

Who are the Israeli settlers and what motivates them?

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While Israel's assault on Gaza continues and has now extended to Lebanon, settler violence in the West Bank has also increased exponentially over the past year, perpetrated in large part by settlers. Who are the settlers? The Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) has produced a documentary, [*Holy Redemption*](#) (53 minutes), that looks at the settler movement and the critical role it plays in Israel's ultimate goal of preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state and driving the Palestinian people out of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

The documentary's power rests in the testimonies of the settlers themselves. Videographers spoke with a broad range of people ranging from leaders of the movement, rank and file settlers, younger members of what is called the *Hilltop Youth*, Israeli soldiers currently serving and retired, and Israeli human rights lawyers. They also had unprecedented access to the settlements.

The settlers are motivated by a messianic belief that the land belongs to them because God gave it to Abraham and that by driving out the Palestinians, they are only doing God's will. In an especially chilling scene, a woman who is a leader in the settler movement said that God gave the land between the Nile and the Euphrates Rivers to Abraham (as recorded in the Book of Joshua). She was not fazed when the reporter pointed out that this land includes several other countries besides Israel.

Extremist settlers now hold positions in the Israeli government, including Cabinet posts. [*In a recent article published in Common Dreams*](#), Columbia University professor Jeffrey Sachs discusses the religious fundamentalism driving Israeli policy regarding the Palestinians. He notes that this fundamentalist religious mandate together with the backing of U.S. military power account for Israel's brazenness.