



Settler violence illustrates why Israel needs a new government

In the West Bank, violent acts by extremist Jewish settlers against the Arab population are becoming increasingly frequent. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu either stands idly by while this settler terror unfolds or downplays it, because he does not want to further jeopardize his chances in the next election. This is unacceptable.

By Sacha Wigdorovits [i](#)

On October 27, Israeli citizens will elect a new parliament (Knesset) and thereby also decide on their future government.

In doing so, the secular majority of the population—as well as the country’s religious-Zionist Jewish community—have various good reasons to send the current government under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu into the Sinai Desert.

This includes, in particular, the blatant preferential treatment of ultra-Orthodox Jews, who make up about 14 percent of the Israeli population but benefit from enormous financial subsidies thanks to the current government. Furthermore, they are still de facto exempt from mandatory military service, even though the Supreme Court ruled as early as 2024 that this is not in accordance with the law.

In any case, the Supreme Court is a thorn in the side of the current government, which is why it is seeking to strip it of its power through a controversial judicial reform. This, too, is not sitting well with many Israelis, as they view this development as a weakening of democracy. Since Israel has no constitution or basic law, the Supreme Court plays a more significant role as a supervisory body over the government in the Jewish state than it does in many other Western democracies. This system of “checks and balances” has proven effective in the past.

Above all, however, the government must take responsibility for the fact that, under its leadership, on October 7, 2023, more than 5,000 terrorists and their supporters from Gaza invaded southern Israel and brutally murdered over 1,200 people there, ranging from toddlers to elderly women.

And that’s not all: To this day, the government refuses to establish a so-called “State Commission” authorized to conduct an independent investigation into the failures of the government, the military, and the intelligence services in the run-up to October 7—as was done, for example, after the 1973 Yom Kippur War.



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Furthermore, the government—and in particular the far-right Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir—can be blamed for the fact that the relationship between the West and the Jewish state has steadily deteriorated in recent years.

As for the Israeli Defense Forces' (IDF) conduct during the Gaza War, the accusations leveled against Israel are indeed unfounded: The IDF adhered to international humanitarian law in Gaza. Anything else amounts to politically motivated, factually unjustified slander. This applies in particular to the infamous accusation of genocide. This accusation is neither supported by a corresponding ruling from the International Court of Justice nor can such a finding be derived from the proceedings to date.

But on another issue, the Israeli government is rightly criticized by other countries—and also by significant segments of its own population—for its response to the increasingly frequent and violent acts committed by radical Jewish settlers in the West Bank against the Arab population there.

The current government is standing idly by while this settler violence unfolds—or is even indirectly supporting it by preventing appropriate security forces from taking action against the violent settlers. Far-right politicians such as Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich do this out of conviction. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, on the other hand, tolerates settler violence because, with the October 27 elections just around the corner, he does not want to alienate voters on the far right of the political spectrum. According to current election projections, however, he will have a hard time remaining head of government even with their support.

Ultimately, the reasons why the current government in Jerusalem stands by and watches the settlers' criminal activities in the West Bank are of secondary importance. Nor is it decisive that this strains its relations with Western countries, including the United States. Anyone who wants to criticize Israel has always found a reason to do so—whether justifiably or not.

What is crucial, however, is that allowing settler terror against Arabs living in the West Bank violates the fundamental principles of the rule of law—and thus undermines democracy.

The Jewish state cannot afford this any more than Switzerland, Germany, France, Italy, or the United States could. That is why Israel needs a new government.



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