

European Union has to be prepared to use sanctions against Israel

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The new unity government of Israel has pulled out all the stops. Annexation of parts of the West Bank may become reality as early as July 1st. Such an annexation of any part of the West Bank would constitute a clear violation of international law. However, it would be in line with a majority of the Knesset and with the support of the U.S. government.

The Israeli political right-wing has never acknowledged the two-state solution as recognized by the international community. They have never recognized a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel - the very legal foundation for the existence of both (UN Res 181).

The suggested annexation shows that the unity government is prepared to use violence to undermine all basis for a two-state solution. This is a new situation. Annexation would constitute a clear violation of international law and international humanitarian law principles. Annexation would erase all prerequisites for a Palestinian state and deprive Palestinians of any possibility of a meaningful democratic representation.

The situation calls for the European Union (EU) to examine its policies in relation to international law. When Russia annexed Crimea, the EU reacted with sanctions and restricted relations. If principle of proportionality applies, the EU should act in similar ways now. That would mean e.g. limitations to visa-free travel between Israel and the European Union as well as limitations to the EU-Israel Association Agreement for trade, which in its second article demands the observance of human rights and democratic principles.

As civil society, skilled in international affairs and with partners among many of those affected, we urge the Swedish government to promptly act against the threats of annexation of any part of the Palestinian state, as recognized by Sweden, and to ensure that any such act has consequences in line with those imposed on Russia after annexing Crimea.

All Palestinians are affected in a situation where international law is disrespected and breached. In addition, the Palestinian Christian churches are affected when the occupation deprives local Christian communities of their viability. Further, it is our conviction that measures like these threaten Israel's existence as a free and liberal

democratic state. It would be unimaginable for the EU and the global community to accept a situation in which a large proportion of the population are to be deprived of their fundamental human rights. Under such conditions, with ongoing crimes against humanity, it is not just the right but the responsibility of the international community to intervene.

We urge the Swedish government to promptly assure that Israel's annexations policies do not pass unchallenged within the European Union, but are met with concrete consequences equivalent to those taken against Russia after annexing Crimea.

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