



## [Israeli Cabinet Approves the Creation of a National Guard under the Command of Itamar Ben-Gvir](#)

Since the start of the year, huge weekly protests have been held by people in Israel opposed to Netanyahu's plan to gut the judicial branch. He has packaged it as a reform plan. Demonstrations have escalated, with hundreds of thousands of people packing the streets in Israel's cities. The protesters have called for the reforms to be scrapped and for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to resign. The protesters argue that the changes will weaken the judicial system, which historically has kept the government's power in check. Netanyahu agreed to postpone these reforms, but to keep his government from falling apart, he needed to make concessions to those who did not favor the postponement. One of these was creating a national guard directly under the control of National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir.

The Israeli cabinet recently approved this controversial "national guard" proposed by far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir. Ben-Gvir's guard would deal with "emergency situations, nationalistic crimes, terror, and strengthening sovereignty," according to his office's statement. Ben-Gvir, who is also the leader of the extremist Jewish Power Party, demanded the action in exchange for stopping the government's contentious judicial changes after months of protest and nationwide strikes. The head of the opposition said, "The government's priorities are ludicrous and abhorrent. Running over democracy and encouraging the wildest dreams of the insane are the only things that keep it occupied". The National Guard's main objective is to work with law enforcement and the armed forces to resolve conflicts, namely pro-Palestinian demonstrations taking place in mixed Jewish and Arab neighborhoods. The hardline Jewish settler Ben-Gvir, convicted previously of supporting terrorism and inciting hatred against Palestinians, has drawn criticism for his threat to use force against anti-government protesters and the Arab and Palestinian population in the occupied West Bank. Ynet News reported that Inspector-General Yaacov Shabtai, the head of Israel's police force, expressed concern that the national guard would be very expensive and might even compromise public safety if not supervised. Israeli media sources say that the project has a budget of about \$276 million. According to Bernard Smith of Al Jazeera, the guard would be financed by skimming 1-1.5 percent of the budgets of all other ministries. According to Smith, the attorney general informed the cabinet that the new national guard does not have legitimacy. According to her, legal issues are currently holding up the current draft. It must also clear parliamentary barriers. A committee composed of officials from the prime minister's office, military ministry, justice ministry, finance ministry, Israeli police, and army will be formed to establish the force. Ayman Odeh, an Israeli lawmaker, asked, "Why does Israel need another national guard when it already has an army, police, military intelligence, Shin Bet, Mossad, National Security Council, Prisons Service, riot police, and a SWAT team?". Former army chief of staff Gadi Eisenkot called the creation of a committee directly accountable to the national security minister "a serious event that threatens the country's ability to use force." Prior to the idea being made public, the Association for Civil Rights in

Israel expressed its grave concern to Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara. In Tel Aviv, hundreds of Israelis have gathered to protest the plan this week. Of even greater concern is the heightened killing and suppression of Palestinians that is almost sure to take place if this force is created. Ben-Gvir is an extremist and allowing him direct control of a military force will only lead to more death and destruction. Continuing the suppress Palestinians will continue to push more of them to a most militant form of resistance, further escalating the conflict.

The conflict is already escalating, as the Al-Aqsa mosque has been raided multiple times over this past week. The Israeli Defense Force used excessive force to clear out the mosque, injuring many while doing so. They employed brutal tactics and weapons such as rubber-coated bullets and tear gas. In response, rockets were fired from Gaza and Lebanon. Adding another military entity into the mix, especially one led by an extremist like Ben-Gvir, would only lead to an increase in the frequency of abuses against Palestinians, and in turn, likely put more Israeli citizens in danger. Not only is the establishment of this militia morally wrong, but it will also increase the frequency with which Israeli citizens are in danger.

The world must take decisive action to stop Israel from creating a national guard. The most effective way to do this is to conditionalize the aid given to Israel by the United States. Additionally, economic sanctions could be used to discourage Israel from creating a national guard. Countries should use their economic and diplomatic leverage to pressure Israel into abandoning its plans. This could include restrictions on trade, financial transactions, and travel. Holding those responsible for any crimes against humanity committed is also extremely important. International pressure should be applied to ensure that Israel is held accountable for any violations of international law. The international community should be united in its condemnation of any actions taken by Israel that threaten peace and stability in the region. An independent body, such as the ICC, must investigate any violations and take appropriate measures to ensure Israel is held to account for its actions.