

# THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF WEST BANK ANNEXATION BY ISRAEL ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF PALESTINIAN RESIDENTS

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Israeli occupation of the West Bank has throughout the years been characterized by its policy of incremental or creeping annexation, achieved by implementing long-term changes to West Bank territory. The most prominent example of this de-facto annexation policy is the establishment and cultivation of Israel's settlement enterprise in the occupied territory, usurping land and natural resources far and wide. In recent years, as its policies on the ground continued, Israel has stepped up its push towards annexation. The main shift can be seen in de-jure annexation measures intended to alter the legal reality in the West Bank (for more on this see [Annexation Legislation Database](#) on the Yesh Din website).

In recent weeks, it has become apparent that the new government expected to be formed in Israel is poised to promote annexation and application of Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank within several months. At this point, it is impossible to predict the exact form annexation will take in terms of the breadth of the territory affected, the number of Palestinians living or owning farmland in it, their status, or the specific types of arrangements that will apply in these areas. (There are several possible scenarios, including the annexation of the entire West Bank, the annexation of Area C in its entirety, the annexation of settlement blocs and the application of sovereignty and annexation of a specific area as a first step). Whatever form it takes, annexation would have a far-reaching impact on the human rights of individual Palestinians and Palestinian communities, as well as Palestinians' collective rights.

Israel already fails to discharge its obligations under international law and extensively violates Palestinians' human rights. Still, the legal framework of the laws of occupation does provide a set of rules and restrictions that limit what it can do. Additionally, the regime of occupation is founded on the principle of temporariness, following from the presumption that occupation is a temporary state. While there is reason to doubt the extent to which Israel's occupation is temporary given that it is nearing its 53<sup>rd</sup> year, there is, however, no doubt that the push for annexation evinces Israel's desire to unilaterally create a permanent situation, which would perpetuate and entrench the violation of Palestinians' rights.

This document aims to briefly highlight some of the major implications Israeli annexation of the West Bank or parts thereof could have for Palestinians' rights: The document covers four aspects:

### **A. Direct violation of Palestinians' human rights**

### **B. International implications of annexation**

### **C. Changes in government and governmental powers**

### **D. Entrenchment of Apartheid in the West Bank**

We stress that even partial annexation, rather than the annexation of the entire West Bank, would have fateful implications for a great many people, including those not living in the annexed area. In addition, and to remove any doubt, partial annexation would clearly be an initial phase to be followed by the annexation of additional areas, as evinced by the fact that annexation supporters have no intention of declaring End of Claims once annexation is completed.

## **A. DIRECT VIOLATION OF PALESTINIANS' HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **1. Violation of freedom of movement**

The annexation of large parts of the West Bank to the State of Israel and the application of Israeli sovereignty in these areas would dictate security arrangements that would limit Palestinians' freedom of movement in the West Bank.

#### **1.1 ROADS**

Many Palestinians are already forced to take bypass roads that greatly extend travel times due to temporary road blockages and permanent travel bans on some West Bank roads spurred by alleged Israeli security concerns. Annexation would exacerbate this situation tenfold.

Israel would consider any annexed area as its sovereign territory, and as such, entry would ostensibly be governed by the Entry into Israel Law. The annexed area would, therefore, presumably be off-limits to Palestinians, unless they receive an entry permit (or visa), meaning they would be forced to go around it. Sites inside the annexed area would become inaccessible to Palestinians living outside it without an entry permit. Denying Palestinians entry into the annexed area would keep them away from sites and lands to which they have ties.

It is reasonable to assume that any annexed area would include major traffic arteries that connect settlements to one another as well as roads that connect the West Bank to Jerusalem and other areas within Israel. Once the legal status of an affected area shifts from occupied territory to sovereign Israeli territory (according to Israel), security would cease to be the only consideration the authorities are permitted to take into account when deciding whether or not to allow Palestinians to use these roads, and they will be able to consider other factors, including, for instance, economic interests. Limiting Palestinians' access to these roads would severely impair their ability to travel within the West Bank, between Palestinian towns and villages, violating their freedom of movement.

Such a violation of freedom of movement produces a string of other, extensive human rights violations as it impacts access to hospitals, workplaces, farmland, educational institutions, relatives and more, thereby potentially violating the rights to health, education, property, a livelihood, family life and more.

