



Defying Oslo Accords, Israel to expand law enforcement in Areas A and B

Matan Golan, Jonathan Lis and Noa Shpigel

The security cabinet on Sunday approved the expansion of oversight and enforcement measures in Palestinian-controlled areas of the West Bank, according to a joint statement by Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Defense Minister Israel Katz.

The decision, which runs counter to the Oslo Accords – under which Israel has no authority over civilian matters in the West Bank, and is expected to take effect in Areas A and B un-

der Palestinian Authority control – will include oversight over prohibitions on water violations, damage to archaeological sites and environmental hazards. It will also introduce measures to ease the sale of Palestinian land to Jews.

"We will continue to kill the idea of a Palestinian state," Smotrich said in a statement shortly after the cabinet meeting.

The decision also includes the transfer of building licensing and construc-

tion in Hebron from the local Palestinian municipality to the Civil Administration, the branch of the Israel Defense Forces that oversees zoning, planning and building permits as well as resource management and security coordination in the West Bank.

As part of the decision, an independent local government will be established for the Jewish settlement in Hebron, allowing it to address settlers' needs directly without relying on Pales-

tinian mechanisms that, it said, involved "a complex and frustrating process."

According to Smotrich and Katz, the cabinet approved the cancellation of a Jordanian law that prohibited the sale of land to non-Arabs in the West Bank. The government had previously attempted to repeal the law through legislation, as settlers are currently barred from purchasing land privately and must do so via companies registered with the Civil Administration.

Smotrich further stated that Jews will no longer be required to obtain what he described as a "complex transaction permit" from the Civil Administration to purchase land across the West Bank. He added that the decision also lifts confidentiality restrictions on land registry records in the region, enabling potential buyers to identify landowners and contact them directly.

According to the statement, the cabinet also approved transferring the

Rachel's Tomb compound in Bethlehem to an Israeli administration, separating it from the Bethlehem municipality. The new body will be responsible for cleaning, garbage removal, landscaping and ongoing maintenance.

If implemented, the decision could have far-reaching consequences. For example, lifting the confidentiality of land registration records is expected to create an opening for accelerating the forgery of land purchase documents, a phenomenon already identified in the West Bank.

Additionally, the transfer of building permit authorities in Hebron to the Civil Administration constitutes a violation of the 1997 Hebron Agreement, which would allow changes in the Old City. The seizure of planning authorities in the city's Cave of the Patriarchs compound is an especially volatile change to the status quo.

The expansion of enforcement measures in several civilian areas in Palestinian areas of the West Bank runs counter to

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Israel and the PA hinder Gaza administrative panel News Page 2

Israeli music legend Matti Caspi dies of cancer at age 76

Shay Ringel and Shira Naot

Israeli musician Matti Caspi, whose compositions are considered part of Israel's core repertoire, has died of cancer at the age of 76.

Caspi composed complex yet accessible and transcendent melodies, such as "In the Warm Summer Nights," "A Place for Worry," and

Song Contest in the Netherlands, and even conducted the contest's orchestra during the performance. The entry, performed by the band Chocolate, Menta, Mastik – which included the iconic singer Yardena Arazi – finished in fifth place.

The songwriter first shared his illness publicly last May, writing on Facebook that he had to cancel all his planned concerts to focus on treatment. A public fundraising campaign to fund his treatment reached millions of dollars within days.

"I can't play, I can move my fingers but only barely," Caspi said. "The doctors sound like lawyers to me. I don't accept it – I see death in front of my eyes, but something in me is fighting. I'm stubborn."

In August, many prominent Israeli artists held a tribute show for Caspi, including Shlomo Artzi, Aviv Geffen and Gali Atari. The proceeds made from the show was eventually donated

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Emil Salman

PM's trip meant to make him look good whatever Trump decides

Analysis Amos Harel

The surprising announcement that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is flying to the United States this week gave birth to conflicting interpretations. Netanyahu is scheduled to meet in Washington on Wednesday with U.S. President Donald Trump. With negotiations

close to Netanyahu said he is going to Washington to convince Trump to carry out his threat to attack Iran. On January 14, when Trump was considering an attack, Netanyahu actually opposed it – due not to any objection in principle, but to practical issues. He thought the

what suspicious of Trump's representatives at the talks with Iran – his son-in-law Jared Kushner and his special envoy Steve Witkoff. Netanyahu has had tensions with both in the past, during the negotiations over a hostage deal with Hamas and, in Kushner's case, over Trump's "deal of the century" for peace with the Palestinians in 2020, during the president's first term.

But there's one detail that raises doubt about the claim that the sole goal of the trip is persuasion. Over the weekend, the media reported that Netanyahu would be accompanied by Brig. Gen. Omer Tischler, who is slated to be the next air force commander. As of Sunday night, this hadn't been definitively confirmed.

