



After Civil Administration, Right-Wing Settlers plan to take control of Military Central Command**By: Madeeha Al-A'raj**

The National Bureau for Defending the Land and Resisting Settlements stated in its latest weekly report , that last April, the so-called Commander of the Israeli Occupation Army - IOA Central Command and Military Governor of the West Bank, M. Gen. Yehuda Fuchs, announced his intention to resign from his position in August 2024, keeping the reasons behind his step almost unknown. However, the debate over the reasons for his intention opened up the issue of the relationship between the leadership of the 'Central Region' in the IOA and the settlers. Noting that Fuchs was close to the settlers, but some reasons pushed the settlers, especially their extremist leaders, into confusion, of which was the feeling of euphoria among them over the appointment of Smotrich as Minister of Settlement in the Ministry of the Army and a rapporteur in the Civil Administration, besides his position as Minister of Finance.

It is known that the 'Central Command' in the IOA plays a central role in anything related to the policy of the Occupation Authorities - OA in the West Bank, including settlement activities, plans and the behavior of settlers. As it includes a number of brigades operating in the region, it has installed itself since the occupation of the West Bank as 'a military ruler', whose mission is to manage the affairs of the land and the population under occupation.

Thus, its military orders apply to areas under its influence, it enjoys 3 powers, specifically in areas C according to the agreements signed between the Palestinian and Israeli sides after Oslo 1993: a legislative authority, as the military orders issued by it is considered legislation for this region that applies under the 'Emergency Law' to Palestinian citizens as well as settlers, and with the Judicial authority through military courts and legal advisors, and an executive authority that includes what is called the "Regional Affairs Coordinator Unit" as well as the Civil Administration, and control over the borders of the occupied land, including bridges, crossings, and borders with the outside world.

With the formation of the new government after the recent elections for the Israeli Knesset, the administration of Area C began to gradually move out of the complete control of the leadership of the central command in the IOA through transferring the powers of its administration to the Israeli government itself in a path that was indicative of the annexation plans pushed by the OAs, which was explicitly happened in Feb. 2023, when the powers of managing settler life, planning and construction in Area C, and part of the land confiscation operations, were transferred from the "Central Command" to civilian ministries, such as, the Ministry of Civil Administration and the Ministry of National Missions, which are run by all religious Zionism, headed by Bezalel Smotrich. and Itamar Ben Gvir, operating independently of the authority of the army command.

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The war on Gaza aggravated the situation, and made it out of control. In the first weeks of the brutal war waged by Israel on the Gaza Strip, Fuchs objected to the Chief of the General Staff on Smotrich's method of managing the settlement file in the Ministry of the Army and to the intention of the Israeli police under the leadership of Ben Gvir not to impose security and enforce the law i.e. 'the occupier's law, of course' in the West Bank.

In response, settler leaders issued calls indicating that they intended to harm the life of Yehuda Fuchs, the commander of the Central Command, especially after he collected dozens of weapons from the extremist settlers, whom Ben Gvir armed. He issued administrative arrest orders against some terrorist settlers, and dismantled a settlement outpost. The matter developed in Feb. of this year, the settlers angrily called for the dismissal of the commander of the Central Command because he conducted a military training with the participation of Israeli intelligence, simulating the kidnapping of a young Palestinian man by the settlers. Both Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Minister Benny Gantz denounced the matter, in addition to Smotrich, Ben Gvir, and the settler leaders, which prompted Fuchs to publicly apologize for "this mistake".

The many services that Yehuda Fuchs provided to the settlers didn't resonate with them. The general committed mistakes that requires his removal, after he imposed an administrative order to deport Elisha Yaered from his area of residence in the terrorist hotspot 'Ramat Migron,' as he is suspected of being involved in the shooting death of Palestinian Qusay Jamal Maatan, 19 in the village of Burqa in the Ramallah and Al-Bireh Governorate in August of the year. In the past, administrative detention was imposed for 4 months on some settlers suspected of committing acts of violence against Palestinians. This may be the second time that the OAs imposed such administrative detention orders, after the one issued against the criminal of Duma, Meir Ettinger, who burned the Dawabsheh family, including a baby in the village.

In addition, the leaders of the extremist settlers, who belong to the movement of Religious Zionism and Jewish Power, have repeatedly asked the rabbis to issue religious opinions 'fatwas' that provide cover for the settlers' terrorism. This actually happened, and some rabbis justified the theft of Palestinian olive crops. This was stated by former Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, when he said, 'Since the land is the inheritance of the people of Israel, agriculture on this land by foreigners is agriculture on land that doesn't belong to them.'

If someone plants a tree on my land, the tree and the fruit it bears belong to me.' Some rabbinic extremists also quoted Biblical texts indicating that it was permissible to exterminate "the Amalekites" to justify the expulsion of Palestinians from the land and the killing of civilians in times of war.

