

## “Bashan Pioneers”: Israelis Falsify Geography and Distort History to Occupy Syria



On the morning of November 27, 2025, thirteen Israeli settlers breached the border fence near the Golan Heights, waving Israeli flags and declaring their intent to establish a new settlement on Syrian land.

The group behind this attempt to cross from occupied Golan into Syrian territory calls itself the “Bashan Pioneers.” But who are they? Why this specific region? And what is the official Israeli stance on their activities?

Who Are the “Bashan Pioneers”?

Movement Profile:

Known in Hebrew as Halutzei HaBashan, the group is a far-right movement that promotes Jewish settlement inside Syria, starting from the region historically referred to as Bashan. According to Israeli beliefs, this area stretches from Mount Hermon in the north to Gilead, a mountainous region east of the Jordan River.

Name Origins:

“Bashan” is an ancient biblical term denoting fertile land and geographically encompasses the Golan Heights, Hauran, and the volcanic region of Al-Lajat.

### Founding:

According to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, the group was established in April 2025. Although the exact number of its members is unknown, they have included families with children among their ranks. Since their inception, the group has attempted to cross into Syria multiple times as a prelude to launching their settlement project.

### Ideological Affiliation:

The movement claims allegiance to the so-called “Land of Bashan,” which they equate with today’s Golan. It adopts a nationalist-religious discourse that calls for a Jewish “return” to the occupied plateau.

On the religious-propaganda front, members often cite biblical texts to justify their ambitions, noting that the term “Bashan” appears around 60 times in the Bible and is associated with divine abundance, especially in Psalms.

### Seeking Legitimacy:

Recently, the Israeli military revived the use of the term in its rhetoric, naming its operation in Syria following the fall of Bashar al-Assad’s regime “Operation Bashan Arrow,” signaling an ideological and historical invocation of the name.

In October 2025, Sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri the spiritual leader of the Druze community in Syria’s Suwayda Governorate also used the term “Mount Bashan” instead of the traditional “Jabal al-Arab,” in a symbolic gesture seen as an endorsement of Israel’s hold over southern Syria.

### Core Demands:

On the day of the latest incursion, members of the movement held their first conference in occupied Jerusalem, urging the Israeli government to accelerate settlement in the area and “reinforce Israeli sovereignty.” A petition was also signed during the event.

One of their statements reads: “Bashan is the inheritance of our ancestors. We call on the Israeli government to expel the enemy from all its territories and allow us to settle there.”

### Long-Term Goals:

In its first phase, the movement seeks to establish permanent Jewish settlements on Syrian land, which they claim is part of the historical “Biblical Land of Israel.”

Their initial aim is to build new settlements beyond the Golan border as a first step toward altering the status quo and expanding deeper into Syrian territory.

The group views control over southern Syria as vital to Tel Aviv’s security

strategy, under the broader vision of creating what they call “Greater Israel.”

### Relations with Syria’s Druze Community:

While there has been no official coordination, Bashan Pioneers’ leaders promote the notion of a shared destiny.

Group activist Amos Azaria, 44, from the Ariel settlement in the occupied West Bank, explained: “This is the land conquered by the Prophet Moses. Today, the Druze inhabit Mount Bashan to the east, and between the Golan and the mountain, Sunni groups lie in wait to slaughter us or the Druze.”

He continued: “That area must be entirely cleansed and settled it is part of our land. Trust that the Druze will welcome us to live side-by-side with them,” he told Yedioth Ahronoth.

### How They Breach Syrian Territory

The Bashan Pioneers use quasi-military tactics to infiltrate Syrian territory, exploiting security gaps in a post-conflict Syria still struggling to restore order.

In the latest attempt on November 27, 2025, the group split into two units: one infiltrated from Mount Hermon in the north, the other from the Beer Ajam area in southern Quneitra countryside.

Using electric saws, they cut through sections of the border fence and drove several hundred meters into Syrian land in off-road vehicles. Israeli forces pursued and returned them to Israeli territory.

The operation was live-streamed on social media. Upon entry, they raised Israeli flags and scouted a location to camp overnight and begin establishing their new settlement.

### Not the First Attempt

The November operation is just the latest in a string of similar incursions since the group was founded.

October 2025: The group organized a larger breach disguised as a civilian protest. Hundreds gathered near the border, and three families used the demonstration as cover to cross into Syria.

August 2025: Around 40 settlers including nine families from the Golan and the West Bank crossed the border, held a ceremonial event, laid a cornerstone, and planted a sign and an Israeli flag marking the future site of “Neve Bashan” (“Bashan Oasis”).

April 17, 2025: Just days after the group’s formation, dozens of settlers crossed the fence into Syria and remained for two hours before being escorted back by

the Israeli army.

Why the Golan?

Several factors underlie the group’s choice of the Golan:

A biblical narrative claims a historic Jewish right to the plateau and broader southern Syria.

The movement invokes stories of King Og of Bashan and his defeat by the Israelites (as recounted in Numbers and Deuteronomy).

Biblical tradition holds that Moses and the Israelite tribes once settled east of the Jordan, including in the Golan, according to Yedioth Ahronoth.

In their worldview, the Golan serves as a gateway to further expansion into Hauran, Daraa, and the fertile plains of southern Syria.

A shifting political and military landscape in Syria has emboldened their ambitions.

Official Israeli Response

Officially, Israel has not expressed any public intention to annex further Syrian territory, and has reacted at least on the surface with caution regarding the Bashan Pioneers’ activities:

**Israeli Police:** Following the latest breach, issued a statement reminding the public that crossing into Syria or Lebanon is a criminal offense punishable by up to four years in prison.

**Israeli Army:** Described the incident as “a serious violation that constitutes a criminal offense and endangers both civilians and soldiers.”

**Military Spokesperson:** Confirmed the infiltrators were quickly apprehended and handed over to police.

**Uri Kelner, Head of the Golan Regional Council:** Called the incursions a “red line” and a threat to personal, national, and community security.

However, rhetoric surrounding the idea of a “Greater Israel” continues to resonate in the background. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently expressed a desire to “completely clear southern Syria of hostile elements.”

Amid what Netanyahu describes as a multi-front war, he and his supporters have returned to invoking biblical and historical terminology, hinting at what they consider Israel’s right to larger swaths of Arab land potentially preparing the public for future changes to the region’s borders.

Settler violence and the extremism of Jewish nationalist groups often enjoy the backing of Netanyahu’s current government widely considered the most hardline

in Israel’s history.

These groups benefit from lenient legal consequences, vague laws, and short-term detentions, only to be released and resume their incursions into Syrian territory just as they have in each previous attempt.

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