

Spy report urges Israel to annex occupied lands now, in case Trump loses election

A leaked report produced by analysts at Israel's Ministry of Intelligence urges the government to annex occupied territories in the West Bank as soon as possible, in case Donald Trump loses the upcoming United States presidential elections in November. The report advises the Israeli government that it "should not expect" a widespread outbreak of violence in the streets. It also forecasts that "a wave of diplomatic protests" will gradually give its place to acceptance, as "the international system acclimates itself to annexation".

The report was leaked to *Israel Hayom*, a rightwing publication, which is currently Israel's most widely read newspaper. It discusses the so-called Netanyahu Annexation Plan, which was first unveiled by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on September 10, 2019, just days before Israel's legislative elections. It proposes the annexation by Israel of several Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories, which are viewed as illegal by the United Nations. The plan has been condemned by the United Nations and many Western countries, but has the approval of the White House.

Palestinian groups and several Arab countries have warned Israel that there will be serious consequences if it proceeds with the proposed annexation. But the Intelligence Ministry report, authored at the request of the Intelligence Services Minister Eli Cohen, claims that these warnings should not worry the Israeli government. A possible annexation of the Israeli settlements will cause some demonstrations throughout the Arab World, it says, but it won't substantially "rouse the Arab street" against Arab governments. This, it claims, "will make it clear to Arab leaders that the Palestinian issue is not a threat" to their political survival.

The report goes further, suggesting that an aggressive move by Israel may bring Arab governments closer to it, once Arab leaders realize that the annexation of Palestinian lands by the Jewish state will not prompt major reactions among their citizens. Additionally, it suggests that the timing for the annexation works in

Israel's favor, as the Palestinian Authority, which controls the West Bank, has been substantially weakened by its disagreement with the White House. Additionally, it says, Hamas "lacks appetite for another round of fighting" and most Palestinians are "mostly concerned with the troubles of day-to-day-life". Other countries are mostly preoccupied with the coronavirus pandemic, and the Arab public outside Palestine has "more pressing concerns at home", the report opines.

In its concluding section, the report appears to dismiss the conventional thinking that the annexation of the settlements will destroy even the remotest possibility of a peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. It report argues that "after a period in which the international system acclimates itself to the annexation", the Palestinians and their supporters in the region will be compelled "to return to peace talks", and even seek "solutions and arrangements that aren't affixed to the 1967 lines and primarily territorial aspects". In its concluding section, the report suggests that the Israeli government would have more to gain by proceeding with the annexation as soon as possible, rather than waiting, because it is "impossible to know how the US presidential election in November will unfold".

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