

## Let Israel Annex the West Bank. It's the Least Worst Option for Palestinians

Gideon Levy, Haaretz, May 10 2020

What is the center-left camp in Israel afraid of when it comes to annexation? Why are the European Union and other countries feigning such a clamor against this coming development? Annexation has always been presented as the mother of all disasters, but we have to stop fearing it, and even say yes to it. It is shaping up as the only way out of the deadlock, the only possible shake---up that could end this status quo of despair we've gotten stuck in, which can no longer lead anywhere good.

Annexation is indeed an intolerable prize for the occupier and an outrageous punishment for the occupied. It legitimizes the most serious crimes and severs the most just of dreams – but the alternative is even worse. It would eternalize the criminal situation – this situation has long been perpetuated; it would establish a reality of apartheid – a reality that has existed for quite some time.

But annexation would also put an end to the lies, and require everyone to look the truth straight in the eye. And the truth is that the occupation is here to stay, there were never any intentions to do otherwise; it has already created an irreversible situation, some 700,000 settlers, including those in East Jerusalem, who will never be removed, and without their removal the Palestinians will be left with nothing but Bantustans, neither a state nor even a joke of a state.

This is what the opponents of annexation fear: Without a declarative and legal process it will be possible to continue to sow delusions forever. Annexation would threaten the fallacious life of the Palestinian Authority, which continues to behave as though it were a free state with sovereignty just around the corner; of the Israeli peace camp, which continues to believe there's still a possibility for a two-state solution; and the European Union, which thinks it's enough to issue (strong!) condemnations against Israel, and then to sit and do nothing against the apartheid, to fund and arm it, and present its "common values," with Israel. Annexation would challenge the deniers of reality who have never been challenged in their lives. Therefore you must be in favor of it despite the injustice and disasters it is liable to create; in the long run, the price will be less than that of the existing situation.

It's precisely the sworn opponent of annexation, Shaul Arieli, who has best described its advantages. In a recent article (Haaretz, Hebrew edition, April 24), he noted how the Palestinian Authority would collapse, the Oslo Accords would be cancelled, Israel's image would sustain damage and another cycle of bloodshed is liable to erupt. These are real dangers that you cannot take lightly but he says: "The step of annexation would deal a great blow to the balancing points in the current situation and upset their fragile equilibrium." And what more could we ask for, Shaul Arieli? The stability that the occupation has created, its routine normality, are the great enemies of any hope to end it. You don't have to be an anarchist or a Marxist to see the latent opportunity in this terrible vision. Annexation is after all more

reversible than the settlements: The policy of annexation can some day be changed into democracy.

We've been waiting for this blow to land. It's our last hope. Whoever knows Israel knows there's no chance it will awaken one morning of its own free will and say: Occupation isn't nice, let's end it. Whoever knows the Palestinians knows that they have never been so weak and isolated and fragmented and bereft of any fighting spirit. And whoever knows the world knows how tired it is of the conflict. So now Israel will come along and, with the encouragement of the well---known peacemaker in Washington, awaken this reality from its sleep: Annexation. Anschluss. In the hills and in the valleys, in Area C and in the end in the entire West Bank.

With nobody intending to grant equal rights to the Palestinians, Israel will declare itself an apartheid state. Two people, one with full rights and the other with none – from the podium of the Knesset and the UN as well. Is it too naïve or optimistic to believe that most of the world would not remain silent nor would a great number of Israelis? Is there any realistic alternative? So, stop being afraid and let them annex.