Due to stubborn pettiness on the part of Netanyahu and Defense Minister Israel Katz, the Israel Defense Forces has lacked a military attaché in Washington for months now. After Katz rejected IDF Chief of Staff Eyal Zamar's candidate for the job (apparently with Netanyahu's encouragement), Zamar recently appointed Tischler as the military's contact person with the Trump administration.

Now, his persuasion trip is a win-win for Netanyahu. If Trump attacks, Netanyahu will take credit for it. And if his host ultimately decides not to act, then at least the prime minister tried.

His desire to speak with Trump directly may also be related to the fact that Netanyahu's staff is some-



Netanyahu and Trump in Florida in December. Alex Brandon/AP

between America and Iran slated to resume, is Netanyahu coming to persuade or to coordinate?

Alternatively, perhaps he's simply avoiding the conference Trump is convening in Washington on February 19 to launch his Board of Peace for the Gaza Strip. That forum isn't a comfortable one for Netanyahu, because Trump's plan completely contradicts the prime minister's promises about how the war in Gaza would end.

The talking points distributed to a few journalists

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Shot in an alley

A 14-year-old bled to death for 45 minutes as soldiers stood nearby

Amira Hass

A 14-year-old boy wounded by gunfire lies on his back in an alley in the al-Far'a refugee camp in the northeastern West Bank. A large group of soldiers walks around him or stands nearby, sometimes less than a meter away. At times they glance at him, but usually stand close without looking, as if an object rather than a human being were lying on the ground.

He rolls onto his side and bends his legs, his knees falling outward. He extends one hand and then another. They drop, and then he raises one or two hands again. Neighbors watch from the windows of nearby houses, unable to do anything.

In another movement that seems like a plea for attention and help, he throws his hat toward the soldiers. One soldier kicks it back. He throws the hat again. This time, a soldier gently kicks it so that it remains out of the teenager's reach. At times, the soldiers fire into the air. On one occasion, they fire toward his mother. When she learns that the wounded boy is her son, she hurries out of the family's home, 200 meters away trying to reach him and beg for his life. Severe bullets strike the wall near the exit door, forcing her back.

The wounded boy is Jadallah Jadallah (Jad) to his



Jadallah Jadallah's parents last month.

family), born in May 2011. On November 16, his family found itself on two painful lists. Jad became one of 55 Palestinian minors in the West Bank killed by Israeli soldiers in 2025, and one of 77 killed minors whose bodies are being held by the IDF – most of them in morgue freezers – by order of the government. Because his body was not returned for burial, the family still clings to the hope that he is alive, even though four disturbing videos obtained by Haaretz document the final hour of his short life. A few minutes of that hour are described above.

According to the IDF Spokesperson's website posted at 6:12 P.M. that day, this was an "offensive operation by the Paratroopers' Battalion special reconnaissance unit (Sayeret Tzahani) in the al-Far'a camp, under the Menashe Brigade."

Camp residents say the soldiers were searching for a wanted man. He was not arrested during the operation and later turned himself in. In an earlier video, chronologically preceding the others and obtained by Haaretz, shows three figures at the junction of an

alley in the camp leading toward Jadallah's house. They peek around the corner of a building at the far end of the alley, looking into the street to their left. It is difficult to determine from the footage whether they are children, but in retrospect we know they are Jad and his friends.

One of them runs into the alley. A few seconds later, a second boy leans forward. The friend who had been running with him suddenly runs westward as well. Then two other figures enter the frame from the north. From

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IDF: Gov't attitude may threaten ties with states in region

Yaniv Kubovich

Defense officials are worried that due to the political divide in Israel, the government, and especially senior ministers, are translating the war's achievements and the deterrence it achieved, at a heavy cost, into boastful, dismissive attitudes, to the point of humiliating other countries in the region.

These officials have warned the government that the switch from a stance of regional deterrence to one of regional belittlement is leading other Mideast countries, including those who signed the Abraham Accords or are in talks about joining them, to distrust Israel and fear its regional ambitions.

These countries are therefore forging alliances with America, Western Europe and each other with the goal of preventing Israel from attaining uncontrolled power in the region in a move that could negatively affect both Israel's security and its economy.

"Many countries in the Middle East think Israel grew stronger during the war to a degree far beyond its real size in the Middle East," one senior defense official said. "The capabilities that the Israel Defense Forces, the Shin Bet security service and the Mossad demonstrated during the war to a large extent restored deterrence against all the players in the region and [led them] to respect its military power in the region."

"But boastful talk and irresponsible statements by politicians have turned deterrence into humiliation," he continued. "In the Middle East, anyone who gains more power and then boasts is immediately marked as a destabilizing element against whom they must prepare."

These senior officials, some of whom hold key roles in intelligence and research

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