

# Annexation and the deterioration of the right to health of Palestinians

22 June 2020

Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) decries the Israeli government's intended annexation of significant parts of the occupied West Bank, to start as soon as 1 July, for the intensified widespread and severe violations of Palestinians' right to health and well-being which it will cause.

Annexation constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and of the post-World War Two international order which prohibits absolutely the acquisition of territory by force. As stated in a robust rebuke on 16 June of the Israeli government's plan, by [a group of UN experts](#): *"The international community has prohibited annexation precisely because it incites wars, economic devastation, political instability, systematic human rights abuses and widespread human suffering."*

The UN experts said that the 53-year-old Israeli occupation has already been *"the source of profound human rights violations against the Palestinian people"* and outlined a number of them:

*"These violations include land confiscation, settler violence, discriminatory planning laws, the confiscation of natural resources, home demolitions, forcible population transfer, excessive use of force and torture, labour exploitation, extensive infringements of privacy rights, restrictions on the media and freedom of expression, the targeting of women activists and journalists, the detention of children, poisoning by exposure to toxic wastes, forced evictions and displacement, economic deprivation and extreme poverty, arbitrary detention, lack of freedom of movement, food insecurity, discriminatory law enforcement and the imposition of a two-tier system of disparate political, legal, social, cultural and economic rights based on ethnicity and nationality...These human rights violations would only intensify after annexation."*

All of these violations, stemming directly and indirectly from the occupation, impact Palestinians' health and well-being. The experts' statement was led by Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), who [previously documented](#) that Israel is in *"profound breach"* of its responsibilities with regards Palestinians' right to health across the oPt.

Alongside our [programmatic work](#), which responds to enormous health and development challenges for Palestinians arising out of decades of displacement and occupation, MAP

has similarly demonstrated the structural impediments to health and dignity caused by the occupation. MAP's [Health Under Occupation](#) report, for example, highlights barriers to [accessing healthcare](#); [impunity for repeated attacks on Palestinian healthcare](#); the [de-development of Palestinian healthcare](#); and the occupation's myriad [negative impacts on mental health](#).

The consolidation and expansion of settlements, all illegal under international law, is envisaged through annexation. Settlements fuel widespread violations of Palestinians' right to health and well-being and consequently annexation will exacerbate the damage and suffering they cause. The building and development of settlements can only occur through the confiscation of Palestinian land and resources, to the detriment of the Palestinian economy, environment, livelihoods and well-being. Their development goes hand-in-hand with restrictions imposed by the occupying power on the development of Palestinian infrastructure, including medical centres. No permanent clinic or hospital is permitted anywhere in Area C of the West Bank.

Five negative trends can be anticipated with regards to the worsening impact of ongoing occupation and annexation on the health of Palestinians:

## **1) Restrictions on freedom of movement**

While movement is promoted for settlers through preferential road and supporting infrastructure, it is obstructed for Palestinians, including for ambulances, mobile clinics, patients and health-workers. Journeys to homes, schools, workplaces and relatives are lengthened and prevented, affecting health, education, livelihoods and family life.

## **2) Loss of property, land and other resources**

Further extensive loss of privately-owned Palestinian land and natural resources to undermine Palestine's agricultural, small industry, extractive and other commercial sectors. Less food to be produced, incomes to continue to fall, aid dependency to increase. Access to water, already discriminatorily controlled by Israel, to worsen for Palestinian communities.

## **3) Settler attacks, detention of children and demolitions**

Already perpetrating [a surge in attacks](#) with impunity, settlers will be emboldened to carry out yet more. The attacks cause loss of life, injuries, damage to crops, orchards, homes and vehicles, with self-evident impact on health and well-being. Abusive and illegal arrests and detentions of Palestinian children already occur primarily [adjacent to settlements](#), causing harm to mental health, schooling and family income. Demolitions of Palestinian homes and structures to increase, fuelling an even more hostile environment and probable expulsion of Palestinians from their homes and lands.

## **4) Exacerbated risks to vulnerable groups**

Worsening socio-economic circumstances to hit disadvantaged groups hardest. Bedouin communities and others in Area C, people with disabilities (through access to education,

employment, essential services etc), breastfeeding mothers and young children to suffer worsening rates of malnutrition. Mental health to deteriorate, risking higher rates of attempted and successful suicides, and more domestic abuse. MAP and its partners will continue to work alongside these made-vulnerable Palestinian communities and groups, striving to alleviate the worsening impacts of occupation and annexation, while also calling for the political drivers of such suffering to be condemned and addressed.

## **5) Threats to dignity**

Systematic inequality and loss of dignity alongside chronic impunity for historical and ongoing injustices to be ever more tangible, causing daily and accumulative indignity for Palestinians. As stated by the [UN experts above](#):

*"The morning after annexation would be the crystallisation of an already unjust reality: two peoples living in the same space, ruled by the same state, but with profoundly unequal rights. This is a vision of a 21st century apartheid."*

MAP is deeply concerned by the scale of the potential further harm to Palestinians' health and well-being, which relentless occupation and annexation will cause. The UK government and the entire international community must be resolute in opposing the annexation agenda of the Israeli government and in supporting Palestinians' right to health and well-being, as well as to the most basic principles of international law.