Israel/OPT: EU must weigh in to ensure accountability as annexation looms, says UN expert

June 26, 2020

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26004&LangID=E>

GENEVA (26 June 2020) – A UN human rights expert has urged the European Union to use its “economic weight, diplomatic expertise and aid, trade and investment leverage” to forestall looming Israeli plans to annex parts of the West Bank and the Jordan Valley.

Michael Lynk, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, said in a [statement](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25991&LangID=e) released today that annexation “will lead to a marked worsening of the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and daily lives of millions of Palestinians”.

“The planned annexation after 1 July is a continuation of Israel’s illegal extension of sovereignty over Palestinian and Arab lands over the past decades, except that now it is happening as the international community is more alert than ever to serious breaches of international law,” Lynk said.

“What would be left of the West Bank would be a moth-eaten Bantustan, which would be the end, not the beginning, of a genuine Palestinian state. This would be a modern form of apartheid, a political anomaly in the 21st century.”

The independent expert said the international community, and particularly the European Union, must take concerted action to counter the proposal and ensure accountability for such serious breaches of international law.

“We have reached a point where resolutions without resolve can no longer contribute to reaching the just and durable peace and human security that Palestinians and Israelis deserve,” Lynk said. “This is a moment of truth for the EU and the integrity of its foreign policy.”

He said the European Union should not only insist that Israel strictly adhere to international law, but also detail the political, diplomatic and economic consequences that it will implement if Israel defies world opinion.

“Should Israel proceed with any form of annexation after 1 July – even if it is ‘annexation-lite’, consisting of several settlement blocs instead of the announced 30 per cent of the West Bank – the European Union must lead the world in imposing accountability measures,” said Lynk. “Any amount of annexation is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, and a fundamentally illegal act.

“It has sometimes been said by critics of the EU’s foreign policy towards Israel and Palestine that it suffers from paralysis and inaction,” said the Special Rapporteur.

“Nothing could better demonstrate that this argument is misplaced than for the EU to back up its criticisms of Israel’s occupation and looming annexation with a decisive menu of counter-measures.”

ENDS

*Mr. Michael Lynk was designated by the UN Human Rights Council in 2016 as the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967. The mandate was originally established in 1993 by the then UN Commission on Human Rights. Professor Lynk is Associate Professor of Law at Western University in London, Ontario, where he teaches labour law, constitutional law and human rights law. Before becoming an academic, he practiced labour law and refugee law for a decade in Ottawa and Toronto. He also worked for the United Nations on human rights and refugee issues in Jerusalem.*