

June 02, 2020

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem” (Psalm 122:6)

Dear Member of Congress:

We are writing to you as faith leaders who are deeply concerned by the announcement of Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel that annexation of West Bank land could begin as early as July of this year. President Trump has endorsed annexation in his “Peace to Prosperity Proposal.” As recently as April, Secretary Pompeo has also greenlighted this announcement with his statement that annexation is an Israeli decision.

We are committed, as individuals, and as leaders of faith communions and organizations, to the achievement of a just peace in Israel/Palestine that respects and defends the human rights of all who live in that land we call Holy. Unilateral annexation of occupied Palestinian land by the State of Israel is not in the cause of a just peace; annexing thirty percent or more of the West Bank would entrench inequalities and abuses of Palestinians’ human rights for the foreseeable future.

We share the grave concern expressed by the Council of Patriarchs and Heads of the Holy Land Churches who in a statement dated May 7, called upon Israel to refrain from annexation, making clear that such a unilateral move “would bring about the loss of any remaining hope for the success of the peace process.” Formal annexation is an act of aggression, not a step for peace.

As of this writing, there is no evidence that President Trump and his administration will reverse course and reject annexation. Warning about the Administration’s current trajectory, Rev. Munther Isaac and Father Jamal Khader, Christian leaders in the West Bank, wrote in *Haaretz* in early May, “Let us be clear: implementing the Trump plan would bring catastrophic consequences for the prospects of a political solution between Israelis and Palestinians, and particularly for the fulfillment of the rights of the Palestinian people, including Palestinian Christians.”

We call on Congress to wield its power of the purse and not allow any United States funds provided to Israel to be used for the recognition, facilitation or support of annexation, or for denial of Palestinian rights and violation of international law, including continuing occupation. Respect for human rights, compliance with international law, and achievement of peace with justice is essential not only for the security and wellbeing of Palestinians, but for that of Israelis as well. Should Congress fail to oppose and create tangible consequences for annexation by the Israeli government, the United States will bear significant responsibility for the continued deprivation of Palestinian rights and for the continuation of the conflict.

The United States has a moral responsibility to promote human rights, justice and peace, both at home and abroad. We are now looking to our Congressional leaders to assure that our country acts courageously and makes clear that annexation undermines the rule of law and is morally unacceptable.

Sincerely,

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