

*Ameinu and Partners for Progressive Israel along with 8 other American Jewish organizations, members of the Progressive Israel Network, penned the following letter to Alternate Prime Minister Benny Gantz and Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi opposing annexation:*

As leaders of American Jewish organizations committed both to the security of the State of Israel and to safeguarding its future as a democracy, we urge you to consider the costs of any unilateral annexations in the West Bank and do everything in your power as a minister in this government to thwart it.

Article 29 of the coalition agreement you signed with Likud, chaired by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, establishes July 1 as the start date for discussion of an annexation proposal by the government or Knesset. We believe that unilateral annexation poses grave risks to Israel's future as a democracy and to its security in the region.

Annexation of any scope is a violation of a core principle of international law, which prohibits the acquisition of territory by the use of force. Knowingly committing an illegal act under international law may risk incurring penalties from

other UN member states and international bodies.

Furthermore, unilateral annexation is not only a violation of international law, but of Israel's own treaty commitments. It risks jeopardizing Israel's vital relationships with allied states and the stability of the Palestinian Authority, which has been key element of Israel's security. Jordan's King Abdullah II has warned of a "massive conflict" if Israel proceeds along the path of annexation. We trust you are aware of the warnings from Israel's own military and intelligence communities who have warned of the likely ramifications: annexation poses mainly risks, without any strategic benefit to Israel. Significantly, formalizing Israel's control over occupied territories through unilateral annexation forecloses on hopes for peace and poses a terminal threat to Israel's democratic character. A situation in which Israel maintains permanent control of the West Bank while denying wholesale equal rights of citizenship to Palestinians has disturbing modern parallels. Indeed, annexation means enacting institutionalized, formal system of discrimination between two ethnic-national populations, both living in the same territory, with each governed by a separate set of laws.

We are concerned that this will lead to further violations of the rights to property, equality and dignity of the Palestinians living in the West Bank, and entrench a system of discrimination between Israeli citizens and Palestinian subjects, as Israel's High Court found in its most recent ruling on the "Regularization Law."

Annexation will surely not bring Israel toward peace, but instead take it down a path of endless conflict and permanent occupation.

Finally, this grave decision to abandon the State of Israel's democratic aspirations runs altogether counter to the shared democratic values and commitment to the pursuit of peace that have long formed the heart of the US-Israel relationship. Indeed, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi has warned that this move runs counter to the long-term interests and likely future policy of the United States.

The vast majority of American Jews support a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Our organizations represent this majority. Achieving an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the occupation through a negotiated two-state agreement is the only viable pathway to secure Israel's future as a

democracy and as a homeland for the Jewish people.

For the sake of the State of Israel's democracy, its global standing, and its relationships with the United States and with the American Jewish community, we urge you to do everything within your power as a minister in this government to prevent annexation.

Sincerely,

Ameinu

Americans for Peace Now

J Street

The New Israel Fund

T'ruah

Hashomer Hatzair World Movement

Partners for Progressive Israel

Jewish Labor Committee

Habonim Dror North America

Reconstructing Judaism