

Oppose the Israeli Annexation of West Bank Settlements

By [Howie Hawkins](#)

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It is time for the United States to end its bipartisan blanket support for Israeli policies that violate the human rights of Palestinians. At this critical moment, where Israel has announced its intention to annex Israeli settlements on the West Bank with the support of the Trump administration, we must speak out and resist this blatant violation of international law and the right of Palestinians to self-government.

Friday, May 15 is the anniversary of the Nakba, which Palestinians commemorate as The Day of Catastrophe, when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced from their own lands, homes, and businesses preceding and following the Israeli Declaration of Independence in 1948. Between 1947 and 1949, at least 750,000 Palestinians of a total Palestinian population of 1.9 million became refugees, 530 Palestinian villages and cities were destroyed and about 15,000 Palestinians were killed and 78 percent of Palestine was claimed by the State of Israel. Since 1967, Israel has militarily controlled the remaining 22% and expanded Jewish settlements into these occupied territories.

This year a new phase of land theft from the Palestinians is developing with the Israeli plan, backed by the Trump administration, to annex Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank to the State of Israel. This annexation is illegal under international law and opposed by all the members of the UN Security Council, except the United States. It is opposed nearly unanimously in the UN General Assembly and unanimously across the Palestinian political spectrum.

Democratic Party leaders nominally oppose the annexation, but the Biden wing refuses to call for measures to pressure Israel to drop its ambitions. Bernie Sanders has called for a cut-off of US military aid to Israel if the annexation goes forward, but Joe Biden along with other Democratic Party leaders have called Sanders' position "outrageous."

The new coalition of government led by a partnership between **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** and Knesset Speaker **Benny Gantz** says it could announce the annexation plan to the Knesset after July. It may be timed to come right before or after the Republican Convention.

The United States should stop giving Israel blanket support no matter how much it violates Palestinian rights and expands the illegal settlements on Palestinian land.

The growth of illegal settlements and the annexation of Palestinian land, as well as Jewish-only roads and hundreds of checkpoints already dominating in the occupied West Bank, is making the two-state solution, supported by international law, increasingly untenable. The

two-state solution calls for an independent State of Palestine alongside the State of Israel, west of the Jordan River, based on the pre-1967 borders. As a result of the constant expansion of Israeli settlements on the West Bank, Palestinians and pro-justice Israelis are increasingly turning to the one-democratic-state solution as the only just solution that is possible now.

The One Democratic State solution respects the multicultural character and the collective rights of the peoples living in the country, Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews among others. It calls for a constitutional democracy in which all citizens enjoy a common citizenship, a common government, and equal civil rights. Constitutional protection will prohibit laws that discriminate against any ethnic or religious community, which addresses the key concern Israeli Jews that their religious and cultural rights will be protected in a country in which they will be a minority.

Regarding the Gaza Strip, which has become a large open-air prison, the Israeli blockade of Gaza must be lifted so that food, construction equipment, and the essentials for healthcare and other humanitarian aid are allowed into the area. The repeated bombings by Israel of Gaza must come to an end. The 715,000 people of Gaza must be given democratic rights and their human rights protected.

The US should be putting pressure on Israel to change its policies by no longer providing Israel with political protection in the UN and no longer providing \$3 billion in annual funding and military aid without any conditions that require Israel to respect Palestinian human rights and negotiate with the Palestinians for a just solution.

I support an escalating program of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) to put pressure on Israel to respect human rights and negotiate a just settlement, starting with cuts to US military aid to Israel, as called for by the Palestinian BDS National Committee with broad support across Palestinian society. I oppose laws in the United States that criminalize individuals and businesses that take their own BDS actions. These laws violate our constitutional rights to organize, speak out, and take political action.

If the US is going to play a positive role diplomatically in promoting a just solution, it has to end its unconditional support for Israel in whatever it chooses to do and instead become a neutral broker helping both sides to negotiate their differences. The political solution is up to the Palestinians and Israelis to negotiate because self-determination means they decide their solution, not us.

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Howie Hawkins is the leading candidate for the Green Party nomination for president. His website is HowieHawkins.US.

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