

### Yemen is Running Out of Food and Water

The ongoing drought has undercut access to potable water. In rural areas—where 70 percent of Yemenis currently reside—access to clean piped water is virtually nonexistent.<sup>4</sup>

The same Yemeni woman noted, “The water is unsafe to drink, and this has infected people with cholera, and it has caused so many deaths.”<sup>5</sup>

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The water shortage increases the possibility of disease outbreaks, such as cholera and Acute Watery Diarrhea (AWD). Since 2017, one of the largest outbreaks of cholera in recorded history has plagued large portions of Yemen, infecting over two million people and killing thousands each year.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, with a compromised healthcare system, Yemen remains a breeding ground for emerging diseases.

Aside from the lack of clean water, food scarcity and malnutrition are also alarmingly widespread.

As a Yemeni woman described, “The issue of providing minimal daily food is a huge problem, especially after the government salaries stopped and the war-zones have expanded.”<sup>3</sup>

With 1.8 million children suffering from acute malnutrition every year and 400,000 cholera

cases threatening their lives, the famine is the main contributor to the deaths of 30,000 Yemeni children each year.

Not only has the famine affected the current population, but it also has implications on Yemen’s future generations. As a result of malnutrition, over one million pregnant and lactating women are anemic and their newborns are often underweight or in poor health. The weakness of future generations perpetuates a vicious cycle of poor physical and mental development.<sup>7</sup>

The conflict has also resulted in heightened drug abuse, dependence on which has drained much of Yemen’s already limited income, water, and land supply.

The drug in question is known as “Qat” (or “Khat”), a plant that, when chewed, produces amphetamine-like effects.<sup>8</sup> Qat is used as an appetite suppressant, but in Yemen, it has become a normalized method of escaping reality.<sup>9</sup> Many Yemeni adults use the plant daily.

### Humanitarian Aid During a Global Pandemic

With a recent history of epidemics, an insufficient healthcare system, and a huge population of internally displaced citizens, Yemen is at a high-risk for a COVID-19 outbreak. Nationwide, only 500 ventilators and 700 ICU beds exist to serve a population of 30 million people, half of whom the WHO projects will be infected.

The COVID-19 pandemic poses new challenges to humanitarian aid efforts in Yemen. The nation cannot afford any cuts in their humanitarian support, but it seems humanitarian aid could face a steep decline with organizations and donors redirecting funding toward domestic coronavirus responses. International aid has significantly waned. In early June, for example, a Saudi-led fundraiser for Yemen fell short of its goal by over one billion dollars.<sup>10</sup>

Humanitarian responses are a lifeline for millions of Yemeni civilians. As the coronavirus pandemic creates new and unprecedented challenges for the nation, the need for a sizable humanitarian response is more necessary than ever before.

## Annexation: Perspectives of Peace and Conflict

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the greatest geopolitical conflicts in human history. The land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea is the region both Israelis and Palestinians recognize as their homeland, thus creating religious, cultural, and political strife.

In January, President Trump devised a peace plan, aiming to put the decades-long conflict to an end—a plan that allows Israel to annex nearly 30 percent of the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley.<sup>1</sup>

The Trump Plan follows years of diplomatic initiatives, most notably the 1995 Oslo Accords, in which Israel

retained control of nearly 60 percent of the West Bank in Area C. The other 40 percent was divided into two Palestinian areas: Area A, which is under Palestinian governance and military rule, and Area B, which is under Palestinian governance but Israeli military rule.

Many Israelis and Palestinians have rejected the Trump Plan for fear of instability and illegitimacy. However, a deeper investigation into the hearts and minds of Israelis and Palestinians as well as a consideration of the historical context of this issue, reveals insights about the conflict that are crucial for progress toward peace.



## Israeli and Diaspora Jewish Views on Annexation

By Ben Winer

Since 1967, two opposing realities for Israeli and Diaspora Jews have largely been the source of gridlock, stagnation, and conflict on the issue of annexation.

As famous Israeli journalist Micah Goodman puts simply, “The [political] right no longer believes that settling the territories will bring redemption; instead, it fears that withdrawing from them will bring disaster. The [political] left no longer believes that withdrawing from the territories will bring redemption; instead, it fears that staying there will bring disaster. The Israeli left and right have undergone an identical change, moving from dreams to fears.”<sup>2</sup>

Goodman further highlights this dualism, in which Israel is threatened regardless of whether it withdraws from or settles the West Bank. Israel’s continued presence in the West Bank and an ultimate political enfranchisement of millions of Palestinians would threaten the demography of a Jewish state, thereby diminishing the very essence of the country. However, a withdrawal from the West Bank would jeopardize the security interests of Israel, as Palestinian extremist organizations could use the region as a launchpad for rocket attacks and tunnel incursions similar to those that have occurred in Gaza in the past decade.

