

Explained: How Israeli occupation of Palestine is based on Likud's charter

PM Netanyahu displayed a map showing Israel from the sea to the river without any Palestine. He was merely echoing his party's official stance.

Benjamin Netanyahu is not only the longest-serving prime minister of Israel but also the longtime leader of the country's right-wing Likud Party, which refers to the occupied West Bank as Judea and Samaria and refuses to acknowledge them as Palestinian territory.

Netanyahu, who has led Likud for a quarter of a century, has publicly stated his party's ideological foundation on several occasions – laying out its long-standing opposition to an independent Palestinian state.

This stance has been reflected in different versions of the party's charter – officially referred to as the Likud platform – in 1977, 1999 and 2009.

Israel's rigid stance has come to the fore since it launched its latest war on Gaza on October 7 last year and subsequently extended it to the occupied West Bank – killing, maiming and detaining Palestinian civilians with impunity.

Interestingly, the English version of Likud's charter is not available on [the party's official website](#). Incomplete and scattered English versions of the charter quoting parts of the party's constitution are scattered over the internet.

[The “original” party platform](#), published in 1977 under the leadership of former Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin, claimed that only the Jewish people have “the right” to “the land” of historical Palestine, which it called Eretz Israel, a Hebrew phrase meaning the Land of Israel.

This “Jewish right” is “eternal and indisputable”, the charter said. As a result, “Judea and Samaria will not be handed to any foreign administration; between the Sea and Jordan there will only be Israeli sovereignty.”

In 1978, this Likud assertion was confirmed by [then-US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance](#), saying that the Likud party “calls for permanent Israeli retention of all of the West Bank and Gaza”, reducing the possibility of an independent Palestinian state to nothing.

‘Autonomous’ Palestine under Israel

[The 1999 version of the charter](#), a document linked to former Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon’s leadership, did not change much on the party’s approach toward the West Bank and Gaza.

“The Government of Israel flatly rejects the establishment of a Palestinian Arab state west of the Jordan River,” said the charter.

It suggested an autonomous status for Palestinians under Israeli control, an offer different Palestinian resistance groups – from Fatah to Hamas – have long opposed.

“The Palestinians can run their lives freely in the framework of self-rule, but not as an independent and sovereign state. Thus, for example, in matters of foreign affairs, security, immigration and ecology, their activity shall be limited in accordance with imperatives of Israel’s existence, security and national needs,” it added.

In 2009, another version of the charter emerged after Netanyahu – who became the Likud leader in 2005 following Sharon’s departure from the party – came to power. Like the 1999 text, [the 2009 charter](#) also [opposed the two-state solution](#), dismissing the possibility of an independent Palestinian state.

This document also kept much of the 1999 version intact regarding illegal settlements in the West Bank.

The 2009 document also clearly states that Likud governments “will maintain Jerusalem as a unified city, the capital of Israel, under Israeli rule”, opposing its division between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, a stance which [violates international law](#).

The Likud document also threatened that any attempt to divide Jerusalem would lead to a regional war.

Netanyahu and the Likud charter

There are a number of signs which indicate that Netanyahu is more loyal to his party’s ideology than any Israeli law and peace agreement with the Palestinian Authority, which is based in the occupied West Bank.

Netanyahu's loyalty to the Likud charter presents numerous political problems for the country in terms of policy oversight.

In 2018, the then Likud government led by Netanyahu enacted a controversial [Nation State Law](#), which recognises the right of self-determination only for Jews in Israel, evoking the original 1977 party charter's assertion that the "Jewish right" is "eternal and indisputable" between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River.

Israel's borders are "not fixed and the direction of travel is Israel sovereign between the river and the sea and over the occupied Syrian Golan Heights," Palestinian professor and political analyst Kamel Hawwash said [in a previous TRT World interview](#), referring to the original Likud charter.

During the ongoing Gaza war, Netanyahu made a very similar assertion to what the 1999 Likud party charter already declared regarding an independent Palestinian state, using almost the same words to say that he and his allies "[flat out reject](#)" the formation of "a Palestinian state".

Another signal of the Likud agenda's implementation emerged with the Trump-led Abraham Accords between some Arab states and Israel, which offers no real Palestinian state but only talks about [economic rights of the Palestinians](#), a topic the 2009 charter also mentioned.

