

ODM MUN

Forum: United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Issue: The present situation in the Middle East with special emphasis on the Israel Palestine conflict.

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Introduction

Recently the Israel annexation plans were announced by the prime minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, and his political rival, Benny Gantz to annex land owned by Palestine. As the annexation plans began to develop, many countries began to question the choices of Israel and decided on what they should do in order to prevent an escalation of tension between Israel and Palestine.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, peace, justice, and strong institutions, is an example of a goal that will not be able to be achieved with the development of Israel's annexation plans. Israel's annexation plans violate international law and violate the human rights of the Palestinians when Israel annexes their territory. Due to the violations that may occur if Israel annexed Palestine, many countries began to disagree with Israel's annexation plans.



Key Terms

Annexation:

Taking pieces of land from a country usually by force, and without permission given. Israel's annexation plan is when Israel plans to annex the West Bank, which was owned by Palestine.

West Bank:

The West Bank is a territory that borders Jordan and is owned by Palestine. The West Bank is the territory that Israel's annexation plans tried to annex.

Coalition Government:

When two or more governments have a formal agreement to cooperate and reach the majority in parliament. The governments usually share similar policies and ideas.

Administrative Plans:

A plan that contains information and instructions for the operation with the logistics of the plan.

International Law:

International Laws are laws that define the legal responsibilities of nations and the treatment of individuals around their boundaries. Israel's plan to annex the west bank is an example of a violation of international law as they are deciding to annex the West Bank, which is already occupied territory.

Historic Joint Statement:

A historic joint statement is a statement formed by a group of countries where they express similar ideas. An example of a historic joint statement on Israel's annexation plans is the collaborations between Jordan, Egypt, Germany, and France.

Background Information

In the early 1900s, the region along the Eastern Mediterranean called Israel-Palestine, had been under Ottoman rule for centuries. It was a religiously diverse region with mostly Muslims and Christians, there were also a small number of Jews. However, around that time, a portion of the population began developing a distinct national identity (Palestinian identity). At the same time, many Jews in the European area were beginning to join the Zionism movement. As defined by the Jewish Virtual Library, the Zionism movement is "the national movement for the return of the Jewish people to their homeland and the resumption of Jewish sovereignty in

the Land of Israel.” The belief embodied the idea that Judaism was not simply a religion but a nationality and viewed the union of Jewish people as a nation of its own. Thus, the Israel-Palestine region in the Middle East was seen as the place for the Jews to establish their nation, a place of safety after centuries of persecution. And in the first decade of the 20th century, tens of thousands of Jews moved there from Europe. However, as the number of Jews moving from the European regions increased, the tension between the Arabs and Jews grew. After the British took control over the area in World War I, it was renamed the British mandate for Palestine. Later, due to the Holocaust, many more Jewish people fled Europe for British Palestine, adding fuel to the already existing tension between the Arabs and the Jews. In response to growing sectarian violence in 1947, the United Nations adopted a proposal to divide British Palestine into two separate states: a Jewish state (Israel) and an Arab state (Palestine). It aimed to satisfy both parties, giving the Jews their state and allowing Palestine to gain independence.

Although the Jews accepted the proposal, the other Arab states in the region were against the UN Partition Plan and the Arab-Israeli War broke out in 1948 between Israel and the neighboring Arab countries, including Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. By the end of the conflict, Israel had occupied much of the land in the area, pushing well past their borders under the UN plan. In addition, the new state of Israel also expelled a large number of Palestinians from their homes. In 1967, the Six-Day War broke out between Israel and the neighboring Arab states. The war ended again with Israeli victory and upon ceasefire, Israel had occupied the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, areas now known as the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). This led to the Israelis governing the occupied territories. And since the Six-Day War, the Israeli occupation of the OPT has been characterized by a process of “incremental” or “creeping annexation”.¹ This shift towards annexation was achieved through Israeli governance: by implementing long-term, irreversible changes to the occupied territory in contravention of the main tenets of the law of occupation under *jus in Bello*, as well as in violation of the prohibition of acquisition of territory by force under *jus ad Bellum*. In the mid-1990s, the Oslo Accords, an interim agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) intended to lead to a permanent resolution of the conflict, were signed. The Accords established the Palestinian Authority (PA), now known as the State of Palestine. It divided the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, into A, B, and C, three areas.

