
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*.”