

Statement of EMOK on the Annexation Plans of the Israeli Government

1. The Evangelical Middle East Commission (EMOK) of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) set out its policy on the Israel-Palestine conflict in 2009 in a paper entitled “Israel-Palestine” that was reissued unchanged in 2017. It is still committed to the principles of that policy paper:
 - The recognition of the bonds between the Church and Judaism that was gained in theological reflection in the Jewish-Christian context also includes present-day Israel.
 - The awareness of ecumenical fellowship leads to solidarity with the Christian churches in Israel and Palestine.
 - Following Christ, the church raises its voice for peace and justice. It defends respect for human rights and international law.
2. On the basis of this double commitment EMOK has taken a position on the political situation in the Holy Land on several occasions. Out of concern for peace and the well-being of the people living in Israel and Palestine we express criticism of the current plans of the Israeli government, also included in the coalition treaty, to annex the Jordan Valley and other parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Such an annexation would violate international law.

By contrast with what the United States government calls its Peace Plan, which argues for annexing large parts of the Palestinian West Bank, we are still guided by the following criterion of our policy paper:

“Only law and justice can be the foundation of a peace that enables both peoples to live in freedom and security. A peaceful solution can only work successfully if it is based on respect for applicable human rights and international law standards.”

With the present statement we reaffirm the internationally recognized perspective of a two-state solution. The majority of European Union (EU) member states, too, recently reiterated their call for the two-state solution, including the German federal government. It is up to the Israeli and Palestinian sides to negotiate what form it would take. The implementation of this goal already seems at risk today and the annexation of large parts of the West Bank by the State of Israel would possibly render it ultimately impossible. EMOK fears that an annexation would provide arguments for extreme positions in Israel and Palestine and lead to violence flaring up again in Israel and Palestine. EMOK asks what legal status Palestinians living in the territory planned for annexation would have in the event of the annexation going ahead.

3. For this reason, we call upon

- the Israeli government to suspend the annexation plans it has agreed,
- the Palestinian leadership to end internal disagreements and to speak with one voice when opposing the annexation plans of the Israeli government,
- Israeli and Palestinian civil society to speak out against the annexation and advocate for negotiations,
- those with political responsibility in Israel and Palestine to resume negotiations to resolve the conflict,
- the German federal government, along with the EU and its member states, to consistently advocate against the unilateral annexation of parts of the Palestinian West Bank by the Israeli government and to maintain their support for the peace process,
- the German federal government, in the context of its upcoming Council presidency, to promote a central mediator role of the European Union and to continue to work for a negotiated solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict on the basis of international humanitarian law.

4. With this statement we are aligned with our ecumenical partners such as the World Council of Churches, the Middle East Council of Churches and, not least, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches recognized in the Holy Land. This call comes with the hope that, through it, people in our context will hear the voices of the people in the Holy Land and that it will send them a message of support and hope for a just peace in Israel and Palestine. The Evangelical Church in Germany will continue to support programmes and initiatives working for encounter, reconciliation and a just peace in Israel and Palestine.

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