

BRIEFING

The official interconnection between Israel's annexation of Palestinian land, and the criminalization of Palestinian civil Society

Or

The Israeli government's secret plan to annex more Palestinian land in Area C

[Link to the official full public report](#) [in Hebrew]

[Annex below - Non-Official Translation of Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendation](#)

Developments

- In early January, an Israeli Ministry of Intelligence report dated 7th July 2021 entitled "The Palestinian Battle for Area C - Creating a Security Situation on the Ground, Description and Significance" was leaked.
- It was then publicly published later in January 2022, in view of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee. The report was the backbone of the Committee meeting.
- The report gives a window into the government's plan to continue the takeover of Palestinian land and progressive ethnic cleansing of the West Bank. The strategy includes criminalizing Palestinian civil society working for steadfastness on the land, as well as sabotaging international financial and material support to Palestinian presence and projects.
- Several Policy recommendations from this report are evidently being implemented by the Israeli government as part of their attempt to implement the annexation of the West Bank and the reengineering of Palestinian community.

What the Report Says

- The report summarizes the Israeli regime's long-term intention to illegally annex and develop Area C for the Israeli State interests exclusively.

"In the absence of a decision on the future of Area C, we recommend that the security departments act to preserve freedom of action in a broader perspective that includes not only activities to enforce the current situation, but also sets more ambitious active goals related to the design in this area of national security and civilian reality that will benefit Israel and its national interests in any future arrangement". (Point 65.)

- The report includes the continuation of a strategy to criminalize Palestinian civil society and sabotaging international efforts to support Palestinian presence and projects in Area

“As part of the overall move to take the initiative, a comprehensive plan must be formulated for a campaign based on offensive nature in all dimensions of the campaign in which the Palestinians challenge Israel (...) The plan must include components such as: Legal campaign, planning campaign, international campaign, communications campaign, thwarting funding (private and political), humanitarian effort.” (point 67.)

- The Report recommends to transfer sovereignty of the whole of Area C to Israeli Bodies and remove any Palestinian agency on this occupied area, and including by redirecting foreign aid funding to Israeli authorities

“The existence of this plan will illustrate the responsibility of the State of Israel for the region, will reduce the PA's influence in the region, and will remove from Israel accusations of discrimination and humanitarian neglect. It is possible that in this way it will be possible to direct some of the foreign funding that is currently flowing to the PA to the needs of the program.” (Point 69.)

Implications

- Israel is presenting itself as serving both “arab and jewish” living there. Just like in the case of East Jerusalem annexation and control, with the population registry and permit regime, Israel is presenting as “gestures’ and good for Palestinians, what is in reality a complete denial of Palestinian agency, and right to decide for ourselves.
- One cannot disconnect the criminalization and international smearing and attacks against Palestinian civil society, and the annexation and further colonization of the West Bank.
- Israel [notably through the COGAT] has long tried to attract and convince the international donors to go through its planning and instruments, without success.
- Reports from the discussion between Germany and Israel, confirm that there will be increased efforts to divert funding from Palestinian civil society, and to Israel. This is a very significant risk.

Recommendations for action

In light of this brazen Israeli strategy to annex and steal more land in Area C, third party actors must take bold steps to prevent this from happening. Including but not limited to;

- 1) Public support for the 6 Organizations including continuation of funding and support.
- 2) Putting pressure on Israeli through the implementation of Human Rights protection tools that include and not limited to: 1) Diplomatic pressure, 2) The freezing of economic and scientific cooperation agreements with Israel until the decision is rescinded and Human rights are respected, 3) Applying sanctions and activation of prosecution mechanisms on individuals and entities in the Israeli government and Army that are responsible for Human Rights violations.

ANNEX – NON-OFFICIAL TRANSLATION OF THE REPORT

[Report - Ministry of Intelligence](#)

7th July 2021

The Palestinian Battle for Area C - Creating a Security Situation on the Ground, Description and Significance

[...]

(page 54)

Chapter 7 – Summary and Recommendations

The overall plan for the initiative campaign

65. The future of Area C stands at the core of the political controversy in Israel, at the heart of the national struggle between Israel and the Palestinians, and it is an important component in the competition of agendas regionally and internationally. In the current situation, it is difficult to draw up a clear policy that reflects Israel's goals in the region. Thus, at this stage, Israel is engaged in preserving the status quo. In our view, even without a deliberate Palestinian effort, the reality on the ground in the years since the Oslo accords have actually led to the erosion of the status quo. When Israel, too, during this period took significant strategic steps: Freezing the expansion of Jewish settlement, the construction of the Israeli West Bank barrier, and the Jerusalem Envelope and other developments in the area. On the other hand, the Palestinian campaign for the design of the space arose. In the absence of a decision on the future of Area C, we recommend that the security departments act to preserve freedom of action in a broader perspective that includes not only activities to enforce the current situation, but also sets more ambitious active goals related to the design in this area of national security and civilian reality that will benefit Israel and its national interests in any future arrangement.

