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The Middle East crisis could ignite a new, long flare-up



Israel's war in Gaza has led to a virtual genocide of the Palestinian people: the number of dead and wounded has long since exceeded 100,000, many of the inhabitants of the enclave are suffering from hunger, and there is a glaring lack of medical services. But the Israeli authorities have not been able to eliminate Hamas, and their military actions have led more and more young Palestinians to seek revenge for the terrible suffering of their relatives.

The press reports that the Netanyahu government intends to launch a full-scale war against Lebanon on 15 July. The Economist predicts that this war will involve kamikaze drones, a massive exchange of rockets and missiles, and mass blackouts: 70,000 people have already left northern Israel, and a mass exodus is also underway in southern Lebanon.

Attempts by various international mediators to dissuade the Israelis from this dangerous adventure have so far been unsuccessful. According to American newspapers, Benjamin Netanyahu is betting on Donald Trump's arrival in the White House and will therefore delay the military operation in every way possible until 5 November.

However, life shows that the calculations of individual politicians are not always justified: “the plan was flawless on paper, but the reality was different”. This Russian proverb applies to the actions of some leaders of the Western world and Israel.

The crisis in the West Bank is escalating

A number of astute observers have pointed out that the world’s attention is focused primarily on the war in Gaza and the plight of the Palestinians there. Meanwhile, far more attention should be paid to the growing crisis in the more densely populated West Bank. According to the UN, 536 Palestinians, including 130 children, have been killed by Israeli troops and settlers in the past eight months. (In the same period, 7 Israeli soldiers and 5 settlers have died at the hands of Palestinians). Since early October, an average of 60 Palestinians have been killed each month in the West Bank, an area nominally considered peaceful.

Locals warn that the West Bank is seething with frustration and outrage and that ‘a big explosion is coming’. The territory, including East Jerusalem, is home to 3 million Palestinians and 720,000 Jewish settlers.

Israel is firmly on course to annex the West Bank by legalising settlement outposts and allowing the construction of thousands of housing units (the government has just announced the construction of 6,000 settlement houses). This deprives the Palestinian Authority of funding and administrative authority, and Finance Minister B. Smotrich is calling for the transfer of legal authority over the West Bank from the military to a civilian body headed by Jewish settlers.

There are now officially 146 settlements in the West Bank and 12 in East Jerusalem.

With radical members of Benjamin Netanyahu’s government openly advocating the annexation of the West Bank and the construction of new settlements there continuing unabated, even American political analysts believe that a Palestinian uprising is inevitable.

The Israeli human rights organisation (B’Tselem) claims that the entire territory between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River is being organised by the Israeli authorities according to a single principle: to develop and strengthen the superiority of one group – the Jews – over the other – the Palestinians.

The danger of this policy is also understood by thinking Israelis: Ami Ayalon, former head of the Shin Bet, Israel’s security service, stresses that the occupation is as poisonous for Israelis as it is for Palestinians: “We are losing our identity as human beings, as Jews and as human beings.

Washington’s policy of actually emboldening Israel by providing it with new weapons could lead to the outbreak of a major conflagration throughout the Middle East.

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