#### **1.2 EXITING AND ENTERING THE WEST BANK**

In some annexation scenarios (for instance, the borders outlined in Trump's "Deal of the Century"), Israeli sovereignty would extend to the Jordan Valley. If pursued, this annexation would cut off Palestinian residents of the West Bank from the only border crossing that allows travel to Jordan and the rest of the world without having to travel through Israel.

Many West Bank residents have relatives in Jordan whom they naturally visit. Others have business and commercial relations in Jordan or travel there for medical treatment and other pursuits. In addition, other than a select few, Palestinians do not receive permission to fly abroad from Israel's international airport and must travel abroad via Jordan.

Needless to say, like all citizens of the world, Palestinians also have the right to travel internationally for various purposes, including tourism, leisure, work, study, friend and family visits and more. Israeli sovereignty that would include absolute control over the border crossing into Jordan could severely impede access to international travel for Palestinian residents of the West Bank. It would also limit visits from foreign nationals in the West Bank. While this is already the situation, the annexation of the Jordan Valley would render it permanent. Additionally, since entry into the West Bank would require transit through purported Israeli territory, Israel would likely introduce tougher criteria for entry.

## 2. Violation of property rights

### 2.1 LAND EXPROPRIATION AND NATIONALIZATION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY IN THE ANNEXED AREA

There is grave concern that annexation measures would include mass expropriation of privately owned Palestinian land and nationalization of other private property in the annexed area.

One of the tools Israel might use is the Absentees' Property Law - 1950, which it had used to transfer property owned by Palestinian made refugees in the 1948 War to Israel. The law stipulates that land and any other property owned by a citizen of an enemy state or a person located in any part of Mandatory Palestine that lies outside the State of Israel would be handed over to the Custodian of Absentees' Property.<sup>1</sup>

The application of the Absentees' Property Law in the annexed area would mean that any property owned by Palestinians who live in the non-annexed parts of the West Bank would be transferred to the Custodian of Absentees' Property, in other words, it would be nationalized. So, for instance, if Area C were to be annexed and the Absentees' Property Law applied along with all other Israeli statutes, it would mean mass expropriation of hundreds of thousands of dunams of farmland owned by Palestinians living in Areas A and B. In addition to the irreparable violation of the landowners' right to property, such a development would also spell lost sources of income for many and debilitating harm to Palestinian reliance on local farming and produce as a foods source for the entire population.

The Absentees' Property Law would also enable land expropriation for "public needs," where those needs may be exclusively those of Israelis living in the area. Annexation would remove the limits the laws of occupation place on expropriation for public needs,<sup>2</sup> and allow such expropriation even if it does not serve the Palestinian residents of the occupied territory. So, for instance, the law would allow expropriating land in order to build neighborhoods, parks, schools, shopping centers or roads to serve settlers and other Israelis in the annexed area. Experience shows that following the annexation of East Jerusalem, Israel built 11 neighborhoods, planned for and marketed to the Jewish public exclusively, partly on land expropriated from Palestinian owners.<sup>3</sup> These neighborhoods are considered settlements under international law.

### 2.2 LOSS OF ACCESS TO FARMLAND, AND CONSEQUENT LOSS OF INCOME

Even if the Absentees' Property Law is not applied to the annexed area, there is a very strong and worrying possibility that Palestinians will lose access to their farmlands. Palestinian farmland is mostly concentrated in Area C, the West Bank's breadbasket (while rural construction is concentrated in Area B and urban construction in Area A). Israeli settlements and outposts were built in close proximity to these farmlands in Area C. Therefore, the annexation of Area C in its entirety, or even just settlement blocs, would include vast farming areas owned by Palestinians.

Palestinians' access to land in Area C is already severely curtailed due to security measures ostensibly designed to protect settlers, chiefly Israel's "coordination mechanism."<sup>4</sup> This regime is also used by Israel to prevent farmers from regularly accessing their lands, allowing access only with prior coordination for a limited number of days each year. There are reasonable grounds

1 Absentees' Property Law - 1950.

2 Article 46 of the Regulations Annexed to The Hague Convention (1907) places an unequivocal, absolute prohibition on the expropriation of private land. Article 43 of the Regulations Annexed to The Hague Convention, which is considered the fundamental guiding principle for the actions of an occupying power and the relationship between ruler and resident in occupied territory, stipulates that other than security, the main considerations that may guide the occupying power in exercising its governmental powers and authorities is the benefit of the local population and the principle of preservation. According to the accepted interpretation of this article, the occupying power must govern the territory as a trustee, while striking a balance between maintaining security and facilitating the continuation of civic life for the local population, which is the beneficiary of the occupation regime. The duty of trusteeship precludes the occupying power from exploiting the areas under its control for its own needs, with the exception of security needs (under certain restrictions). Thus, in terms of land use, the occupying power is under limitations designed to uphold the principle of the occupation as temporary: The expropriation of private land in the service of the occupying power is prohibited, with the exception of short-term seizure for military needs.

