

Regional Escalation Gives Israel Cover to Intensify Its Policies... An Interview with Nihad Abu Ghosh





Amid rising regional tensions, the West Bank is increasingly turning into an open arena for the intensification of Israeli security and political measures. Palestinian communities face tightening restrictions, including closures, checkpoints, and arbitrary arrests, alongside an accelerated pace of settlement expansion and the displacement of some population clusters.

In this context, Noon Post conducted an interview with Nihad Abu Ghosh, a writer and specialist in Israeli and Palestinian affairs, who offered an in-depth reading of Israeli strategies and outlined potential security scenarios in the event of further regional escalation.

The interview reveals how the West Bank has become a space of daily tension and confrontation, where Israeli measures intersect with Palestinian responses, rendering the lives, security, and even the future of the region hostage to regional shifts and escalating Israeli policies.

To what extent do regional tensions or wars affect the level of Israeli security measures in the West Bank?

Undoubtedly, they have an impact on several levels. First, when regional conflicts flare up even if Israel is not directly involved, such as crises in Sudan or Syria this contributes to sidelining Palestinian affairs and marginalizing the Palestinian cause. For instance, when three citizens are killed by settlers' gunfire in a Palestinian village like Abu Falah, al-Mughayyir, or Qaryut, such incidents would



normally provoke strong international and regional reactions. However, when we hear daily about airstrikes killing hundreds, even severe Palestinian incidents become marginal events. That is one aspect.

Consequently, Israel has a clear program regarding the occupied Palestinian territories. This far-right government has an explicit, not hidden, agenda one that is openly stated in coalition agreements between the Likud party and its partners, as well as in the government's general direction.

It is committed to intensifying and expanding settlement activity while simultaneously reducing the powers of the Palestinian Authority. Naturally, this leads to a plan of displacement and rendering Palestinian land unlivable.

Thus, regional escalation provides a highly conducive environment first because the world is preoccupied, and second because it resembles a state of darkness that suits a thief, as the saying goes. Amid this constant global distraction, settlers act with impunity, and the army implements whatever measures it chooses, sometimes under the pretext of security, and at other times by turning a blind eye to settler behavior.

Moreover, Israel seeks to instill the notion that it is confronting the same enemies whether in Iran, Yemen, Lebanon, or the Palestinian territories grouping them all under what it calls an "axis of evil." It therefore attempts to portray the Palestinian national movement and its factions as part of an Iran-aligned axis, labeling resistance movements as Iranian tools rather than as a natural response to occupation or an expression of the Palestinian people's will for freedom.

In reality, resistance movements predate the Iranian Revolution and have existed as long as the occupation itself. Resistance is not tied to Iran, Hamas, or any political faction aligned with Iran; it is a historical phenomenon shaped by the Palestinian people through their long struggle and sacrifices.

Can we say that Israel treats the West Bank as an arena directly affected by any regional escalation?

Certainly. Israel considers the West Bank an internal matter, particularly after adopting political and legislative measures that explicitly affirm this. One such example is the Nation-State Law, which states that the right to self-determination in the Land of Israel meaning all of historic Palestine is exclusive to Jews.

Accordingly, Palestinians are viewed as having no political or national rights, with only limited civil and economic rights potentially granted.

This is not merely an Israeli perspective; it was largely adopted by Donald Trump in his "Deal of the Century." It also appears, to a significant extent, in Trump's



Gaza peace proposals, where Palestinian self-determination is framed ambiguously and conditioned on unrealistic requirements.

Thus, Israel operates on the basis that all Palestinian affairs are internal Israeli matters security issues that concern neither the United Nations, nor Arab states, nor any other global actor. It manages them unilaterally through military force rather than negotiations or agreements.

Historically, has the West Bank experienced similar security tightening during previous regional crises?

Absolutely. During every war involving Israel—such as the Gulf War—and whenever regional crises erupted, Israeli governments seized the opportunity to impose additional restrictions. Over time, such measures have become routine, extending beyond periods of security tension to include Jewish holidays and various occasions.

As Itamar Ben-Gvir has stated, the freedom of movement or the right of Jews to move is more important than that of Palestinians. This reflects a longstanding, deeply rooted, discriminatory outlook that treats Palestinian life and daily affairs as marginal and insignificant.

What are the main security measures Israel employs in the West Bank during regional escalation?

Since the start of the war on Gaza, Israel has adopted what it defines as wartime legal measures. Consequently, the laws applied in the West Bank operate under exceptional, war-like conditions. These include expanded grounds for arrest, prolonged detention, methods of interrogation, detention locations, property confiscation, and continuous closures.