Settlement council leaders also joined in inciting 'the leadership of the central command.' This came in an urgent letter sent by the former head of the West Bank Settlements Council, 'Yesha Council', Shlomo Neeman, to the Israeli PM requesting them immediate assistance to 'warning teams' or 'alert teams' in the West Bank. He said, 'There is a strong and skilled infrastructure and various defense components for these teams, but in light of the atrocities committed by the enemy

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against our brothers in the southern settlements, we are obligated to be prepared to defend our residents, and the means, we have been asking for a long time, have become an urgent requirement these days.'

On more than one occasion, head of the Shin Bet warned against harming the security of Fuchs, and targeting him, against the backdrop of statements made against him by Jewish terrorist organizations operating in the settlements in recent weeks that amounted to incitement to begin persecuting him in accordance with Jewish law 'Din Rodef', which stipulates to pursue the other to kill him without this entailing any responsibility.

Against the background of all that, and with the approaching end of the term of the Commander of the "Central Command" in the IOA, Fuchs, the settler leadership, in addition to the Settlement Council in the West Bank, are pushing towards appointing those close to them in the command of the Central Command, who have a more brutal iron fist, and closer to the settlers, they are supported in this by Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir, and behind them stands Netanyahu, and quite a few ministers and members of the Knesset, especially after they succeeded in expanding their influence in the Civil Administration, as well as, appointing Tzivi Sukkot as head of the West Bank file within the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee, which is a key committee and most of its meetings are secret, oversees the formulation of strategic visions for the status of the occupied territory, and how to govern them.

Although the presidency of this committee requires the selection of an "officer" from within the security establishment; However, the settlers' incursion into the deep state led to the appointment of Sukkot, who was arrested several times for his extremism and his previous leadership of the "Hill Youth," and was previously rejected from conscription into the army because he was "unfit for service".

Within the context, Minister of Finance and Minister of Settlement in the Ministry of the Occupying Army, Bezalel Smotrich, said during a meeting, he initiated with a number of leaders of settlement councils in the West Bank, that 'the danger of a Palestinian state is as tangible as it has not been for years, within the framework of incitement to launch terrorist attacks against Palestinians throughout his calls to exterminate them in the Gaza Strip during the war, and to erase the town of Huwwara from existence.

In a statement issued by his office, Smotrich announced that he 'reviewed in the meeting the tangible and evolving danger of establishing a Palestinian state with international involvement and the approval of the leftist parties in the Israeli political establishment, and that a Palestinian state poses a severe threat to the State of Israel that we must now prevent by all means.' Smotrich, who also serves as Settlement Minister in the Ministry of the Army, explained to the settlement leaders that Netanyahu has, in recent months, prevented a meeting of the Supreme Planning Council to approve settlement construction in the West Bank, contrary to the clear understandings when forming the government, and that he gave Netanyahu 4 days to clarify his position.

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As of resuming settlement construction in the West Bank at this stage, and clarifying this officially and in writing, in an attempt to push him to “bear the political price” for this step, otherwise he will resume settlement construction himself by virtue of the powers granted to him based on the coalition agreements on the basis of which the current Netanyahu’s government was formed.

On another level, the so-called ‘Judea and Samaria Settlements Council’ i.e. “West Bank” announced the election of the head of the Binyamin Regional Council i.e. (Ramallah and Al-Bireh Governorate), Israel Gantz, as the new president of the council ‘Yesha’ to replace Shlomo Neeman, who until recently was president of Gush Etzion Regional Council. Israel Gantz heads the largest regional settlement council. He enjoys close relations with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and senior ministers from various political parties.

Shlomo Neeman described his colleague as a settler man, and that Israel needs a visionary and energetic person, who will participate in developing and strengthening the settlements and achieving a real revolution, and that he is confident that Israel Gantz will successfully continue developing the settlements in “Judea and Samaria.” Gantz replied to him that the settlement movement in “Judea and Samaria.” stands at a dramatic and life-changing crossroads that will have an impact on the State of Israel.

Adding, we face enormous challenges in defending Israel that will ensure the country’s security.

Life in Judea and Samaria should be the same as anywhere else in Israel. It is known that the new head of the Settlements Council Yesha is following a policy that the settlements throughout the West Bank must become an integral part of the State of Israel, and therefore, the State of Israel’s investment in strengthening the settlements must be organized systematically, not as part of a political process, but rather as a national priority. He is an extremist right-winger, no less extremist than Yossi Dagan, head of the settlement council in the northern West Bank, who called about a year ago for erasing the town of Hawara from existence. In 2020, he held a prayer with a number of his colleagues in the city of Hebron in which he called for the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States, but later he had reservations about Trump’s Abrahamic Accords from an extreme right-wing position that rejects in principle even talk about a Palestinian state on any part of the West Bank

List of Israeli Assaults over the Last Week Documented by the National Bureau:

Jerusalem:

- Forcing the Qaraeen family to demolish 3 shops they owned in the town of Silwan under the pretext of not having a license, while settlers severely beaten the boy, Adam Al-Rishq, 16 in the Old City. Majed Al-Rishq, the boy’s father, said that his son was assaulted by settlers while jogging. Seizing a Bedouin community of Jahalin Arabs near Khan al-Ahmar and forced its residents to leave after seizing their tents and agricultural crops.

