# Israeli Minister Discloses Plan to Transfer West Bank Governance to Civilians



**Israeli Minister Reveals Strategy to Restructure West Bank Governance**

Bezalel Smotrich, a key member of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition, disclosed plans to shift governance of the Israeli-occupied West Bank from military to civilian control. Speaking at a private event on June 9, 2024, with settlers in the West Bank, Smotrich detailed efforts to avoid formal annexation accusations while cementing Israeli control over the territory. He stated that this strategy aims to thwart the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank.

Smotrich, who is also a lawmaker in Israel's Defense Ministry, emphasized changes in administrative roles, and hinted that most of these transfers had already occurred. Civilian officials now oversee many aspects of settlement expansion and land management, traditionally controlled by military commanders. Smotrich confirmed that the prime minister supports the initiative.

The speech was verified by a recording obtained by Peace Now, an anti-occupation group, and later confirmed by Smotrich's spokesperson. The Israeli government's official stance remains that the West Bank's status is open to negotiation, in line with previous Supreme Court rulings classifying the territory's governance as a temporary military occupation. Nonetheless, Smotrich's revelations suggest a significant policy shift toward civilian administration, potentially complicating future peace negotiations.

**Israeli Strikes Near Rafah Result in Civilian Casualties**

On June 21, 2024, Israeli forces shelled tent camps for displaced Palestinians near Rafah, Gaza, killing at least 25 people and injuring 50 more, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The camps, located outside an Israeli-designated safe zone, have become densely populated due to ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas.

Ahmed Radwan, a spokesperson for Civil Defense responders in Rafah, reported the shelling occurred at two coastal locations. Israel's military claimed to be reviewing the episode and denied immediate responsibility for the strikes.

Witnesses recounted secondary attacks targeting individuals who emerged following the initial explosion. Mona Ashour described how her husband was killed when he left their tent to investigate a flashbang detonation, followed by a lethal strike. Hasan al-Najjar recounted losing his sons, who were helping evacuate women and children during the second bombardment.

This incident follows a previous deadly fire caused by an Israeli bombing in southern Gaza, sparking international condemnation. Israel asserts its operations target Hamas militants, who allegedly embed themselves within civilian populations. Despite diplomatic efforts for a truce, including from Hamas officials seeking a two-state resolution under UN guidelines, the conflict persists, with significant civilian casualties and humanitarian crises in Gaza.