3 Immediately after the occupation of the West Bank in 1967, Israel annexed about 70,000 dunams and applied Israeli law in the area. The annexed area was brought under the municipal jurisdiction of the City of Jerusalem. For figures on land expropriation for settlements in East Jerusalem, see: [B'Tselem statistics](#)

4 See e.g.: HCJ 9593/04 [Rashed Morar et al. v. IDF Commander in Judea and Samaria et al](#), judgment, June 26, 2006.

to fear that even this limited access would be eradicated with annexation, meaning that even if the lands are not officially expropriated, the landowners would, in practice, lose the ability to cultivate these lands and earn a living from them.

### 3. Further establishment and expansion of settlements

Despite the widely held understanding that the prohibition placed by international law on the transfer of the civilian population of the occupying power into the occupied territory applies to the situation in the West Bank, and therefore precludes the establishment of Israeli settlements there, Israel denies both that the prohibition applies in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and that it covers voluntary transfers, thus precluding settlements.<sup>5</sup> As noted, the entire international community (with the recent exception of the USA<sup>6</sup>) maintains that Israel's settlement policy is unlawful and constitutes a violation of international law. Israeli annexation of all or part of Area C would solidify and perpetuate the settlement enterprise (including unauthorized outposts), and lead to massive Israeli construction in the West Bank.

Turning settlements into a permanent feature not only constitutes a continued violation of international law, but also the perpetuation and expansion of focal points for systemic, continuous abuse of Palestinians' human rights, from land grab to violence.

Annexation would make it easier for Israel to pursue development without having to consider Palestinians' interests or rights (or pretending to do so), and channel funding and resources to this purpose. Notably, Israel already uses most of the land resources it controls to benefit the settlement enterprise,<sup>7</sup> while lavishly funding its continued development,<sup>8</sup> all of which is augmented by lack of enforcement and removal against settlers who take over private or public land unlawfully or without proper authorization. Nevertheless, despite the severe discrimination and the willful disregard for the violence seen today, the situation is expected to grow much worse under Israeli sovereignty and law, partly as a result of the removal of centralized power over development policies (now wielded by the Government of Israel via the military) and the dramatic increase of the power of local authorities. Though Israel works to further establish and expand the settlement enterprise at present as well, it still reserves the option and flexibility to halt development in certain areas, for instance, in response to international pressure.

It is important to stress that all Palestinian communities are surrounded by Area C, meaning that annexation of Area C would create a large number of Palestinian enclaves enclosed by areas that are under Israeli sovereignty and connected through a network of bypass roads, bridges and tunnels. A development boom in the annexed area (which would include residential, commercial and road construction) could stymie any potential for Palestinian development. Israeli development to serve the settlement enterprise already constrains the development of Palestinian cities. For instance, the section of Road 60 known as the Tunnel Road constricts the development of Bethlehem. Road 443 similarly blocks the development of Ramallah.

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- 5 Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949), Art. 49(6). This article prohibits the occupying power from deporting or transferring parts of its own civilian population into the occupied territory. According to accepted interpretation, this prohibition is violated even if the population migrating into the occupied territories is not coerced to do so and certainly when the migration is supported or encouraged by the state. According to ICRC commentary, the drafters of the convention sought to preserve a demographic status quo in occupied territories. Successive Israeli governments have interpreted the prohibition on transferring population into the occupied territory as applying to coerced transfers only and claimed that since Israeli civilians move to the settlements voluntarily, international law is not violated. In contrast, in its advisory opinion on the separation fence, the International Court of Justice in The Hague ruled that the settlements were established in contravention of Art. 49(6), and Resolution No. 446 of the UN Security Council from 1979. The Rome Statute, the constitution of the International Criminal Court frames the prohibition in a manner that criminalizes both direct and indirect population transfers into an occupied territory. Given these interpretive developments, there is broad legal consensus that Israel's policy of enabling, encouraging and funding settlement activity is a violation of the prohibition on both direct and indirect population transfers into the occupied territory.
- 6 The Associated Press, Amir Tibon and Noa Landau, "[Israeli Settlements Don't Violate International Law, Pompeo Announces](#)", **Haaretz English website**, November 18, 2019.
- 7 Of the total state land allocated for use in the West Bank, 99.76% (some 674,459 dunams), was allocated to serve the needs of Israel's settlement enterprise, compared to (at most) 0.24% allocated for use by Palestinians (some 1,625). [Figures supplied by the Civil Administration](#) (in Hebrew) in response to an application made by Peace Now and the Movement for Freedom of Information under the Freedom of Information Act.
- 8 See: Peace Now [Surplus Spending on Settlements Tops NIS 1 Billion](#) December 3, 2019.

