
Hamas says annexation of West Bank would be 'DECLARATION OF WAR' that Israel would 'regret bitterly'

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Israel will pay an “unprecedented price” if it goes ahead with plans to annex parts of the West Bank, Hamas has warned, saying the move would be a “declaration of war” on Palestinians.

In an Arabic-language video published on Thursday, Hamas spokesperson Abu Obeida said Israel’s plans were “criminal” and would amount to the “biggest theft of Palestinian land in decades.” He promised that Hamas, the Islamist group which Israel regards as a terrorist organization, will guard the sacred land and its people.

Obeida said the organization does not make many statements, but wanted to state clearly that “the resistance considers this decision a declaration of war on our Palestinian people.” He added that Israel would “regret bitterly” if it continued with the annexation and that “the occupation will pay an unprecedented price.”

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Earlier, on Monday, another senior Hamas official said the annexation project should be “confronted with resistance in all forms” and called for unity with the Palestinian Authority, despite divisions between the two. A statement called the annexation plans a “conspiracy woven by the Zionist occupation.”

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu aims to begin a process of annexing parts of the West Bank, where more than 420,000 Jewish settlers live, from July 1, as part of the US’ “vision for peace” initiative. The Palestinians have rejected the plan.

The United Nations recently condemned the decision, calling Netanyahu’s plan “unlawful” and expressed regret at the US’s support of the policy. The EU has also warned of a possible “reprisal” for Israel and said it would work to “discourage any possible initiative toward annexation.”