There are now over a thousand gates restricting movement across the West Bank, alongside widespread abuses, harassment at checkpoints, and mass arrest campaigns that have detained more than 15,000 Palestinians during the war including academics, unionists, students, women, children, and local officials from across the political spectrum.

Additionally, there has been a notable easing of rules of engagement. During the Gaza war, Israel killed around 1,100 Palestinians in the West Bank, including 60 to 70 by settler gunfire. Notably, none of these settler killings have been seriously investigated; instead, Israeli institutions routinely justify them. Any perceived suspicious movement such as accelerating a vehicle or reaching into a pocket can be deemed sufficient grounds for lethal force.

These measures coincide with ongoing raids, the gradual erosion of Palestinian Authority powers, land seizures, and the forced displacement of Bedouin



communities one of the most dangerous developments during the war. More than 75 herding and Bedouin communities have already been displaced, particularly to facilitate control over Area C.

Ultimately, these measures serve the broader project of settlement expansion. While framed as security policies, they are in essence punitive measures designed to make life increasingly difficult for Palestinians, pushing them toward migration by eroding hope for a stable future.

To what extent are checkpoints, closures, and movement restrictions linked to fears of internal escalation?

While they are ostensibly justified as security measures, their primary aim is not security. Repression often generates backlash; arbitrary arrests, assassinations, and collective punishment frequently push young people toward resistance. These measures are therefore political tools aimed at coercion and control rather than effective security policies.

They align with ideological visions such as that of Bezalel Smotrich, who denies the existence of a Palestinian people and describes them merely as “Arab residents.” According to this vision, Palestinians must either accept inferior status, emigrate, or face death. While Netanyahu may not openly endorse this rhetoric, in practice he allows such policies to be implemented.

How do these measures affect daily Palestinian life and the economy?

Israel’s policies have profoundly impacted all aspects of daily life. These are cumulative measures that predate the current war, including control over land, water, and resources; restrictions on access to 1948 territories for work; and a structurally unequal economic framework shaped by the Paris Protocol.

Further pressure comes through financial measures, such as withholding Palestinian tax revenues (“clearance funds”) under various pretexts compensation claims, alleged terrorism, or other justifications.

Meanwhile, restrictions on land use and infrastructure hinder development, even as Israel benefits economically from practices such as waste disposal on Palestinian land.

As a result, the Palestinian Authority has struggled for over 30 months to meet its financial obligations, deepening economic hardship. While Gaza faces catastrophic conditions, the West Bank is also experiencing rising unemployment, poverty, and the collapse of productive and charitable institutions.

Even international agencies, including UNRWA, face restrictions, while over 60,000 refugees have been displaced from northern camps.



Are these measures primarily aimed at preventing unrest in the West Bank?

That is one factor, but the broader objective is to resolve the conflict unilaterally. The current right-wing government seeks to impose a final settlement by expanding settlements and seizing more land, aiming to establish irreversible facts on the ground.

The goal of reaching one million settlers in the so-called “Samaria” region reflects this strategy. These realities are intended to override negotiations and render previous agreements obsolete.

To what extent can Israel use regional tensions to justify stricter policies?

In the past, Israel relied heavily on security justifications, but it now operates within a political climate shaped by Donald Trump’s doctrine of “peace through strength,” which sidelines international law. This approach enables Israel to impose its policies unilaterally, leveraging its military and political dominance.

If regional conflict expands, what are the possible scenarios in the West Bank?

While Israel maintains overwhelming military superiority, it cannot ignore the presence of over 5.5 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Long-term political resolution cannot be achieved without addressing their rights.

Israel may impose temporary control through force, but it risks entrenching an apartheid-like system, which faces growing global opposition. International recognition of Palestine and widespread solidarity movements underscore the limits of Israeli dominance.

Could we see broader military deployment or exceptional measures such as full closures?

Such measures already occur periodically. During the current war, the West Bank has effectively been sealed off at times, with travel between cities taking several hours instead of one. Entire areas can be shut down for days following minor incidents.

Is the West Bank likely to become an additional flashpoint if regional conflict escalates?

The West Bank has always been a zone of tension, regardless of the form resistance takes. As long as occupation, repression, and daily violations persist, resistance whether organized or spontaneous will continue to emerge.

Palestinians face constant threats to their lives, dignity, and basic rights, from movement restrictions to economic deprivation. This reality fuels a growing determination, particularly among youth, to resist occupation and reject its policies.



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