

Smotrich's Negev Plan Isn't Ethnic Cleansing

THE LIE

Israel's Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has unveiled a plan to seize the Negev and Galilee for Jews only – building dozens of Jewish-only settlements, rewriting the law to permit it, and pushing out the hundreds of thousands of Arabs who live there.

THE TRUTH

The Negev and Galilee are sovereign Israeli territory, not occupied land. Smotrich's plan to establish 40 new communities uses voluntary incentives - housing subsidies, immigration packages, and job creation - to attract new residents. No Arab citizens are being expelled, displaced, or stripped of rights. Building towns inside your own country is standard national development policy, and Israel has had a dedicated government ministry for Negev and Galilee development across administrations of every political stripe.

BACKGROUND

→ On August 27, 2026, Israel's Finance Minister, Betzalel Smotrich, unveiled a plan to settle one million Jews and establish 40 new communities in the Negev and Galilee.

→ Arab activists like Hadash chairman Yousef Jabareen immediately accused Smotrich of “ethnic cleansing” and “apartheid” <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/432384>

→ Smotrich's plan calls for 40 new Jewish communities - 20 in the Negev, 20 in the Galilee - targeting new immigrants from North America and Europe and Israeli military reservists, with financial incentives and a legislative push to cut bureaucratic building timelines from 20 years to 6-12 months. [i24 News](#)

TRUTH EXPLAINED

→ Developing the Negev is not a new right-wing idea. David Ben-Gurion made Negev development a founding priority of the Israeli state in 1947-1948, arguing the desert region was essential for the country's growth even when it was considered uncultivable.

→ Jewish history in the Negev and Galilee predates any modern political dispute by millennia. Beersheba for example was settled during the Chalcolithic period; Abraham and Isaac lived there around 2000 BCE; King David's kingdom included the city as part of the tribe of Simeon. The Jewish people are not newcomers to this land. [Jewish Virtual Library](#)

→ Ambassador Mike Huckabee, an evangelical Christian who has visited Israel since 1973, has consistently affirmed the unbroken Jewish connection to this land: 'The consistency has always been that there has been a Jewish presence and a Jewish connection to the land, historically and biblically.' His perspective underscores that Jewish development in the Negev and Galilee is a continuation of history, not a provocation. [Daily Wire](#)

→ Israel has an entire government ministry - the Ministry for the Development of the Periphery, the Negev and the Galilee - dedicated to closing economic and infrastructure gaps in these regions, a priority maintained across governments of all political parties. [Gov.II](#)

→ The Negev and Galilee are internationally recognized sovereign Israeli territory. Applying the word “settlements” to new communities there is therefore especially revealing: it shows that for some critics, the objection is not really about disputed borders at all, but about Jewish communities and Jewish development wherever they are built. That same rhetoric is used against Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria, the historic heartland of the Jewish people, and NGO Monitor has documented its extension even to solar energy projects and railway construction in the Negev. [AJC](#)

→ The plan's mechanism utilizes voluntary immigration incentives - housing subsidies, financial packages, and job creation - targeting new immigrants and military reservists. Canada, Australia, and the United States all run comparable programs to settle underpopulated regions. No Arab resident is being removed, relocated, or dispossessed. [i24 News](#)

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→ The plan's security component targets illegal weapons networks and organized crime inside Arab communities in the Negev - a problem Arab community leaders themselves have demanded action on. Measures include Shin Bet involvement, 10-year sentences for illegal weapons possession, and 20-year sentences for trafficking. This is law enforcement protecting all citizens, not persecution of any community. [Fox News](#)

→ The 'Judaization' framing applies a standard to Israel that no other country faces. Every democratic government develops its underpopulated regions and recruits immigrants to settle them. The objection is not to development policy - it is to Jewish presence in the Jewish state. [JNS](#)

QUOTES

Editor's Note: Objecting to Jews building in the Jewish state is not a policy position — it is an objection to Israel's existence.

“We will remove from all these systems anti-Zionist and post-Zionist elements who have taken them over, and bring back good people who understand the challenge of Judaizing the Negev and Galilee.”

-Betzalele Smotrich, 2026

TAKEAWAY

The 'Judaization' smear is a propaganda formula, not a policy critique. It takes a standard government development program - voluntary immigration incentives, infrastructure investment, community building on sovereign national territory - and repackages it as ethnic cleansing. The same script has been used to delegitimize Jewish presence in the Negev since before Israel's founding. Ben-Gurion faced it in 1947. Smotrich faces it in 2026. The lie is consistent because the goal is consistent: deny that Jews have any legitimate claim to their own land, anywhere in it. When Quds News Network calls new Israeli towns 'Jewish-only settlements' on land that has been sovereign Israel since 1948, they are not reporting a policy dispute - they are running the oldest anti-Zionist playbook in circulation. Influencers should call it what it is.