

Does It Make Sense for Israeli Government Money to be Bankrolling the Settlers' Campaign Against the Government's Own Disengagement Plan?

We Don't Think So Either.

The Israeli Peace Now movement has scored a major victory in the battle over whether or not local government councils in the occupied territories can use money-given to them by the state for performing municipal services-to fight against the government's own plan to evacuate settlements from Gaza and the northern West Bank.

Over the past year, the Settlers Council has waged a fierce campaign against the evacuation plan, a campaign estimated to cost \$7 million. However, a large part of the money contributed to the campaign comes from the coffers of the West Bank local authorities. It is also believed that these local authorities have contributed equipment to the campaign.

The new Israeli Interior Minister, Ophir Pines, took office last month and immediately began working to eliminate state funding for the settlers' campaign against the disengagement initiative.

The minister's action didn't come in a vacuum-it came in response to a High Court of Justice petition filed by Peace Now director general Yariv Oppenheimer, who said that local authorities should not be allowed to use their funds for political activism. His argument is based on a decade-old legal opinion in which an Israeli justice wrote that regional councils should not be allowed to divert their budget funds from providing municipal services to a national political campaign.

The Interior Ministry stated that it accepts the principles of the arguments in the Peace Now petition. The Interior Ministry even asked every local authority in the occupied territories to account for all the funds transferred for several years to the Settlers Council or other bodies engaged in "activity that has the object of frustrating, preventing, or disrupting in some form the implementation of the disengagement plan."

Peace Now is proud to be leading the fight to begin evacuating settlements from the occupied territories. Please help us continue our efforts with a generous contribution today to Americans for Peace Now.

Americans for Peace Now

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