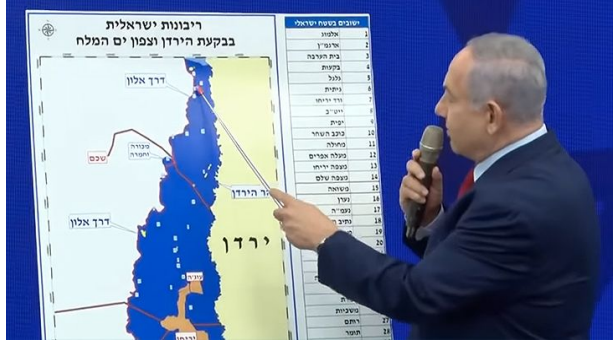
¹ O. M. Dajani, “Israel’s Creeping Annexation”, in Symposium on Revisiting Israel’s Settlements, *AJIL Unbound*, Volume 111, 2017, p. 51.

Although partial jurisdiction of some areas was transferred to the PA, the overall security remained under Israeli control. While it gave the PA some administrative responsibility for certain areas, the power was mainly in the hands of the Israelis. For example, Area C was maintained under full Israeli civil and security control. The Oslo Accords were signed to act as a “transitional arrangement lasting not exceeding five years”. However, its terms and negative implications remain in force today.

Since the occupation of the OPT in 1967, the Israeli government has been promoting the expansion of Israeli settlements in those territories. These Israeli settlements are much more than residential colonies, occupying Palestinian neighborhoods. For example in Area C, Israeli settlers have covered around 60% of the land. The Israeli military has also imposed movement restrictions on the Palestinian population as supposed security measures for these settlers, preventing the Palestinian’s from accessing their land. In 2013, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) have also reported concerns in regards to the impact of the Israeli business operations on the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of the local Palestinian population.

The issue of Israel’s annexation plans resurfaced on April 20, 2020, during the 3rd Israeli election. A coalition government was formed between Benjamin Netanyahu and his political rival Benny Gantz. Both Benjamin Netanyahu and Benny Gantz agreed to The annexation plans for the West Bank which was occupied by the Palestinians. The annexation plans follow the United States’ president, President Donald Trump’s administration plans, which proposed that the West Bank should be annexed by Israel.

Annexations violate the UN Charter and international law. Not only will the annexation plans for Palestine violate international law, but the annexation will also intrude on the human rights of Palestinians. The UN envoy of the Middle East, Nickolay Mladenov believed that the annexation plans may lead to instability for both Palestine and Israel.



Picture above shows Benjamin Netanyahu pointing out areas he would annex in the Palestinian occupied West Bank

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United States (US): The US is in support of Israel’s annexation plans. US President Trump formed a plan which was unveiled in January called the “Peace to Prosperity: A vision to improve the lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People”. The plan formed by President Trump has also been a beginning step towards Israel’s annexation plan.

Israel: Israel’s prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu was the one who worked on the annexation plans for Israel. As the prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu began to discuss the annexation, disagreement sparked between nations on the plan to annex Palestine.

United Nations (UN): The United Nations had a Security Council debate on Israel’s annexation plans. The UN Secretary-General has also confirmed that he would like the “Israeli government to abandon its annexation plans” due to its violations.

Jordan, Egypt, Germany, and France: The four countries, Jordan, Egypt, Germany, and France are countries that have discussed with each other and disagreed with Israel’s annexation plans. Because the annexation plans violate international law and are considered illegal, Jordan, Egypt, Germany, and France disagree with Israel’s annexation plans. On July 7th, Jordan, Egypt, Germany, and France issued a historic joint statement going against Israel’s annexation plans.

Relevant Laws and Treaties

UN Security Council Resolution 242, 1967

In November 1967, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously adopted Resolution 242 on the Israel-Palestine issue. Its context is after the Six-Day War, which involved several countries in the Middle East. In short, this resolution called for the withdrawal of the Israeli Armed Forces from the territories recently occupied during the conflict, as well as "the end of all claims or states of belligerence and respect for the recognition of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all states in the region and their rights to live in peace with secure and recognized borders". (UN, 2014)

