

Att. Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod,

Re.: Israeli annexation of occupied territories

Dear Jeppe Kofod,

We have followed with great concern the most recent developments in Israel with the formation of a coalition government between the Likud and Blue-White parties, and the possibility this opens for an imminent legislation in the Knesset about annexation of occupied Palestinian territories on the West Bank.

Friends of Bethlehem have been approached by our Christian partners in Palestine, Kairos Palestine, with a statement that expresses great concern about the situation, which is seen as a threat not only to Palestinian society, but also to international law and conventions. And they point out the parallel between Russia's annexation of The Crimean Peninsula, where the EU immediately responded with sanctions. And they appeal to us, that similar consequences are drawn here.

Friends of Bethlehem cannot neglect the appeal from our partners. The situation is serious if we want to avoid a de jure apartheid situation in Israel/Palestine, with all that that entails in terms of oppression of the Palestinian population's welfare and citizen's rights.

We therefore appeal to the Government of Denmark to consider concrete measures that can put pressure on Israel, so that Israel abstains from further annexing Palestinian and Syrian territories.

Denmark and the EU have over time condemned Israel's behavior in the occupied territories as breaches of UN resolutions, international law and the Geneva Conventions. But we need more than words of condemnation, that have not had a great effect. We need action in terms of concrete sanctions. **And the rapidly growing 10-year old global network, Kairos Palestine, now appeals that protests are followed up by direct BDS action, from businesses, organisations and governments.**

We are aware that there is a EU meeting on May 6, 2020 where the question of Israel's possible annexation of occupied territories will be discussed. We appeal to you that Denmark also at these meetings applies pressure on the other EU countries in order to come to an agreement about concrete measures to be taken with respect to Israel's policies of occupation.

Friends of Bethlehem was established in 2003, and we see it as our task to disseminate knowledge about Christian networks such as Kairos Palestine and with strong leaders such as Rev. Mitri Raheb (head of the Dar al Kalima University of Arts and Culture in Bethlehem), that appeal for international support. We need to see active steps to stop Israel's continued measures against Palestinians.

The appeal from our Christian partners in Palestine takes place in the perspective of love and hope. We cannot allow ourselves to neglect the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Christians, but need to support them in their struggle for justice and peace.

We thank you in advance for including this message and appeal in Denmark's and the EU's deliberations on concrete measures vis-à-vis Israel in this critical situation.

With kind regards and on behalf of Friends of Bethlehem www.betlehemsvenner.dk

Vita Andreasen, chairperson