When it comes to annexation, the ultimate question in the minds of Jews and Israelis—which has been pressing since 1948—is determining the balance between Israel’s democratic and Jewish nature. On one side, Israel remains one of the freest countries in the Middle East, where all citizens have equal voting, religious, and civil rights. Yet, national holidays, Shabbat laws, and established institutions like the Rabbanut—which mandate religious/cultural laws about marriage and immigration—allow the country to remain inherently Jewish.

Annexation of the West Bank would force Israel to choose between these principles, either granting its new Arab citizens equal rights and potentially diminishing the Jewish essence of the state or excluding large segments of the Palestinian population to preserve the country’s initial purpose.

Beyond the ideological impediments to peace, a lack of understanding of the motives of Jews living in the West Bank presents challenges to this conflict. When diplomatic solutions are proposed by political chess players who believe that compromise and sacrifice are successful bargaining tactics, this has often led to an estrangement of the very people who are immediately affected.

Among the nearly half a million Israelis living in the West Bank,<sup>3</sup> religious Jews in cities like Gush Etzion, Beit El, and Maale Adumim are fueled by a divine conviction that the land between the Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea was gifted from God to Abraham to the Jewish people for eternity, and that any attempt to remove them is a malign attack on a collective identity that has survived for millennia. Many of these residents have travelled from across the globe to live in these areas as a statement of purpose and identity.

To these people, any sacrifice or compromise that does not guarantee Jewish sovereignty will be deemed unworthy of merit.

Unless the Israeli government is willing to forcibly remove West Bank Jews—which did occur in 2005 when the military relinquished control of Gush Katif in Gaza—those Jews will continue to live there. Even if a future Palestinian state is willing to incorporate Jews living within the West Bank, these residents pose a significant obstacle to establishing a two-state

solution.

Until then, there is little incentive for either side to budge; Israel enjoys military presence and security capabilities in the West Bank, and the Palestinian political elite benefit from remaining in power, despite the suffering of the people they represent. Long-term, until Israeli political leaders feel they have a viable partner for peace, the conflict will remain as it has for decades—stagnant and gridlocked.

There is a reason this conflict has existed since its inception, and no single action will result in a solution. Ultimately, the topic of annexation is only one in a series of countless other grievances and problems that fuel the conflict. While annexation and geographic disputes can manifest themselves as the most significant aspects of this issue, social and cultural tensions between Jews and Arabs typically constitute the biggest inhibitors to peace.

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## The Palestinian Perspective

By Ece Yildirim

The decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict is at an unsustainable deadlock, which feeds the extremist approaches of both sides while playing with the fates of civilians. For the past few years, however, the situation in Palestine has not only been a political dispute but an issue of human rights.

For instance, Area C contains the majority of the West Bank’s agricultural land, water, and mineral resources, keeping the Palestinians economically dependent on Israel.<sup>4</sup> The government further encourages settler movement by allocating one-third of subsidized housing to settlements, despite only 5 percent of Israelis living there.<sup>5</sup> After annexation, the Israeli government does not plan to grant Palestinians citizenship in that territory and requires exceptional conditions to maintain residency.

In 2018, Israel approved a law that gave the interior ministry the authority to revoke Palestinians’ permanent residency in annexed land, on the grounds of a “breach of allegiance” to Israel, without elaborating on what that might entail.<sup>6</sup> For those residents who still continue to live under Israeli military rule, the government makes life extremely difficult by imposing frequent curfews, banning meetings, and granting Israeli settlers permission to carry arms and be involved

