

Israel's Deliberate and Carefully Planned Annexation of Palestine

Take a Look Around. The annexation of Palestine will not come one day, it is happening every day, and this is what it looks like: legislating mundane changes about higher education councils.

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Featured image: Jewish residents of the illegal outpost Amona, November 17, 2016. (Miriam Alster/Flash90)

There will be no definitive moment, event or a point in history, when we can say that annexation happened. Israel's annexation is a process — a deliberate process — which has been carefully planned, began a long time ago, and which will continue for years to come.

It is hard to get too excited over small steps toward annexation, such as a law that moves a university from the jurisdiction of one council of higher education to another. The international community will not raise a storm. The UN Security Council will not hold an emergency session. The EU will not threaten sanctions. Yet this is precisely what the annexation of Palestine will look like.

The Knesset on Monday [passed a law](#) that places Israeli universities in the occupied Palestinian territories under the aegis of the Israeli Council for Higher Education, a civilian body created by Israeli law to oversee universities and colleges in Israel. Settlement colleges and universities were previously supervised by the Council for Higher Education in Judea and Samaria, a military body created specifically *because* the civilian council's jurisdiction did not extend beyond the State of Israel's borders.

This was [not the first time](#) the Knesset decided that it could legislate beyond the boundaries of the territory over which the state claims sovereignty. Israel rules over the West Bank not with the laws of its elected civilian government but rather with a military regime, in loose accordance with those parts of international law that deal with occupied territories. The wholesale application of civilian law to an occupied territory amounts to annexation.

There are many other small steps toward annexation being planned in the near and long term. Israeli **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** on Monday stressed the need to advance those plans in an organized manner, and not as *ad hoc* proposals from individual politicians looking to make headlines.

“With regards to the question of the application of Israeli law in Judea and Samaria and the Jordan Valley,” the prime minister said in a Likud faction meeting, referring to the entirety of the West Bank, “...it should be

government-sponsored legislation and not private legislation. This is a process with historic consequences ... We will act intelligently.” (Listen to [the recording](#) in Hebrew.)



Construction workers begin work on the new settlement called Amichai, meant to resettle the evacuees of Amona, in Shilo Valley, West Bank, on June 20, 2017. (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

The media immediately latched onto a different part of Netanyahu’s statement, in which he claimed Israel is coordinating and holding ongoing discussions with the United States regarding annexation plans. The Prime Minister’s Office was forced to retract that part the statement, which made for even better headlines. The prime minister openly and unabashedly describing how he plans to apply Israeli law to the Palestinian territories, however, is barely news anymore. It has fully penetrated the mainstream discourse.

And that is the point. Annexation is no longer a topic that the Israeli right whispers about in closed meetings and [fringe conferences](#). The Israeli government no longer feels bound by the conventions of the past few decades, according to which it constantly reassures the world that it is working to achieve a two-state solution — even if only years down the road. Ironically, the only world leaders who are willing to call out that false sincerity these days are those, [like Donald Trump](#), who were never invested in a two-state outcome to begin with, and those, like **John Kerry**, who [have left public life for good](#).

Annexation is spoken of as if it is an outcome in and of itself. But annexation is not the goal. The goal is simply to strengthen and cement Israel’s control over the entire area between the Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea (minus the Gaza Strip, at least these days). Annexation is merely a tool for accomplishing that.

We can expect to see more and more pieces of legislation pass through the Knesset in the coming months and years that move the process of annexation along — like the higher education law, or the [so-called Regularization Law](#), which *regularizes* the theft of privately owned Palestinian land by Jewish settlers. Some of these laws may grab the world’s attention enough to garner up a few statements of protest. Many will be so seemingly insignificant that nobody will notice, and if they do, they likely will not understand *what*, if anything, these laws actually change. And the truth is, most of these small bills and policies don’t really amount to much when taken individually. Taken in the aggregate, however, this is what annexation looks like.

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