# Sanctioned settler Moshe Sharvit confronts peace advocate amid surge in West Bank violence



In the tense and often volatile atmosphere of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, a recent encounter involving a sanctioned Israeli settler has brought to light stark contrasts between philosophies regarding land and coexistence. A team of BBC journalists documenting the efforts of Gil Alexander, a 72-year-old advocate for Palestinian shepherds, found themselves face-to-face with Moshe Sharvit, a settler under sanctions from the UK and EU for his alleged involvement in violent actions against Palestinian communities.

The encounter occurred in the Jordan Valley, an area where settler violence has escalated sharply amid heightened tensions following the recent Hamas attacks. The UK had imposed sanctions on Sharvit and others, following reports that they had employed physical aggression and property destruction to forcibly displace Palestinians from their land. This was part of a broader condemnation of settler activities, which have been labelled illegal under both Israeli and international law. The EU later aligned itself with this stance, further sanctioning Sharvit in July 2024 as part of its Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime.

During the interaction, Sharvit, who driven by a belief that the entire West Bank is a divinely granted territory to Jews, approached the journalists with hostility. He accused Alexander of being a "dangerous guy" and suggested that journalists were "great lovers of Israel" but ultimately detrimental to it. His narrative aligns with a faction of Israeli politics that sees settlement expansion as a necessary part of national security, echoing sentiments expressed by figures like Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Public Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir. Both have been criticised widely for their incendiary rhetoric towards Palestinians and for promoting policies that appear to incite further violence.

Claims by Palestinian residents like Ayesha Shtayyeh—who alleged that Sharvit had threatened her with a gun to vacate her home—spotlight the grim realities faced by those living in the shadow of these settlements. The officials' failure to take effective action against rising settler violence has drawn ire from both human rights organisations and international observers, who argue that Israeli authorities frequently stand by during assaults on Palestinian villages.

Gil Alexander represents a divergent view, advocating for a resolution that respects both Jewish and Palestinian rights within the borders established before the 1967 conflict. His perspective is marked by a commitment to peaceful coexistence and human rights, contrasting sharply with Sharvit's aggressive stance. The Jordan Valley Activists group to which Alexander belongs, attempts to foster inter-community solidarity, often at great personal risk. Alexander himself has faced legal troubles stemming from his altercations with settlers, including a serious incident in January 2023 that led to both him and Sharvit obtaining restraining orders against each other.

Sharvit’s declaration during the encounter—that “there’s no such thing as peace with enemies who try to destroy you”—highlights a prevailing belief among some militants that eradication of what they perceive as a threat is the only pathway to safety. His comments carry a foreboding weight, suggesting an escalated willingness for violence which can be traced back to the growing influence of far-right ideologies within Israeli politics. This sentiment was echoed in a call by certain U.S. lawmakers for sanctions against the key architects of these policies, notably Smotrich and Ben-Gvir, reflecting increasing international concern over the implications of such extremism.

As tensions mount, particularly following the Israeli response to recent escalations in Gaza, the situation in the West Bank appears increasingly precarious. Reports indicate a surging number of settler attacks, with more than 1,800 documented incidents in a short span, raising alarms regarding the urgent need for intervention and accountability. The complex interplay between entrenched ideologies and human rights remains a focal point for both local and international observers.

Ultimately, Alexander’s story—and those of ordinary Palestinians like Shtayyeh—underscore a struggle between diverging visions of what the future holds for this disputed land. While some dream of a regional transformation free from conflict, others remain ensnared in a reality of violence and fear that seems far removed from ideals of peace, coexistence, or understanding. The stark realities and the raw emotions encapsulated in their encounters reveal much about the ongoing conflict, suggesting that the path to resolution remains fraught with challenges, yet desperately sought by many.

As peace activists endeavour to bridge these divides, the question lingers: can there ever be a shared future in a land marked by such profound and stark differences?