In 2017, the then-Donald Trump administration also [recognised](#) Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, a development the Netanyahu government hailed as implementing one of Likud's main agendas. Likud has long seen Jerusalem "as a unified city" which should be "the capital of Israel".

When it comes to advocating illegal settlements across the occupied West Bank and Gaza, which the 1999 charter sees as "the realisation of Zionist values", the Israeli prime minister also follows the Likud path, pledging to "[advance and develop settlement](#)" across "Judea and Samaria".

"Settlement of the land is a clear expression of the unassailable right of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel and constitutes an important asset in the defense of the vital interests of the State of Israel. The Likud will continue to strengthen and develop these communities and will prevent their uprooting," [said the 1999 document](#).

This Likud settlement position was implemented during the party's different tenures. The current Netanyahu government, the most hardline administration

ever, also sees it [as a priority](#). Most recently, the Netanyahu government recognised [three illegal outposts in the West Bank](#).

The 1999 charter also pledged that water resources, as well as road intersections in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, shall [“remain under full Israeli control”](#), referring to vital resources of Israeli-occupied territories.

Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 after controlling the enclave for years.

Successive Netanyahu governments have consistently blocked Gaza and West Bank residents from having direct access to water sources, [preventing water transfers](#) from the West Bank to Gaza.

During the ongoing war, Israel is also [using water as a weapon](#) against Gaza residents.

Gaza withdrawal: a hot debate

Another interesting connection between Netanyahu's actions and the Likud chapter is related to the 2005 Gaza withdrawal of the Israeli army, a disputed issue between hardliners and moderates inside the party. Most of the Likud party members had strongly opposed the withdrawal from Gaza.

In 2005, when Sharon decided to unilaterally withdraw from Gaza and dismantle illegal Jewish settlements in the Palestinian enclave, he faced stiff resistance from Netanyahu and his cohorts in the party.

Under increasing pressure from his opponents in Likud, Sharon resigned from party leadership and formed a new party, Kadima. Netanyahu, Sharon's longtime rival in the Likud, quickly replaced him, becoming the party's undisputed leader. Interestingly, a few months after the Gaza withdrawal, Sharon was incapacitated and forced to leave the government.

Sharon's partially forced departure from Likud signalled that if a leader – even of Sharon's stature – goes against the core principles of the party charter, he/she would lose the privilege of leading the party.

Since Netanyahu became the party leader in 2005 and prime minister in 2009, he has taken a hardline stance aligned with the Likud charter against Hamas rule in Gaza.

The 2009 party charter, codified under Netanyahu's leadership, criticised Sharon's Gaza policy, saying that "the warnings of Likud and its leader against unilateral withdrawals were not in vain", referring to Hamas's attacks on Israel and Lebanese Hezbollah's armament of sophisticated long-range weapons.

Netanyahu has launched [numerous large-scale attacks](#) on Gaza in 2012, 2014 and 2021. Most lately, Netanyahu has conducted and overseen the most devastating Israeli invasion ever on Gaza following Hamas's October 7 attack.

Netanyahu's military campaign in Gaza has killed more than 41,000 Palestinians, mostly children and women, up to date as the Likud leader has [envisioned a long-term occupation](#) of the Mediterranean enclave.

Ends...

Tweet and FB post:

Netanyahu has pursued a hardline policy aligned with his Likud party's charter. Here's a look at Likud's founding principles and what it says about Palestine

Bullet points card:

Title: What Likud charter says about the borders of Israel

- Charter does not envision an independent Palestine
- Advocates illegal settlements across occupied West Bank
- Opposes Israel's Gaza withdrawal in 2005 under ex-PM Sharon

All ends...

- Samaria and Judae x
- Israeli constitution x
- Jabotinsky
- Jerusalem under Jewish control x

- **Self-rule x**

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Fatih:

When Palestinians reject this Israeli position, they look like they are opposing a resolution, according to Tel Aviv and its allies, says Fatih Semsettin Isik, an expert on Israeli politics.

“The text does not have clear information on the status of the West Bank,” Isik tells TRT World.

Likud’s very foundation is based on Israeli occupation of West Bank, Gaza

Explained: Likud ideology is based on Israeli occupation of West Bank, Gaza

Bullet points card:

Title: How the Likud party sees the borders of Israel

- Does not envision an independent Palestine
- Advocates **illegal settlements** across occupied West Bank
- Opposes Israel’s **Gaza withdrawal** in 2005 under ex-PM Sharon