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Call for an inclusive peace - countering *de facto* annexation

On September 14, Israel signed the “Abraham Accords” with the UAE and Bahrain during a ceremony in the White House. Rapprochement and dialogue between countries, in general, should be welcomed and encouraged. However, it should also be acknowledged that sustainable and inclusive peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved before all descendants of Abraham, including the Palestinians, can live in dignity and with equal rights in the birthplace of the three monotheistic religions.

The parties to the agreement claim the deal has averted, at least for the time being, Israeli plans for *de jure* annexation of parts of the West Bank. However, in reality, the occupation and *de facto* annexation continue on a daily basis in a structured and systematic way. Israeli settlements, one of the main results of occupation, designed to exclusively serve Israeli settlers, continue to expand apace even under Covid-19. In May the Israeli government announced 7,000 new units in the southern West Bank, nearly doubling the settlement of Efrat in size.ⁱ Settlement expansion is inextricably linked to violenceⁱⁱ and home demolitions. In August 2020 alone, 30 Palestinian homes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem were demolished, leading to the displacement of 205 people, half of them children.ⁱⁱⁱ The separation of substantial parts of the occupied territories from access and use by the Palestinian population, has a detrimental effect on Palestinian human rights at large.

These are only a few aspects of what *de facto* annexation looks like. *De facto* annexation is and remains illegal under international law, as clearly stated in art 2(4) of the UN Charter, the UN General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV), the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Hague Regulations.^{iv}

Against this backdrop, CIDSE calls upon the European Union and member states to continue to denounce *de facto* annexation and occupation, and live up to their responsibility as a third state, by:

1. Pushing forward an inclusive peace initiative that is based on equality, self-determination and security for both Israelis and Palestinians, in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law.
2. Opposing any plan or initiative that disregards international law, UN resolutions (in particular UNSC Res 242 and 2334)^v and the internationally agreed parameters for resolving the conflict; and thus, threatens to compound the injustices and push peace further away.
3. Holding those actors accountable that are responsible for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, by supporting relevant mechanisms such as the International Criminal Court and the UNHCHR database for business activities related to illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory.

ⁱ Peace Now (06.5.2020) *Bennett Announces Intention to Build New Settlement in E2: Peace Now to Petition* (www.peacenow.org.il/en/bennett-announces-intention-to-build-new-settlement-in-e2).

ⁱⁱ B'tselem, (2020) *state-backed settler violence* (www.btselem.org/settler_violence_updates/during-corona-crisis).

ⁱⁱⁱ ICAHD, *Demolitions & Displacement in the occupied West Bank (including occupied East Jerusalem) and within the state of Israel*, August 2020. Report (www.icahd.org/2020/09/08/august-2020-demolition-and-displacement-report).

^{iv} Diakonia, *Briefing note: Annexation under International Law and in the oPt Context* (www.diakonia.se/globalassets/blocks-ihl-site/ihl-file-list/reporting/annexation-under-international-law-and-in-the-opt.pdf).

^v UNSC resolution 242 condemns the acquisition of land by force and calls for the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the occupied territories. Resolution 2334 reaffirms the illegality of the Israeli settlements and calls for. For full text see <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/IP%20S%20RES%20242.pdf> and <https://www.un.org/webcast/pdfs/SRES2334-2016.pdf>.