As a side note, bolstering the status of the settlements would greatly impede any future evacuation as part of a peace agreement. Evacuating sovereign territory and retreating from occupied territory are legally and politically distinct acts. Placing such a major obstacle to reaching an agreement that includes settlement evacuation and Palestinian sovereignty in the annexed area violates the Palestinian people's collective right to self-determination and impedes its ability to exercise this right in a territorially contiguous state.

#### **4. Threat of expulsion and house demolitions in communities unrecognized by Israel**

Israel's ambition to annex as much land as possible with as few Palestinian residents as possible puts individuals and communities, particularly communities unrecognized by Israel, at risk of expulsion. Various measures have been used in recent years to pressure these communities into relocating, most notably demolition of dwellings and other structures.<sup>9</sup> There is fear that as the annexation plan becomes more imminent, use of these measures in the areas targeted for annexation will intensify. Once these areas are annexed, Israel could claim members of these communities are illegal aliens in its territory and expel them without difficulty and without regard for international law, which prohibits population transfers and expulsions. (for more on unrecognized communities see: [B'Tselem](#) website).

#### **5. The status of Palestinians in annexed territory**

The future status of Palestinian residents of annexed territory remains unknown at this time. Possibilities suggested by various actors include: (1) Granting full Israeli citizenship and equal rights to all residents of the annexed territory; (2) Granting permanent residency status similar to the status of most residents of East Jerusalem. Residency status (at least in theory) confers all the rights to which Israeli citizens are entitled, except the right to vote or run for the Knesset. Unlike citizenship, however, it is subject to physical presence in the country. Once a permanent resident relocates to another country, they may lose their residency status; (3) Granting citizenship in a graduated and conditional process which includes meeting certain conditions, as proposed in various bills concerning the annexation of the West Bank in recent years;<sup>10</sup> (4) Leaving Palestinian residents of the annexed territory without status, such that they are bereft not only of political rights, but also social and health rights, among others. This dangerous option could result in the expulsion of these "status-less" residents.

The possible annexation of parts of the West Bank raises questions about the status of Palestinians in non-annexed areas. There is concern that they will remain stateless. This scenario would cement the situation of those whose civil rights have been suspended due to the occupation.

#### **6. Control of natural resources**

Area C, which spans some 60% of the total area of the West Bank, contains many natural resources. Control over these resources is in the hands of the Civil Administration at the present time, and although Israel's use and allocation of Palestinian natural resources is controversial,<sup>11</sup> it is still subject to the laws of occupation, meaning that despite Israel's exploitive use of these resources, there are restrictions on how it uses them and for what purpose.

Annexation would give Israel exclusive control over natural resources located in the affected areas, allowing it to manage and exploit them without restrictions. So, for example, Israel would be able to freely transfer extracted materials from the annexed area for its exclusive benefit and use. It would also be free to use quarries and other resources unsustainably. Israel already

9 According to B'Tselem figures, which are based on information received from the Civil Administration, from 2006 until March 31, 2020, Israel demolished at least 1,548 residential units belonging to Palestinians in the West Bank. In Palestinian communities Israel does not recognize, many of which face the threat of expulsion, Israel demolished the homes of at least 1,085 Palestinians, including 521 minors, more than once. [Full statistics on the B'Tselem website.](#)

10 See, e.g.: [Application of Israeli Law to the Jordan Valley Territory by \(Procedure for Acquisition of Citizenship\) - 2018, Proposal Number 5350/20.](#)

11 See: Yesh Din, [The Great Drain: Israeli quarries in the West Bank: High Court Sanctioned Institutionalized Theft](#) (September 2017); HCJ 2164/09 [Yesh Din - Volunteers for Human Rights v. Commander of IDF Forces in the West Bank et al.](#), judgment dated December 26, 2011.

uses natural resources extracted from the West Bank for its own economy. However, there are some, if not exhaustive, restrictions on this use.