Hebron:

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Nablus

- Welding the doors of the old Hebron Municipality's building located in the Ain Al-Askar area as a prelude to seizing it, while mayor of Hebron, Tayseer Abu Sneineh, confirmed that this building is a purely Palestinian heritage, and that the building's case is still before the court, as the municipality possesses all the legal and official documents, that prove its ownership of the building.
- Demolishing a two-story house, under the pretext of building without a license in the Juba area, east of the town of Yatta.
- Attacking citizens' vehicles in the Qalqas area and destroyed it, belonging to citizen from the Shawahin family.
- Detaining an agricultural tractor belonging to the citizen, Kayed Moh'd and seized a motorcycle belonging to the citizen Saeed Al-Amour in Al-Tuwani.

Bethlehem:

- Building a settlement road on citizens' lands in the village of Husan in the "Wadi Qadis" area, extending from the Ain Qadis spring all the way to the Ain al-Taqa spring.
- Demolishing a 3-story house under construction in the "Jofa Aziz" area, under the pretext of not having a license.
- Forcing citizen Moh'd Issa Muslim from the town of Nahalin to demolish the barracks built on an area of 5 dunums in the Wadi al-Baqar area, north of the town, which includes a building, an aluminum shop, a car repair garage and a restaurant, after he had previously been notified of the demolition and paid a financial guarantee of NIS 25,000. It also demolished a commercial complex, which was built on 5 dunams in the Wadi al-Baqar area in the same town. The losses amounted to about half a million shekels, under the pretext of building without a license.
- Demolishing a 3-story house under construction in Beit Ta'mar, under the pretext of not having a license.
- Grazing sheep on citizens' lands in the Al-Khader town in the "Wadi Al-Ghuwait and Baniyas" areas, west of the town, which are planted with vines and almond trees. Moreover, settlers attacked Palestinian shepherds in the Al-Furaidis area, while they were grazing their sheep.

Ramallah:

- Demolishing a floor of a house and a commercial facility in the village of Ras Karkar that belonged to Nawaf Samhan's heirs, under the pretext of not having a license, and another commercial establishment, which is a car wash and barracks, belonging to the citizen Amjad Samhan.
- Handing over demolition and construction halt orders to 11 houses in the area.

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- Gathering at the intersections of a number of roads leading to Ramallah and Al-Bireh Governorate, near the “Beit El” settlement, and burned vehicle tires.

Nablus:

- Demolishing agricultural rooms and tents for citizens in the town of Duma under the pretext of building without a license in the Al-Shakara area.
- Attacking tents and houses in the village of Faroush Beit Dajan, estimated at about 100m², which was built more than 20 years.
- Injuring a boy in the Qasra town, while dozens of settlers stormed the top of Mount Al-Arma in the town of Beita, south of Nablus, located between the towns of Beita and Aqraba.

Salfet:

- Storming the Kafil Haris town, and prevented Palestinians from moving around, in preparation for the settlers to storm and attempt to desecrate the shrines there.
- Destroying an agricultural room and stole agricultural equipment in Kafr al-Dik, belonging to the citizen Safi Abdel Majeed Ali Ahmed.

Jordan Valley:

- Demolishing 4 houses in the village of Al-Jiftlik, and KHALLET Al-Fula area, belonging to the families of Bani Odeh, Jahalin, and Al-Ka’bneh, under the pretext of not having a license, and a house belonging to the citizen Qadri Darwish Bani Odeh, consisting of a cement floor covered with ‘Zinko’, under the pretext of not having a license.
- Erecting a new settlement outpost and placed sheep and fodder in it, 700 meters from the Ras Ain Al-Auja Bedouin community, to control the land and water. At the same time, prevented Palestinian farmers from using water pumps to irrigate their crops in Khirbet al-Deir in the northern Jordan Valley.
- Notifying the demolition of 5 homes and a sheep barn, belonging to Saleh, Akram, Talib, and Muhammad Suleiman Mleihat in the Mleihat Arab community.
- Attacking a citizen’s vehicle while it was in the “Um al-Qaba” plain in the northern Jordan Valley. Moreover, they stormed the Al-Hamah Hill, and raised the flag of the occupying state above it.