Oslo Accords, 1993

Officially, the Oslo Peace Agreement refers to a series of agreements signed by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister, at the time; this agreement had the strong support of US President Bill Clinton. Through this agreement, the Palestinian National Authority was recognized by the State of Israel, as well as the most excellent right of this country to exist. The territory was then divided into three localities, this being the initial step towards lasting peace. The division can be seen in the image below:



Font: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0uLbeQlwjw&t=5s>

UN Charter

The UN Charter aims towards justifying international law. One of the preambles of the UN Charter has the objective of being able to “to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained”. Israel’s annexation plans violate the UN charter as it violates international law due to the annexation of an occupied territory.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

- [Israel-PLO Recognition](#)

(Click on the links to view in detail)

The Israel-PLO recognition was an agreement made between the Israeli Foreign Minister and the Palestine Liberation Organization to work towards maintaining peace.

- [The Interim Agreement](#)

The Interim Agreement was an agreement that was based on 4 issues, including “security arrangements, civil affairs, legal matters, and economic relations”. This was an agreement to have Israel remove military forces in Gaza and Jericho.

- [Milestones in the Implementation of the Interim Agreement](#)

After the Interim agreement, the Wye River Memorandum was signed by the US and Sharm el-Sheik memorandum was signed by Israeli representatives and the Palestine Liberation Organization. The Sharm el-Sheik memorandum was signed in order to re-emphasize the commitment of the two sides, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization to implement the agreements made in September 1993 and solve issues that occurred after the Wye River memorandum.

- [Permanent Status Negotiations](#)

The Permanent Status Negotiations were negotiations aimed towards resolving issues such as “Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, borders, relations and cooperation with neighboring countries”. There was a summit meeting that was held in Sharm el-Sheik which ended with the decision that Palestine should end all violence against Israel.

- Disengagement

“The future Palestinian state cannot be a terrorist entity. For this reason, the international community has insisted that the path to Palestinian statehood must follow acceptance of the conditions outlined by the international 'Quartet' (the UN, EU, US, and Russia), including the renunciation of terrorism, acceptance of previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements and the recognition of Israel's right to exist”.

- The Annapolis Conference

“The Annapolis Conference was an international conference that worked towards relaunching the negotiating process between Israel and Palestine. “Various measures have been implemented by the Israeli government in order to strengthen and develop the Palestinian economy. These steps have been both bilateral and multilateral, involving the PA, Israel, and the international community (both governmental and non-governmental). The results have been impressive and encouraging, with World Bank and PA statistics showing an 8% growth in the West Bank economy in 2009”.

- Abortive Attempt to Restart Talks:

“On August 20, 2010, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton invited Israel and the Palestinians to hold direct negotiations. Addressing a Joint Meeting of the U.S. Congress in May 2011, PM Netanyahu reiterated his commitment to the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside the Jewish state. While Israel remained dedicated to direct negotiations as the only method of resolving the conflict, the Palestinian leadership embarked on the path of unilateral action, preferring to attempt to force their will on Israel through international pressure, with the submission of a request for admission to the United Nations in September 2011”.

- Netanyahu's Election Conversion

“The prospects for a two-state solution appeared to dim when, in a last-ditch attempt to swing more right-wing voters, Netanyahu stated the day before the 2015 election that there was no chance of the establishment of a Palestinian state while he remained

Prime Minister.

Netanyahu won the election and his aides played damage control during the following days, speaking on various news programs trying to convince the world that Netanyahu had not in fact asserted his support for a one-state solution. Speaking on English television programs, Netanyahu attempted to backpedal on his statements, claiming what he meant is that the conditions currently don't exist for a two-state solution, and in his opinion much needs to change before a two-state solution is even considered. President [Barack Obama](#) responded to these remarks by Netanyahu, saying that the prospect for Israeli-Palestinian peace seems "very dim" and that the United States is going to be re-evaluating its relationship with Israel in the coming years.

In response to Netanyahu's decisive victory in the March 2015 elections, the Palestinians vowed to increase diplomatic efforts at statehood recognition through different U.N. avenues".

- The 2016 French Initiative

"French officials announced on January 29, 2016, that they would be spearheading an initiative to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and pledged to recognize the independent state of Palestine if their efforts were to fail.

The French government announced a second Middle East peace conference to be held in Paris during January 2017, which the Israelis once again soundly rejected. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu verbally assailed the organizers, referring to the conference as a 'rigged conference, rigged by the Palestinians with French auspices to adopt additional anti-Israel stances.' French officials welcomed representatives from 70 countries to this conference on January 14, 2016, to 'reaffirm their support for a just, lasting and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.' To read the Joint Declaration adopted by the participating countries at the end of the conference".

