

20 years after its landmark withdrawal from Gaza, Israel is mired there

written by Prof. Kobi Michael | 16.08.2025

Prof. Kobi Michael: Israel couldn't justify the military or economic cost of maintaining the heavily fortified settlements in Gaza. There were around 8,000 Israeli settlers and 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza in 2005.

"There was no chance for these settlements to exist or flourish or become meaningful enough to be a strategic anchor. By contrast, there are more than 500,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank, most living in developed settlement blocs that have generally received more support from Israeli society. Most of the world considers the settlements illegal under international law.

"This contributed to Hamas' win in the elections in 2006, because they leveraged it and introduced it as a very significant achievement. They saw it as an achievement of the resistance and a justification for the continuation of the armed resistance.

Footage of the violence between Israeli settlers and Israeli soldiers also created an "open wound" in Israeli society.

I don't think any government will be able to do something like that in the future. That limits any flexibility over settlements in the West Bank if negotiations over a two-state solution with the Palestinians ever resume.

Disengagement will never happen again, this is a price we're paying as a society, and a price we're paying politically.

Published on AP and many other websites on August 15, 2025.

