ar “will safeguard the interests of the settlement movement, both at the budgetary level and at the diplomatic level.” More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem al-Quds.

Israel has stepped up its illegal settlement construction activities in defiance of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334, which has pronounced settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem al-Quds “a flagrant violation under international law.”

The United Nations says Israel’s demolition campaign against Palestinian structures jumped by 90% in April compared to the same month last year. All Israeli settlements are illegal under international law. The UN Security Council has condemned Israel’s settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions.

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