Other natural resources, such as water wells and natural springs, located in the annexed area, would also be transferred to exclusive Israeli control, possibly dispossessing Palestinian communities of water sources for domestic and agricultural use.

## B. INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF ANNEXATION

### 1. Direct violation of international law, undercutting international law and institutions

International law prohibits annexation of occupied territory by the occupying power.<sup>12</sup> The application of Israeli sovereignty to the West Bank and its annexation to the State of Israel would be a brazen violation of this prohibition, undercutting international law and eroding its status.

Annexation would also be a violation of numerous resolutions made by international bodies and institutions, primarily, UN Security Council resolutions and the General Assembly recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer State.<sup>13</sup> These resolutions reflect the international community's clear stance that all areas occupied in 1967 are considered Palestinian territories. Israeli annexation of the West Bank would undermine the status of these specific resolutions and the bodies that adopted them. It would make a mockery of international law and international institutions.

Annexation of parts of the West Bank would subvert the object and purpose of the Oslo Accords (signed by Israel), which stipulate the parties consider the West Bank and the Gaza Strip a single territorial unit, prohibit unilateral changes in the status of the territory and establish, as their fundamental principle, the implementation of UN Resolutions 242 and 338 which require Israel to retreat to the Green Line.<sup>14</sup> Hence, annexation, even if partial, in the West Bank could nullify the Oslo Accords.

### 2. Elimination of the laws of occupation regime

Once the territory is annexed, Israel would almost certainly renounce any obligation to uphold the laws of occupation in it. These laws are designed to protect residents of an occupied territory and their rights. Replacing them with Israeli law would result in mass violations of all the rights listed in this document, and others, leaving Palestinians without a legal umbrella that can guarantee their rights and provide them with an avenue for demanding restitution from those who violate them.

The Israeli laws that would be applied to the annexed area reflect only the interests of Israeli citizens, as expressed in legislation coming out of a democratic process in which only citizens may participate. Palestinian residents of the West Bank have no right to vote for the Knesset and have no representation in the Israeli administration or legal system. They clearly have no part in designing Israeli policy and legislation. Even if Palestinian residents of the annexed area receive full Israeli citizenship and voting rights (and it is extremely doubtful that they will), all Palestinian residents of the West Bank will be affected by the legislation applied in the annexed territory. As noted, Israeli policies in this area, such as land expropriation, road construction, travel restrictions, natural resource exploitation and more, could harm all Palestinian residents of the West Bank.

<sup>12</sup> Annexation is a unilateral act whereby one country takes over some or all of the territory of another using force or threats and asserts its sovereignty over said territory (ICRC, How Does Law Protect in War, ICRC online platform). According to international law, the acquisition of territory by force is illegitimate. The laws of occupation rely on the principle that use of force, whether lawful or not, cannot undermine sovereignty. This principle is valid even in territory sovereignty over which is disputed. The principle of preserving sovereignty is expressed in a variety of international instruments that regulate the state of occupation. A fundamental provision of the laws of occupation, articulated in Article 43 of the Hague Convention (1907) limits the occupier's powers to measures designed to "restore, and ensure, as far as possible, public order and safety, while respecting, unless absolutely prevented, the laws in force in the country". International law recognizes occupation as an aberrant state and provides a normative regime (the laws of occupation) designed to ensure that effective rule by the occupier remains temporary, respects the humanitarian needs and human rights of the occupied population and operates in a manner that facilitates a speedy return to normal, based on sovereign equality. (Orna Ben-Naftali, Aeyal Gross and Keren Michaeli, "'Occuxivation': Occupation, Annexation, Deprivation - On the Legal Structure of the Occupation Regime", Theory and Criticism, 31 Winter, 2007. pp. 18-19) (Hebrew).

<sup>13</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, Resolution 67/19, [Status of Palestine in the United Nations](#), adopted by the General Assembly on 29 November 2012.

<sup>14</sup> [Declaration of Principles on Interim Self- Government Arrangements](#), September 13, 1993.