### Reference Map

* Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8d1j3v2y3mo), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/12/uk-places-sanctions-on-israeli-settlers-for-forcing-palestinians-from-their-land)
* Paragraph 2: [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/12/uk-places-sanctions-on-israeli-settlers-for-forcing-palestinians-from-their-land), [[3]](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/07/15/extremist-israeli-settlers-in-the-occupied-west-bank-and-east-jerusalem-as-well-as-violent-activists-blocking-humanitarian-aid-to-gaza-five-individuals-and-three-entities-sanctioned-under-the-eu-global-human-rights-sanctions-regime/)
* Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8d1j3v2y3mo), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/12/uk-places-sanctions-on-israeli-settlers-for-forcing-palestinians-from-their-land)
* Paragraph 4: [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/02/israel-vigilante-settlers-violence-benjamin-netanyahu)
* Paragraph 5: [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8d1j3v2y3mo), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/12/uk-places-sanctions-on-israeli-settlers-for-forcing-palestinians-from-their-land), [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/02/israel-vigilante-settlers-violence-benjamin-netanyahu)
* Paragraph 6: [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8d1j3v2y3mo), [[5]](https://www.timesofisrael.com/88-democrats-urge-biden-to-sanction-smotrich-ben-gvir-for-promoting-settler-violence/), [[6]](https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/06/26/israel-annexation-west-bank-bezalel-smotrich-netanyahu/)
* Paragraph 7: [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8d1j3v2y3mo), [[7]](https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/09/05/israel-far-right-violence-netanyahu-ben-gvir/)
* Paragraph 8: [[6]](https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/06/26/israel-annexation-west-bank-bezalel-smotrich-netanyahu/), [[7]](https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/09/05/israel-far-right-violence-netanyahu-ben-gvir/)
* Paragraph 9: [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/02/israel-vigilante-settlers-violence-benjamin-netanyahu), [[5]](https://www.timesofisrael.com/88-democrats-urge-biden-to-sanction-smotrich-ben-gvir-for-promoting-settler-violence/)

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## Bibliography

* <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8d1j3v2y3mo> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/12/uk-places-sanctions-on-israeli-settlers-for-forcing-palestinians-from-their-land> - In February 2024, the UK imposed sanctions on four Israeli settlers, including Moshe Sharvit, for using physical aggression, threats, and property destruction to displace Palestinian communities in the West Bank. The UK government condemned these actions as illegal and unacceptable, urging Israel to take stronger measures against settler violence. The sanctions targeted individuals accused of undermining security and stability for both Israelis and Palestinians. The move followed similar actions by the US, which had previously imposed sanctions on individuals involved in settler violence in the West Bank.
* <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/07/15/extremist-israeli-settlers-in-the-occupied-west-bank-and-east-jerusalem-as-well-as-violent-activists-blocking-humanitarian-aid-to-gaza-five-individuals-and-three-entities-sanctioned-under-the-eu-global-human-rights-sanctions-regime/> - In July 2024, the European Union sanctioned five individuals and three entities under its Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime for serious human rights abuses against Palestinians in the West Bank. Among those sanctioned was Israeli settler Moshe Sharvit, known for engaging in settler violence and threats towards Palestinian residents in the Jordan Valley. The EU's restrictive measures included asset freezes and travel bans, aiming to hold individuals accountable for actions that violate Palestinians' rights to physical integrity, property, and education.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/02/israel-vigilante-settlers-violence-benjamin-netanyahu> - In July 2023, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu condemned settler violence against Palestinians, urging the public not to take the law into their own hands. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and security agencies faced criticism for their inaction during such attacks. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who held a defense ministry portfolio, called for Huwara to be 'erased,' drawing international condemnation. The article highlights the challenges in addressing settler violence and the need for effective government intervention.
* <https://www.timesofisrael.com/88-democrats-urge-biden-to-sanction-smotrich-ben-gvir-for-promoting-settler-violence/> - In October 2023, 88 Democratic lawmakers urged U.S. President Joe Biden to impose sanctions on Israeli ministers Itamar Ben Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich for their roles in promoting settler violence against Palestinians. The lawmakers argued that the ministers' policies and statements were undermining security and stability in the West Bank. Despite the call for sanctions, the Biden administration had not taken direct action against these ministers at that time.
* <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/06/26/israel-annexation-west-bank-bezalel-smotrich-netanyahu/> - In June 2024, Foreign Policy reported on Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich's role in the annexation of the West Bank. Smotrich, a settler leader, was accused of facilitating settler violence and undermining Palestinian communities. The article highlighted the challenges in addressing settler violence and the need for effective government intervention.
* <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/09/05/israel-far-right-violence-netanyahu-ben-gvir/> - In September 2024, Foreign Policy discussed the rise of far-right violence in Israel, particularly in the West Bank. The article highlighted the roles of ministers Itamar Ben Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich in promoting settler violence and undermining Palestinian communities. It also discussed the challenges in addressing this violence and the need for effective government intervention.