



## [An Extremist Far-Right Israeli Lawmaker Draws Criticism for Opening a Parliamentary Office in the Illegally-Occupied East Jerusalem Neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah](#)

Itamar Ben Gvir, an extremist far-right member of the Israeli Knesset, has been denounced for instigating violence in the flashpoint Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem. Ben Gvir recently set up a “parliamentary office” in the front yard of a Palestinian family who is facing the threat of eviction, doing so in what he absurdly called an effort to “look after the security of the (Jewish) residents.” The actions of Israeli authorities in Sheikh Jarrah had already been a source of contention and widely criticized, due to the plans for continued illegal Israeli settlements and the forced displacement of Palestinians from their generational homes. Now, Ben Gvir’s incendiary behavior has also been condemned following his call for supporters to aggressively gather in the area, a move which sparked violence. Ben Gvir has a long history of provocations, and has repeatedly made racist and bigoted comments regarding Arabs. He is known for defending Jewish radicals on trial, and espouses the views of extremist Meir Kahane, the ideological inspiration behind the right-wing terror group Lehava.

Ben Gvir has spearheaded illegal Israeli settlers’ attempts to seize the land of Palestinian families, including the Salems – who were the victims of his “parliamentary office” ploy. He has also tried to establish a settlement outpost in the Negev on lands where Palestinians from the Bedouin community live. Additionally, Ben Gvir recently sparked outrage for pulling a gun on two Arab security guards in Tel Aviv back in December of last year. The guards were unarmed and Ben Gvir was heavily criticized for his actions. As a lawyer, the lawmaker has represented an array of people being charged for heinous hate crimes, earning him a reputation as the “go-to man” for Israeli extremists. Ben Gvir even provides the legal representation for Lehava, the far-right and anti-assimilation terrorist organization that is linked to many of these extremists.

Entities like the European Union voiced concern over this week’s developments and violence, highlighting the reprehensible behavior of Ben Gvir and others for “irresponsible provocations and other escalatory acts in this sensitive area (which) only fuel further tensions & must cease.” Reports also emerged of Israeli police using means such as skunk water cannons to disperse non-violent Palestinian protesters who were demonstrating in solidarity with the mistreated families of Sheikh Jarrah. The police have a history of engaging in excessive force toward justifiable Palestinian protests against Israeli human rights abuses and violations. There is a variety of evidence pointing to Israel’s systematic discrimination against Palestinians. In the preceding weeks, prominent rights group Amnesty International became the latest such organization to label Israel as an apartheid state due to its embedded discriminatory practices which include “territorial fragmentation, segregation and control through the denial of equal status, restrictions on movement, and the dispossession of land and property.”

Social justice activists are worried that Ben Gvir’s inflammatory actions could lead to an escalation in violence reminiscent of the one which took place in May of last year, and are hoping that the situation will not spiral out of control. The significant increase of police forces in the area has exacerbated this fear as well. In response to his behavior, groups of settlers have attacked Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah and destroyed their property. Israel’s plans to forcibly displace Palestinians and in turn transfer settlers into illegally-occupied Palestinian territory is a violation of international law. To date, there are more than 200 Palestinian households that are facing the potential of displacement.