### 3. Straining the distinction between Israel and the Occupied Territories

In the past few years, the European Union has pursued a policy of distinguishing between the sovereign State of Israel and the territories it occupies.<sup>15</sup> This policy was more broadly adopted by the international community in UN Security Council Resolution 2334, passed in 2016, in which the Security Council urged all countries to make a distinction between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967 (the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem), in all relevant dealings with Israel.<sup>16</sup>

The annexation of the West Bank or parts thereof to Israel, with the attendant geographic expansion of the jurisdiction of Israeli institutions to include the annexed area, defies this distinction and pushes it towards a boiling point. The Israeli government and legislature would not tolerate different treatment, under Israeli law, of Israeli civilians and institutions living and operating in the annexed area. This may push the international community to make a binary decision in the context of concrete collaborations with Israel - whether to engage in such cooperation despite the fact that the Israeli side includes the annexed area or refrain from it altogether.

## C. CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNMENTAL POWERS

The removal of the regime of occupation from the annexed territory and the application of Israeli sovereignty mean direct Israeli governance in the annexed territory, without the mediation of the military. In practical terms, the result would be the transfer of powers now held by the military commander to Israeli state authorities. All areas of life currently governed by the military commander and Civil Administration would be handed over to the Knesset, the government, the various government ministries and other Israeli authorities - from legislative powers to environmental policies.

The Israeli government is naturally loyal to Israeli citizens and residents only, and, therefore, to Israeli interests. Whatever status Palestinians living in the annexed territory are given, their individual and collective interests are not likely to be seen as relevant factors for consideration by the Israeli authorities. Within the framework of the laws of occupation, the military commander carries a duty of trust towards the Palestinian population, and every decision he makes must be predicated on either security considerations or on considerations related to the benefit of the population which he serves as trustee. Although some of the powers of the Civil Administration are trickling over to government ministries, and although the actions of the military commander, who is ultimately subordinate to the government, are often influenced by other considerations, annexation would completely upend this framework. The Israeli legislature and government ministries would be free to implement policies that serve Israeli public interests alone, as they understand them.

Annexation would also give Israeli local and regional authorities in the West Bank, in other words, the settlements, a great deal of governmental power. They would no longer operate pursuant to military orders and subject to the military commander and his considerations, but rather pursuant to Israeli law and under the Ministry of Interior. This shift is expected to significantly increase their powers within their jurisdiction. The power the central government has to control development in the annexed area in response to foreign policy considerations would be greatly diminished. Other public authorities operating in the Occupied Territories, such as the Supreme Planning Council or the Supervisor of Governmental and Abandoned Property would become obsolete, and their powers would be transferred to agencies currently operating inside sovereign Israel (the planning committees and the Israel Land Administration respectively).

**One of the primary, and certain, outcomes of these eventualities would be a boost in development and construction in the West Bank.**

<sup>15</sup> European Union, Foreign Affairs Council, 18 January 2016, [Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process](#), paragraph 8.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations, Security Council, [Resolution 2334](#) (2016) Adopted by the Security Council at its 7853rd meeting, on 23 December 2016. Paragraph 6.



## **D. ENTRENCHMENT OF APARTHEID IN THE WEST BANK**

The annexation of all or part of the West Bank would further entrench the existing situation in which two groups of people live under Israeli rule and sovereignty: Israeli citizens with full rights and Palestinian subjects deprived of political and other rights, with the Israelis ruling over and oppressing the Palestinians.

The institutional, systemic discrimination against Palestinians and the diversion of local resources to Israelis at the Palestinians' expense, are, already, a distinct feature of Apartheid. Annexation would prove Israel is interested in cementing, perpetuating and deepening this situation, and demonstrate Israel no longer has any intention (not even declaratively) to maintain a regime of occupation that is designed to be temporary by nature.

The coming annexation will pull the rug from under the argument, currently prevalent in many circles, that while Apartheid, or at least an Apartheid-like regime, is currently practiced in the West Bank, the sovereign State of Israel is a democracy. Applying Israeli sovereignty to the West Bank would be tantamount to a declaration that there is one regime, rather than separate administrations. Annexation without full citizenship and equal rights for Palestinian residents of the entire West Bank would produce a veritable Apartheid regime Israel would have difficulty denying. Such a regime would perpetuate human rights abuses against Palestinians, leaving them forever deprived of liberty and equality.