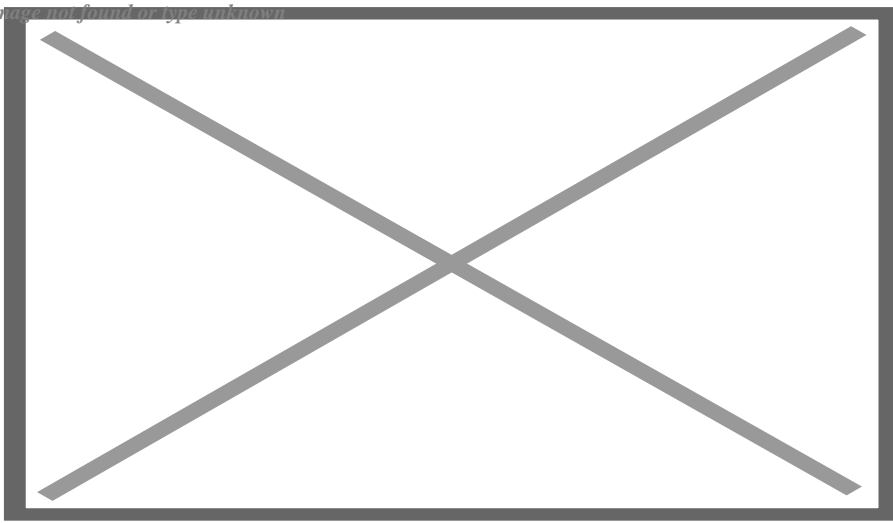


Israel to launch intense offensive to relocate Palestinians and seize the Gaza Strip

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Tel Aviv, May 6 (RHC)-- Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israel plans to seize the entire besieged Gaza Strip. In a video posted on X, Netanyahu said the Gaza population will be moved as part of an "intensive" operation.

He said Israeli soldiers won't go into Gaza, launch raids and then retreat. "The intention is the opposite of that."

The scheme would involve the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to southern Gaza. Hebrew-language Maariv daily recently said Netanyahu was expected to order an expansion of the ongoing onslaught on the besieged Palestinian region.

Israel has already expanded its ground aggression in Gaza, seeking to seize a large portion of the Palestinian territory amid the genocidal war. The regime intensified its onslaught in April.

Critics say the Israeli regime "is sending more soldiers into Gaza to fight in the same areas where battles have already taken place repeatedly." In recent weeks, thousands of Israeli reservists have signed letters demanding that Netanyahu's regime stop the war in Gaza.

Hawkish minister Bezalel Smotrich has said Israel will not withdraw from the Gaza Strip even if there is another hostage deal. He called on Israelis to embrace the word “occupation.”

“We are finally going to occupy the Gaza Strip. We will stop being afraid of the word ‘occupation,’” Smotrich was quoted as saying by Israel’s Channel 12.

An Israeli campaign group said the plan would mean “sacrificing” captives held in the blockaded Palestinian territory. “The plan approved by the cabinet deserves to be called the ‘Smotrich-Netanyahu Plan’ for sacrificing the captives,” the Captives’ Families Forum said in a statement.

Israeli authorities suppressed a protest by the families of captives who had gathered outside the Knesset on Monday. The protesters accuse Netanyahu of abandoning the captives in favor of prolonging the war for his political survival.

Former Israeli minister for military affairs Avigdor Lieberman has also weighed in, criticizing Netanyahu’s cabinet for what he calls a politically motivated war. He says the current conflict is not about security but about maintaining Netanyahu’s political power.

[SOURCE: AL JAZEERA and REUTERS]

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