



Third states must take effective action to stop the annexation of territory

We, humanitarian and development international organisations (INGOs) present in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), witness the humanitarian and human impact of the ongoing *de facto* annexation on Palestinian people in the Jordan Valley and across Area C on a daily basis. We urge the international community to demand that the Israeli government abandon its plan to formally annex areas of the Jordan Valley and Area C, which constitute a third of the West Bank, and to comply with its international legal obligations as an occupying power. Beyond annexation, the status quo is neither acceptable or sustainable. Annexation is yet another moment that demonstrates the systemic inequality and discrimination that defines the relationship between Palestinians and Israelis.

Israeli annexation of any part of the West Bank would constitute a violation of the basic principles of international law and a violation of Palestinians' right to self-determination. The *formal* acquisition of territory by force would have severe human rights implications for the occupied Palestinian population and breach Israel's obligations under international law. It risks dire consequences for a just peace between Palestinians and Israelis and has the potential to impact regional stability. *Formal* annexation would collapse decades of US- and EU-supported peace efforts dashing hopes of a two-state solution, and propelling the region into a new, uncharted reality.

Up to 150 Palestinian villages and hamlets in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) home to 140,000 people, may fall within the newly annexed areas. Under the US-led plan, any resulting Palestinian state would be a series of isolated islands, cut off from essential services, support networks and markets by Israeli-controlled territory. The poor quality of life in such enclaves would therefore seem destined for further erosion exacerbating a coercive environment that is likely to place even greater pressure on residents to leave the area.

Palestinians living in the areas to be annexed are likely to face protection risks similar to or greater than the ones that Palestinians living in East Jerusalem have faced since its formal annexation. This includes discriminatory legal regimes; obstruction and denial of family reunifications, inability to participate in free and democratic political processes and community organization; inadequate provision of services and infrastructure; lack of rule of law and accountable policing leading to increased violence.

With the imposition of Israeli sovereignty over West Bank territory, erection of additional checkpoints and other physical obstacles would appear certain, placing further restrictions on the freedom of movement of Palestinian inhabitants.

The move to unilaterally enlarge the geographical scope of the Israeli state will enable Israel to continue to unlawfully exploit vital natural resources including water, land, and minerals, thereby deepening Palestinian poverty and violating Palestinian territorial integrity, political independence and sovereignty over natural resources. Israeli annexation of West Bank territory, particularly the rich agricultural land in the Jordan Valley that is the food basket of the OPT, would render a functioning Palestinian State impossible, depriving it of the land and natural resources necessary to sustain itself and to trade with neighbors and commercial partners, thus entrenching perpetual dependency on foreign aid.

Should the international community fail to forcefully reject annexation, it would undermine a foundational principle of the United Nations Charter, the contemporary international legal order, and international peace and security. Other current and future expansionist states may rely on this precedent to justify territorial conquest, a concept that has been authoritatively rejected by the international community.

Therefore, Third States must:

- Communicate clearly that annexation will have proportional consequences on diplomatic relations and the standing of Israel in the international community.
- Demonstrate non-recognition of Israel's sovereignty over newly annexed areas and continue to treat the West Bank as occupied territory and demand Israel fulfil its obligations to Palestinians under international law.
- Uphold their obligations under international law not to recognize unlawful annexation, including by limiting or conditioning of bilateral assistance.
- Initiate immediate and proportional diplomatic measures including restrictive measures in relation to any annexation of territory. We call on the European Union, including all 27 Member States, to follow consistent EU Foreign Affairs policy and hold all government of countries that acquire land by force accountable to the same standards.
- In case of paralysis on the EU level, EU Member States sharing concern should either proceed individually or as a collective of Member States willing to take measures in response to the annexation.