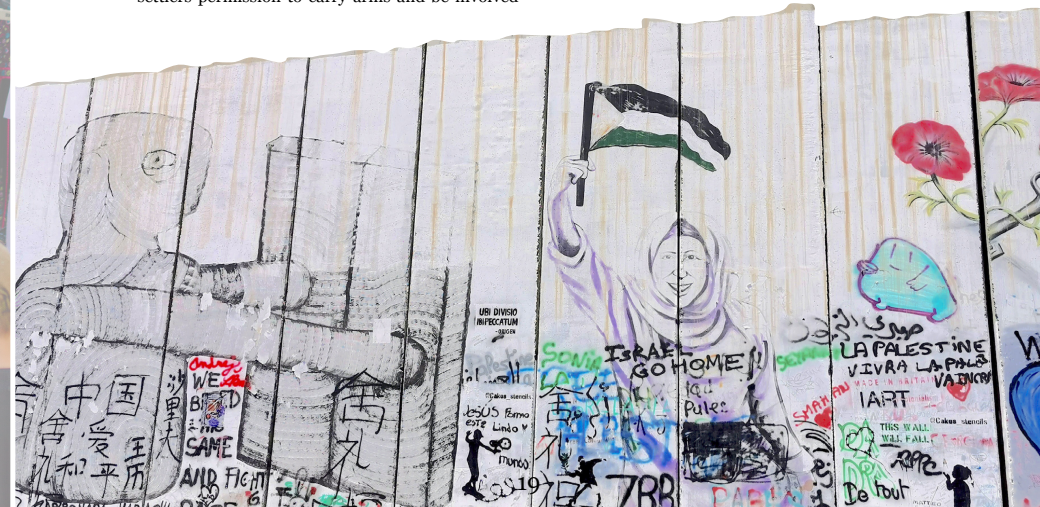
in “maintaining law and order” in these Palestinian cities and neighborhoods.<sup>7</sup>

Because of Palestinians’ inability to vote due to Israel’s denial of citizenship, politicians don’t invest in Palestinian neighborhoods. Almost 90 percent of all sewage pipes, roads, and sidewalks in Jerusalem are found in the West—where Israelis live—leaving only 10 percent of that infrastructure to the East—where Palestinians live.

The same inequity is observed in distribution of resources. For every 1,000 parks in West Jerusalem, there are only 45 in the East; for every 25 libraries in the West, there are 2 in the East—the list goes on.<sup>8</sup> This disparity is leveraged by Israel, as demonstrated in 2016 when the government decided to only provide funds to renovate schools that adopted the Israeli curriculum.<sup>9</sup>

However, Palestinians have no interest in Israeli citizenship.

Currently, there are two camps: on-the-rise moderates who believe that an equal division of land can be reached through dialogue, and fundamentalists who view negotiations as pointless. However, the actions of the Netanyahu-Trump alliance are anticipated to jeopardize the rising trend of non-violent moderates, pushing Palestinians towards the fundamentalist extreme,





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raising suspicions of a third Intifada, and further muddying the future of a two-state solution.<sup>10</sup> As one Israeli activist put it, it might as well lead to “the Hamasification of the West Bank.”<sup>11</sup>

Trump and Netanyahu’s “Peace Plan” will separate communities, restrict free movement with military checkpoints, and eliminate the right of return for refugees, thus dismantling any Palestinian claim to independence.

Palestinians are appalled by these implications, which spurred protests and demonstrations called the “Day of Rage” not just in Palestine and Israel, but all over the world—from US cities to Toronto, Paris, and Brussels.

These calls to impose negative consequences on the Israeli government have been echoed around the globe; Dutch and Belgian governments passed resolutions on punitive measures against the Israeli government if it proceeds with the annexation plan, and a public letter in the US spearheaded by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and endorsed by Bernie Sanders called for the end of military aid to Israel.<sup>12</sup> Israel receives the most US aid in the world—this plan aims to conditionalize this aid, a proposal that presidential nominee Joe Biden called “outrageous.”<sup>13</sup>

Many human rights activists also support Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions (BDS), the controversial movement that advocates boycotting

companies that abet the unjust treatment of Palestinians.

According to the Palestinian Liberation Organization’s (PLO) US Diplomat, Husam Zomlot, “The objectives of the BDS movement are...deliberation and the end of this occupation... the return of refugees to their homes...the end of the apartheid and segregation and discrimination against Palestinians.”<sup>14</sup>

Some, including former Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) chairmen, liken BDS to AAM which helped end the South African Apartheid,<sup>15</sup> while others claim it is anti-Semitic for disproportionately affecting Jewish workers.

While the recent annexation plan dashes hope of achieving a prompt and equal two-state solution, the backlash it received and the growing support of Palestinian rights in the global sphere has been promising.

As long as the population of moderate Israeli and Palestinian two-state solutionists continues to rise and as people across the world challenge their own governments’ complicity in Palestinian plight, the far-right Israeli government can be held accountable, the extremist Palestinian fight can be neutralized, and, hopefully, the long-awaited two-state solution can be achieved.

That would be the real “Peace Plan.”



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