

Is the EU trying to undermine Israeli control in the West Bank?

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Is the European Union working in tandem with the Palestinians against Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank?

That was the allegation made Monday in an exposé by Israel's Channel 13 which obtained an E.U. document that outlines a plan to empower pro-Palestinian organizations to acquire land in Area C of the West Bank in order to expand the Palestinian presence.

Area C is the portion of the West Bank under Israeli control. It accounts for 60% of the West Bank—also referred to by its biblical names Judea and Samaria. The West Bank was part of Jordan from after the 1948 war until Israel's victory in the Six-Day War in 1967.

Though the document was written before the Israeli election on Nov. 1, this flies in the face of the aims of the anticipated incoming right-wing government.

The E.U. plan promotes an expansion of Palestinian presence in those areas by securing land, apparently through organizations—not the E.U. itself—and building on it in order to prove Palestinian entitlement to the land, Channel 13 reported.

The plan also calls for the E.U. to “follow and monitor” Israeli archaeology in Area C which is used by Israel to prove the historic and biblical roots of the Jewish people to Judea and Samaria.

Nablus, for example, is a Palestinian city today but was

called Shechem in the Bible and is the site where Joseph's bones were believed to be buried. There is also archaeological evidence of an altar there dating to the time of Joshua, Benny Katsover—a settler and activist—told ALL ISRAEL NEWS.

The ultimate goal of the E.U. document is to merge Area C with Areas A and B, according to Channel 13.

In response, the E.U. said that its "policy has not changed—we are committed to a two-state solution, with Jerusalem as the future capital of both states.

"We call on Israel to allow a tangible improvement in the lives of the Palestinians, to enable Palestinian construction and stop the deterioration of living conditions for Palestinians in the field," the body said in a statement.

AT ODDS WITH INCOMING GOVERNMENT

Israel's Foreign Ministry is said to be looking into this. But the revelation puts the E.U. at odds with Israel's incoming coalition that wants to expand its control over the settlements and the West Bank, in general. Religious Zionism party head Bezalel Smotrich is demanding a new position in the Defense Ministry that will enable him to approve construction of West Bank settlements in Area C. Smotrich favors annexing parts of the West Bank.

"The fight against the Arab takeover of the open areas in Judea and Samaria is one of the urgent and important challenges that the next government must address and is one of the main reasons for my demand to receive the authority for this in the Ministry of Defense," Smotrich said.

Ohad Tal, a new Knesset member in Smotrich's Religious Zionism party, said it's one thing for the E.U. to continually adopt the "Palestinian narrative," but this plan crosses a red line.

"We will not accept the E.U.'s two-faced behavior towards us,"

Tal said. "They cannot benefit from cooperation's in intelligence, trade, research and Israeli innovation on the one hand, and undermine and destabilize our sovereignty in our land on the other hand. Even worse, they do so behind our back."

WHAT ARE AREAS A, B AND C IN THE WEST BANK?

Established by the Oslo Accords in 1995, Areas A, B and C were defined in order to split control between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.

Area A is under Palestinian administrative and police control. Area B is under Palestinian Authority administrative control with shared security control with Israel. Area C is solely under Israeli control and covers 60% of the West Bank.

Most Palestinians live in Areas A and B while some 300,000 live in Area C. Around 400,000 Israeli settlers live in Area C. {eoa}

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