

# Israel re-establishes evacuated West Bank settlement

● Several cabinet members and lawmakers attended the ceremony near a cluster of white prefabricated homes arranged in rows on a hilltop.

AFP | Sa Nur, Palestinian Territories

Israeli ministers yesterday officially reopened Sa-Nur, a settlement in the occupied West Bank that was evacuated 20 years ago, marking the occasion with defiant declarations against Palestinian statehood and calls to resettle Gaza.

Several cabinet members and lawmakers attended the ceremony near a cluster of white prefabricated homes arranged in rows on a hilltop.



A group of Israeli settlers gather in front of the structure of a mosque at the end of the resettlement ceremony of Sa-Nur, south of Jenin in the Israeli-occupied West Bank

Excluding east Jerusalem, more than 500,000 Israelis now live in the West Bank in settlements that are illegal under international law, among some three million Palestinians.

"On this exciting day, we celebrate a historic correction to the criminal expulsion from Northern Samaria," Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said, using the Israeli biblical term for part of

the West Bank.

Sa-Nur's settlers were evicted in 2005 as part of Israel's so-called disengagement policy that also saw the country withdraw troops and settlers from the Gaza Strip.

The policy promoted by then-prime minister Ariel Sharon was framed as a security measure intended to reduce Israel's civilian and military footprint in densely

populated Palestinian areas.

Israel's current government, considered one of the most right-wing in the country's history, approved the reconstruction of all four northern West Bank settlements evacuated in 2005.

Authorities have approved 126 housing units in Sa-Nur alone.

"We are cancelling the shame of the disengagement, bur-

ying the idea of a Palestinian state and returning to the settlement of Sa-Nur," Smotrich said.

Smotrich, a far-right minister in the ruling coalition and a settler himself, also called for the resettlement of the Gaza Strip as a "security belt" for the State of Israel.

Israeli media reported that 16 families had moved into the re-established settlement in recent days, adding that the new residents included Yossi Dagan, head of the northern West Bank Settlements Council.

Dagan was among those evacuated from Sa-Nur in 2005.

"For me, this is both a national and a personal closing of a circle," Dagan said after cutting the ribbon at the ceremony.

"No more uprootings, no more retreats. We have returned to stay."

Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967 and since then settlement expansion has been a policy under successive Israeli governments.

But it has accelerated significantly under the current coalition government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

More than 100 settlements have been approved since the government came to power in 2022, according to activists and authorities.

Pope Leo XIV calls for 'hope' before 100,000 faithful in Angola



AFP | Luanda, Angola

Tens of thousands of people attended a giant open-air mass by Pope Leo XIV outside the Angolan capital yesterday, where he delivered a message of hope to the resource-rich country marked by poverty and inequality.

Leo flew to Portuguese-speaking Angola on Saturday, the third leg of a whirlwind four-nation African tour on which he has condemned corruption and the plunder of the continent's resources -- and had a high-profile spat with US President Donald Trump.

Around 100,000 people attended the pontiff's first mass in Angola at Kilamba, around 30 kilometres (19 miles) from Luanda, the Vatican said, citing local authorities.

The pope encouraged the crowd "to look to the future with hope" in a "new beginning" for the nation still scarred by a 27-year civil war that ended in 2002.

## 500k

Excluding east Jerusalem, more than 500,000 Israelis now live in the West Bank in settlements that are illegal under international law

## South Korea's chainsaw artist carves a name for herself at 91

AFP | Paju, South Korea

South Korean sculptor Kim Yun Shin wields a chainsaw with a quiet focus, refining a craft the 91-year-old has honed over decades spent far from home.

Long overlooked in her home country, Kim has more recently gained recognition as a pioneering artist, featuring in a sweeping retrospective at South Korea's esteemed Hoam Museum of Art.

The solo exhibition, titled "Two Be One", is the institution's first since its founding in 1982 to spotlight a woman artist, and includes some of her signature abstract sculptures hewn from hardwood with her tool of choice.

"The saw is my body," Kim told AFP in her studio in Paju, a city northwest of the capital Seoul.

"When I lift it and cut (the wood), it has to move exactly like me -- the saw has to become me, and I have to become the saw."

Hoam is exhibiting about 170 of Kim's sculptures and paintings, reflecting her reverence for nature and blending spirituality with meditations on existence, material and form.

Born in 1935 in Wonsan, now in North Korea, she grew up playing alone in the countryside, talking to trees and rice paddies, and making eyeglasses out of sorghum stalks.

At the time, Korea was under Japanese colonial rule. Kim saw her older brother disappear af-



South Korean sculptor Kim Yun Shin using a chainsaw to create a work at her studio in Paju

ter joining the independence movement, and pine trees in her town cut down for fuel.

"Those trees were my friends," she said, recalling the pain of seeing them uprooted -- and her drive to salvage and transform them into works of sculpture.

"I think I wanted them to endure -- to keep living on within that (art) form. Maybe that's why I've loved working with wood so much."

**Chainsaw carving**

Kim's family fled south during the horrors of the Korean War, and she later studied in France before returning to become an art professor in Seoul.

South Korea was then under a brutal military dictatorship. Authorities held artists in suspicion: a friend of Kim's was interrogated simply for using red, a colour associated with North Korean communism.

"Women, in particular, were virtually invisible," she told AFP, noting that her superiors would comment on the length of her

Visitors looking at works of South Korean sculptor Kim Yun Shin in her retrospective exhibition, titled "Two Be One", at Hoam Museum of Art in Yongin.

skirt and tell her to refrain from smoking on college campuses.

At 48, drawn by the abundant trees in Argentina, she made the unusual choice to move to the South American nation, then just restoring democracy after a dictatorship of its own.

She ended up staying for 40

years, taking up chainsaw carving.

Kim focused on dense, durable wood such as palo santo and "algarrobo", and also worked with quarries in Mexico and Brazil, experimenting with stone sculpture using materials such as onyx and sodalite.

She managed to forge her "own artistic world, nourished by the country's culture and nature", Tae Hyun-sun, senior curator at Hoam, told AFP.

**Pave the way**

Like many women artists of her generation, Kim has only recently gained global recognition, said Rachel

Lehmann, the co-founder of

Lehmann

Maupin

which represents Kim

internationally and has

shown her work in London

and New York.

"Her perseverance and lifelong dedication have helped pave the way for subsequent generations of women artists," she told AFP.

Kim returned to South Korea after a major 2023 solo show in Seoul that propelled her to the Venice Biennale the following year.

Among her former mentees in Buenos Aires is Korean-Argentine filmmaker Cecilia Kang, 40, an award-winning director who

is now making a film about her.

As the daughter of Korean immigrants, she felt pressure to follow a conventional path, but Kim -- whom Kang first met when she was 13 -- showed her "that pursuing a life doing what one loves is possible".

At 15, Kim, who was a war refugee, changed her name to Yun Shin -- "truth and faith" -- on the advice of a monk who urged her to spend her life discovering her "true colour".

Those words have always "stayed vivid with me", she said. "Sometimes I feel they are what have carried me through this life."



**A striking fact: despite the tool's rough nature, skilled chainsaw artists can produce highly intricate works--such as lifelike animals, human faces, and even delicate textures like feathers or fur--often completing large sculptures in just a few hours, something that could take days or weeks with hand tools.**