

RESPONSE TO 'WE BELIEVE IN ISRAEL' ATTACKS ON PSC

The organisation We Believe in Israel has launched a [disinformation campaign](#) against the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, contacting MPs in an attempt to scare them from meeting with their constituents as part of the National Lobby Day for Palestine.

This is an obvious attempt to prevent discussion around Palestine, and censure criticism of Israeli policies through demonstrably false claims, including attempts to conflate legitimate criticism of the laws and policies of Israel with anti-Semitism.

Claim 1: “There is no need to discuss “Stopping Annexation” because any plans Israel had to extend sovereignty to parts of the West Bank have been parked as a collateral effect of the very welcome Abraham Accords peace deals between Israel and Arab countries (UAE, Bahrain and Sudan).”

Just days after the Abraham Accords were signed, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued a statement insisting that annexation will go ahead, and that any delay is only temporary.

“There is no change to my plan to extend sovereignty, our sovereignty in Judea and Samaria (the Biblical name for Palestine)”. - [Benjamin Netanyahu](#)

In addition to threats of formal de-jure annexation, it is crucial to look at the de-facto reality of annexation happening rapidly on the ground. UN Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory, Professor Michael Lynk, issued a [report](#) in October which stated:

“While formal annexation plans appear to have been delayed for the time being, **it is imperative to stress that the de facto annexation of Palestinian territory by Israel is ongoing and has intensified in 2020**, most notably through illegal settlement expansion.

In 2020 alone, Israel has approved or advanced more than 12,150 settlement homes, making it the single highest rate on record since 2012, when such figures started to be recorded by Peace Now. More than 5,000 of these housing units were approved in mid-October alone.

Settlements and settlement construction are illegal under international law and are one of the major obstacles to peace. Concurrently, demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures have increased significantly over the past year. In 2020 alone, more than 560 structures have been destroyed, leading to the displacement of 747 Palestinians. **The Special Rapporteur stresses that, while it was important to counter the formal Israeli annexation plans, it is also imperative to counter all measures on the ground that amount to de facto annexation, which Israel advances in the plain sight of the international community and which lead to serious breaches of the human rights of Palestinians on a daily basis.”**

Amnesty International UK have this week published [The Art of the Steal - Israel's Slow Motion Annexation](#), which details how annexation of Palestinian land is happening right now. Amnesty International UK highlights that:

- The Abraham Accords have done nothing to bring Palestinians closer to peace and justice.
- Israel did not abandon annexation plans following the UAE-Israel deal. Just a few days after the deal was announced, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu himself was on Israeli radio claiming that annexation was not off the table, but [merely temporarily suspended](#).
- In October 2020, only a few weeks after the Abraham accords, the Israeli government approved close to [5,000 new settlement homes](#). On 15 November 2020, the Israeli authorities announced new plans to construct 1,200 additional settlement homes in the next few months.

Israeli plans of formal annexation are on temporary hold, but de facto annexation is moving ahead at an alarming rate. De facto annexation is equally illegal under international law as de jure annexation, and requires the same response from the UK. It is entirely legitimate for constituents to want to raise this issue with their MP.

Claim 2: It is racist to argue that Israel is committing the crime of apartheid.

There have been discussions over the years as to whether Israel's treatment of Palestinians constitutes the crime of Apartheid as defined by the 1973 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, which was later codified into law by the Rome Statute that established the International Criminal Court.

An ever growing number of legal experts and scholars are reaching the conclusion that Israeli policies, vis-à-vis Palestinians, do indeed meet the legal definition of the crime of apartheid under international law. This includes two UN Special Rapporteurs on human rights in the Palestinian Territory, a special South African Law Commission that dispatched a fact-finding mission to Palestine, and numerous other mainstream and established human rights organisations.

In a [detailed and meticulous report](#) commissioned by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and submitted to the UN, was the unambiguous conclusion that:

“This report establishes, on the basis of scholarly inquiry and overwhelming evidence, that Israel is guilty of the crime of apartheid.” (p53 of the report)

The authors of the report were former UN Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory, Professor Richard Falk, and legal expert Professor Virginia Tilley.

Richard Falk (LLB, Yale University; SJD, Harvard University) is currently Research Fellow at University of California and Professor of International Law and Practice Emeritus at

Princeton University. Falk is author or editor of some 60 books and hundreds of articles on international human rights law, environmental justice, and other fields concerning human rights and international relations.

Virginia Tilley (MA and PhD, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and MA in Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University) is Professor of Political Science at Southern Illinois University. From 2006 to 2011, she served as Chief Research Specialist in the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa, and from 2007 to 2010 led the Council's Middle East Project, which undertook a two-year study of apartheid in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The use of the word “apartheid” is based on well founded legal arguments. The question of whether the State of Israel is constituted as an apartheid regime springs from the same body of international human rights law and principles that rejects anti-Semitism: that is, the prohibition of racial discrimination. No State is immune from the norms and rules enshrined in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which must be applied impartially.

Individuals may, or may not be persuaded by the legal arguments that Israel is an apartheid state. But it is entirely legitimate for those arguments to be made and heard.

The British Trades Union Congress (TUC) [passed a motion](#) this year referring to Israeli annexation of Palestinian land as “another significant step in the creation of a system of apartheid.”

PSC is committed to fighting all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism, a position entirely at one with campaigning for Palestinian rights. It is utterly unacceptable for organisations – such as We Believe in Israel – to purposefully conflate criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism. Such actions undermine genuine efforts to combat anti-Semitism, and are a dangerous example of efforts to suppress human rights advocates and the ability for Palestinians to voice their experiences living under Israeli occupation.