

9.31x22.23	1	עמוד 3	the jerusalem post - front	02/09/2016	54938461-0
המרכז הבינתחומי הרצליה - 84260					

Ex-IDF general calls Israel 'world champion of occupation'

*Uri Ariel: I suggest
Shamni study Bible*

• By LAHAV HARKOV

Former OC Central Command Maj.-Gen. (res.) Gadi Shamni's characterization of Israel as "bringing occupation to an art form" angered politicians on the Right on Wednesday.

Speaking at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, Shamni talked about his time in charge of Central Command when he was responsible for the West Bank, and describing himself as "the occupation general."

"We are world champions of occupation, and we've brought it to an art form," Shamni said, "and we have to ask ourselves, is that what we want to be?"

Shamni said that Israel will never agree to jeopardize its security interests, while the Palestinians will never accept an "endless occupation," so the only solution is agreed-upon separation between the sides.

Israel should take calculated risks to improve its strategic position, he added.

"Countries in the region are interested in establishing full relations with Israel, but won't do so as long as the Palestinian issue is not solved. Israel must influence the regional arena through ties with various countries and its relations with the US," Shamni posited.

In addition, Shamni argued that "the IDF's dealing with control over a population of 2.5 million civilians distracts the IDF from its main objective, and has trouble preparing for threats it is meant to deal with. The army is losing its values and its strength and becoming a political punching bag."

Environmental Protection Minister Ze'ev Elkin said he was disappointed to hear Shamni's statements, and "you cannot be an occupier in your own land; you can only return to it.

"As a resident of Gush Etzion, I see myself as a proud settler and not an occupier of a foreign land, and that is what I expect from IDF officers who protect the lives of the settlers," Elkin stated.

MK Nissan Slomiansky (Bayit Yehudi) theorized that Shamni is trying to enter the political sphere, and wondered why, if he has such a problem with Israel's presence in the West Bank, he took the position of OC Central Command.

Agriculture Minister Uri Ariel said "no speech can blur the fact that Judea and Samaria are the cradle of Jewish history, and saying we're 'occupying' our own land is ridiculous and irrelevant.

"As the school year begins, I suggest that Shamni go back to school and learn some Bible or history," Ariel quipped.