- Kerry's Final Push

“During [Obama’s](#) final year in office, Secretary of State John Kerry continued a U.S. diplomatic effort to bring Israel and the Palestinians together for peace talks.

Thanks to Israel’s improved ties with the [Gulf States](#), Netanyahu advocated pursuing peace with those countries first, hoping they would bring along the Palestinians. Kerry had eschewed this approach until proposing a regional peace initiative (which the Palestinians were not informed about and other regional actors had not agreed to at that point) during a secret meeting on February 21, 2016, in Aqaba, which was also attended by Jordanian [King Abdullah](#) and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Netanyahu intimated he had been the one who initiated the proposal, not Kerry, which made his subsequent opposition to the idea surprising”.

[- Recent Developments](#)

“President [Donald Trump](#) met with Prime Minister Netanyahu for the first time as President on February 15, 2017. During a joint press conference with the Prime Minister the President dropped the historic U.S. commitment to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, stating I'm looking at two states and one state, and... I can live with either one.

On December 6, 2017, [Trump](#) recognized [Jerusalem](#) as the capital of [Israel](#) and announced the U.S. would begin the process of moving its embassy from [Tel Aviv](#) to [Jerusalem](#). Subsequently, the administration said it would move the embassy to the current location of the Jerusalem consulate on May 14, 2018, to coincide with the 70th anniversary of Israel’s [declaration of independence](#).

Palestinian Authority officials rejected a U.S. offer to participate in a Gaza stakeholders summit on March 13, 2018. The summit convened with the goal of addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and was attended by representatives from 19 nations including Israel and all of the Arab [Gulf states](#)”.

[Possible Solutions and Challenges](#)

There are six approaches (possible solutions) to this important issue, and it’s worth reviewing all of them.

1) The first approach is the one-state solution, which implies that Israel must annex the West Bank in its entirety and put an end to Palestinian ambitions to establish an independent state in the future. Those in favor of this option claim the demographic issue doesn't pose a threat, because based on the current birth rate figures, the Jewish majority is guaranteed, provided we don't take the Gaza Strip into consideration.

2) The second approach, which also opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state, supports the annexation of Area C—some 60% of the territory of the West Bank—as well as all areas with already established Israeli settlements. That way, Palestinians living in Areas A and B would enjoy civil autonomy, while Israel would maintain full military control of all areas between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. The problem is Area B comprises 169 enclaves all surrounded by Area C, and every time a Palestinian were to cross between them they would enter sovereign Israeli territory.

3) The third approach, in principle, supports a political solution to the conflict but argues it can't be achieved in the foreseeable future, making "conflict management" the only viable option at the present time

4) The fourth approach also emphasizes the importance of reaching a permanent agreement with the Palestinians, but without the added pressure of it being within a framework of the two-state solution—which those advocating for this approach believe would be detrimental to both sides.

5) The fifth approach is also based on a conviction that reaching a political agreement in the near future is impossible. However, those campaigning for it believe the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories must end no matter what. Israel must withdraw to the separation barrier along the Green Line in the West Bank while retaining control of the Jordan Valley—where practically no Palestinians live—thus transferring the political burden to the Palestinian Authority. Back in 2006, then-prime minister Ehud Olmert called this approach “the Convergence Plan.”

6) The sixth approach calls for an immediate return to the negotiating table as a prerequisite to a future two-state solution. There are various tactical “sub-approaches” as to how

the negotiations could be facilitated, but they all hold a common belief that it's vital to reach a permanent agreement as soon as possible based on the two-state principle.

The principle of having two states is based on four assumptions: the solution must be found between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea; Palestinians must establish a sovereign state of their own; the Gaza Strip and the West Bank must merge into one political entity; and the border between Israel and a future Palestinian state must be based on the 1967 lines, with only slight adjustments

There are at least two alternative solutions to the conflict. The first is based on an exchange of territory between Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, and Saudi Arabia, while the second is based on the establishment of a federation between Jordan and the West Bank.

The division between the left-wing that supports a two-state solution and the right-wing that opposes it, doesn't really reflect the full scope of the discussion.

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