

Israel right-wing activists rally in Tel Aviv, demand expulsion of African migrants

National Union MK Ben Ari calls Netanyahu's recent announcement of intention to expedite plans for the construction of a detention center for illegal immigrants insufficient.

By David Sheen

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Dozens of right-wing protesters, led by National Union MK Dr. Michael Ben Ari, rallied in Tel Aviv's south on Sunday, calling for the expulsion of African migrants and asylum seekers.

The protesters, who were also joined by several of the area's residents, amassed near Levinsky Park in southern Tel Aviv, an area heavily populated by African migrants.



MK Michael Ben Ari during a rally in Tel Aviv, Dec. 11, 2011.

Photo by: David Sheen

The demonstrators chanted "The people demand the expulsion of the infiltrators," "We have come to expunge the darkness," and "Tel Aviv is for Jews, Sudan is for Sudanese."

Ben Ari criticized Prime Minister Netanyahu for allowing African migrants to remain in the county after they had already entered in recent years. He called Netanyahu's cabinet "the blackest government ever for Tel Aviv."

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On Sunday, the cabinet approved a plan on Sunday to spend an additional NIS 630 million on projects aimed at preventing African migrants and others from infiltrating into Israel via the Sinai Peninsula.

The plan approved on Sunday includes speeding up construction to complete a border fence with Egypt within the coming year and also includes the construction and expansion of detention facilities to hold illegal migrants.

"Now [Netanyahu]'s talking about detention centers. It's too late for detention centers! Where are you going to put 40,000 people? You can build a detention center for 5,000 or 6,000 people. Forget about a detention center. Only one thing: we need an airline! That's the only thing. Gather them up and tell them, the vacation is over!" said Ben Ari on Sunday.

The right-wing MK urged on the crowd, calling: "Now you are going home!" and "Sudanese to Sudan!"

A crowd of Africans and their Israeli supporters of similar size gathered in an adjacent area of the park, separated by a metal barriers and a team of Border Police officers.

The Africans and their local supporters chanted "Prison - No! Freedom - Yes!" in English and "Enough with the racism," and "All of us together without hate or fear" in Hebrew.

Ben Ari, who currently lives in a West Bank settlement but grew up in South Tel Aviv, harshly criticized the Israeli counter-protesters, characterizing them as enemies of the state.

"I see them over there, those that want to destroy our country. I see those that are preparing a welcome table for the millions of Africans that are on their way here," he said.

Tensions ran high between the nationalist demonstrators and Africans and their supporters, but did not escalate beyond shouting matches.

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