



# BRISMES

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies

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## **British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Issues Grave Warning: Danger of Massive Ethnic Cleansing of Palestinians in the West Bank**

The British Society for Middle Eastern Studies is deeply concerned that, under the cover of the Gaza War that includes forms of [genocidal retribution](#), the ongoing expulsion of Palestinian communities from their villages in the West Bank will intensify dramatically and that, should the war develop into a regional conflict, Israel might embark on a massive act of ethnic cleansing that could spill across international borders. In addition to the catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Gaza, these are yet more reasons for an immediate ceasefire. This warning is based on our extensive collective expertise as scholars of Palestine/Israel, and is issued in line with our ethical responsibilities to educate the public and promote public awareness of significant issues unfolding in the region, while encouraging cooperation and exchange amongst persons concerned with the scholarly study of the Middle East.

The expulsion of Palestinian communities, although underreported, is already underway (for example see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) in the hills east of Ramallah, the Jordan Valley and in the South Hebron Hills (see [map below](#)). Often escorted by soldiers and backed by police, Israeli settlers routinely attack Palestinian communities, at times [killing](#) or [torturing](#) them, whilst also [destroying](#) structures and olive trees; stealing cars, livestock, and agricultural equipment; as well as vandalising water tanks, pipes and solar panels. Since Hamas's attack on October 7, [eight communities](#) have been forced to abandon their villages for fear of being killed, and six others have been partially evacuated. These actions are part of Israel's longstanding policy of making life so miserable for dozens of Palestinian communities in the West Bank that the residents eventually leave, seemingly of their own accord.

Since 7 October, Israeli settlers have been threatening Palestinian communities that if they refuse to leave their villages they will be killed. In a message circulated in both Hebrew and Arabic on a 10,000 strong settler WhatsApp group, one individual uploaded a [poster](#) that read: 'You asked for 1948 and you got it! We are giving you an opportunity to escape to Jordan now in an orderly manner, because we will eliminate every enemy and forcibly expel you from our country'. These messages, it is important to underscore, come in the wake of various Knesset Members calling for [revenge](#), and are in line with Israel's Minister of Finance, Bezalel Smotrich's plan to annex the West Bank and [offer](#) Palestinians two alternatives: live in the West Bank without citizenship or realise their national aspirations 'in one of the many surrounding Arab countries...' This is furthermore taking place in the context of the recent distribution of [thousands of guns](#) to the settlers.

To reiterate, should we witness a regional conflagration, the ethnic cleansing currently underway is likely to dramatically intensify, with Israeli forces pushing West Bank Palestinians out of their homes and possibly across international borders. In the face of grave threats to the region's



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populations, to the very possibility of cooperation and study and in line with our duty to educate and inform the wider public about the situation in the Middle East, BRISMES calls for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and for the international community to guarantee the protection of the Palestinian population in the West Bank.

*BRISMES Council*  
*26 October 2023*

***Map of West Bank: Areas in Blue under Threat of Expulsion***

