

Annexation is illegal, morally corrupt, and threatens the lives of all in the Holy Land.  
Churches and civil society must speak up.

*Call to Action by Sabeel-Kairos UK. May, 2020*

Israel's new coalition government has announced<sup>1</sup> that from as early as July 1<sup>st</sup> it will legislate to formally annex parts of the occupied West Bank, including the Jordan Valley. Annexation, as well as being illegal under international law<sup>2</sup>, threatens the livelihoods, hopes and daily lives of thousands of Palestinians, who are already experiencing severe restrictions under Israeli occupation since 1967.

Despite receiving condemnation internationally, Israel continues to pursue its annexation agenda with support from the United States. At the same time, since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic, our partners tell us Israel has increased its policies of home demolitions, closures, arrests, child detention, and settler violence.<sup>3</sup> This is not the first time that Israel has used an opportunity like this – when the world's attention is diverted elsewhere – to further entrench their illegal control over the lands and lives of Palestinians.

Last week over 140 MPs wrote to Prime Minister Boris Johnson calling on him to place sanctions on Israel should it proceed with annexation plans.<sup>4</sup> This falls in-line with the expectation of states to uphold international humanitarian and human rights law, and follows the precedent set by the EU when Russia annexed Crimea. However, MPs alone cannot change the course of action, and neither can the UK government. A global, moral outcry against this illegal action is needed, and it is needed fast.

The reality of the matter is that Israel holds no regard, or respect for international law. It has yet to abide by a single United Nations resolution regarding its occupation of Palestine, indeed it does not even recognise this as 'occupation' in the legal sense of the word. Israel has not been held to account for this over the years, and therefore it should not come as a surprise that it has no intention of following international law now. Israel has no interest in, or commitment to a two-state solution, neither does it intend to allow Palestinians equality and indivisible rights within Israel. Israel responds to power, money, and influence. This is where we must now put more pressure.

Since 2005 Palestinian civil society has called for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel<sup>5</sup>, a non-violent, legitimate and peaceful form of resistance. It is no coincidence that Israel itself recognises BDS as one of the greatest threats to its existence – and by that, we mean the existence of Israel as an apartheid state. It spends millions each year fighting, defaming, and trying to criminalise the BDS movement and its campaigns. And yet the BDS

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.timesofisrael.com/unity-deal-allows-netanyahu-to-begin-advancing-annexation-from-july-1/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://lphr.org.uk/latest-news/lphr-briefing-on-the-urgent-imperative-for-the-uk-government-to-ensure-application-of-international-law-in-response-to-israels-imminent-illegal-annexation-of-parts-of-the-occupied-west-bank-a/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.kairopalestine.ps/index.php/resources/statements/the-dire-consequences-of-israel-s-coalition-government>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/01/mps-press-for-sanctions-against-israel-over-west-bank-annexations>

<sup>5</sup> <https://bdsmovement.net>

movement is growing, and the number of organisations, states, individuals and companies that are willing to do business with Israel is shrinking.

**We call on civil society, including the individuals and Churches which we work with, to continue, or begin, an unprecedented campaign to Boycott, Divest from, and Sanction Israel with immediate effect, until it ends its illegal occupation of Palestine and complies with international law. Below we have outlined how you can do this in practical ways.**

Annexation may well go ahead on July 1<sup>st</sup>, despite international outcry. The world will be angry for a week, or maybe more, and then it will quietly return to normal. Relationships with Israel may be strained, but countries will continue to do what they have done for the last 72 years – to look away, and accept the status quo. The reality on the ground will potentially not look much different to what it does already, with the severe restrictions on movement, trade, and ordinary life that are already happening under occupation. But it is one more step towards the complete obliteration of the vision for an independent, equal, viable Palestinian state, and therefore it is vital that we speak up loudly for Palestinians' human rights now.

We know that change happens when civil society rises up and demands it. Our politicians, Church leaders, and influential figures will only listen when we demand, in force of numbers and in strength of voice, that they do so. We urge you to join your voice, with others, in doing so now.

Taking Action today:

1. If your MP has not signed the letter to Boris Johnson, please write to them, asking them to join the **call for sanctions against Israel** should it proceed with annexation. EAPPI UK have created guidance for you to use here: <https://mailchi.mp/quaker/urgent-action-write-to-your-mp-today-on-imminent-plans-to-annex-occupied-palestine?fbclid=IwAR1qvBLNSOMrca3Whz3iPyklo5xduwye09MPsbZBC8ZfCt7wsSIUNkNLaj8>
2. Write to your Church leader, asking them to ensure that their Church's investments are not supporting companies profiting from the occupation, and to **divest immediately** from companies that are. You can find information, resources and campaign postcards here on the Sabeel-Kairos website: <http://www.sabeel-kairos.org.uk/category/taking-action/investing-for-peace/>
3. Support the global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, taking up the suggested actions and **boycotting those products**, services and businesses that are profiting from the occupation. For more information, see here: <https://bdsmovement.net>

4. **Spread the word.** Use this opportunity to focus the world's attention on Israel's illegal actions. Share this statement and these actions with your friends, family, colleagues, Churches and more.