66. The Palestinian campaign on Area C is an organized state effort led by the PA and with significant backing by foreign governments. It is a multi-dimensional effort that includes international, legal, communication, budgeting and financing, and the physical dimension, in which a long line of construction and agricultural projects are being promoted aggressively and extensively. We recommend that the Israeli government initiates a counter-campaign to thwart the moves of the rival system, due to its responsibility for Area C by virtue of the Oslo Accords, this campaign will aim to halt the continued takeover, erode the Palestinian achievements so far

"and restore the status quo." Illustrating the price of unilateral violations will establish rules of action and take away practical military and civilian tools from the rival campaign.

67. As part of the overall move to take the initiative, a comprehensive plan must be formulated for a campaign based on offensive nature in all dimensions of the campaign in which the Palestinians challenge Israel. In this view, the "defensive" efforts (such as efforts to increase enforcement, which is central to the current policy) will be only one tool in a collection of relevant procedures. The plan must include components such as: Legal campaign, planning campaign, international campaign, communications campaign, thwarting funding (private and political), humanitarian effort.

68. The apparent complexity of this type of campaign and the few successes in dealing with the threat so far further bring to attention that there is no power of one body and in particular a body of a military nature (Pakmaz) or a civilian body with limited capabilities and powers (COGAT) lead the efforts against the phenomenon. We believe that the national security system should expand the notion of the campaign in Area C as part of a comprehensive response given to the Palestinians in routine and emergency situations, from a holistic, resource-oriented, and operationalistic vision.

69. In addition, as part of an initiative policy, we recommend that the State of Israel lay down its own alternative plan for the long-term development of Area C, which will be formulated in accordance with the national objectives of the State of Israel. The plan will provide an appropriate and comprehensive response to the needs of all the populations living in this area (Arab and Jewish) and will include development in the areas of infrastructure, transportation, education, environment, etc. The existence of this plan will illustrate the responsibility of the State of Israel for the region, will reduce the PA's influence in the region, and will remove from Israel accusations of discrimination and humanitarian neglect. It is possible that in this way it will be possible to direct some of the foreign funding that is currently flowing to the PA to the needs of the program.

70. However, the complexities associated with strengthening the civilian aspects of the campaign, which go far beyond the influence of the national security system, require that this be led up by a civilian political front in cooperation with the national security systems. We, therefore, recommend marking a dedicated budget for the campaign, giving it a binding status in government decisions, and establishing an inter-ministerial team on the subject. The team must include representatives from the Ministries of Finance, Defense, Justice, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs, Transportation, Infrastructure, Economy, Environment, and the Ministry of Strategic Affairs. It is also true that given the decision to hold the campaign, a clear order of priorities will be defined (and updated from time to time as part of a situation assessment), outlining principles for planning the efforts.

71. Given the decision on the campaign, the government will set up a dedicated staff with extensive authority that will be entrusted with providing continuous updates and concentrating all campaign efforts through plan preparation, dedicated budget management, broad

coordination between ministries and authorities, leading staff between monitoring and reporting agencies. It should be emphasized that this function will be parallel to that already established by the legislature.

72. It is correct to conduct this campaign in an intelligence-based manner, for which purpose one of the intelligence organizations (or a designated body in cooperation with all the intelligence organizations) must be given responsibility for providing the intelligence required for: Formulation of strategic plans, providing early warning and thwarting the moves of the rival campaign, in a way that allows us to be one step ahead of the enemy's steps in the field, monitoring funding channels, incriminating and exposing the connections of individuals and organizations with terrorist and illegal activity, and providing intelligence required for communication and intelligence campaign.

73. The Palestinian plan is intended as a response, not only for the activities of the State of Israel but also for dealing on the ground with the efforts of organizations and private bodies engaged in the design of space from below as per the agendas they adopt. In response to this challenge, we recommend that activities be encouraged in the program to encourage the participation of civil bodies and private organizations. Since these are already operating in the space voluntarily, they have accumulated knowledge and expertise in gathering intelligence, communication, blocking funding, a legal campaign, and field supervision. Connecting them to the coordinated effort, while creating coordination and synchronization between them and guiding them to take part in the design of the space, legally, while defining clear demarcation boundaries in light of goals set by the state. To this end, it is appropriate to consider creating a support mechanism, setting up forums, tools for sharing information and knowledge.

74. At this point, Israel is conducting an enforcement effort against the Palestinians "with symmetrical tools" (squatter versus inspector). Action in this way does not reflect the advantages of the State of Israel such as intelligence superiority, organizational and resource capability, and especially the ability to make use of advanced technological tools. We recommend that as part of the overall responsibility for the management of the campaign, relevant resources be allocated to the construction and implementation in the field of the technological response relevant to the needs of the campaign.

Principles of the recommended plan

75. There is an urgent need to strengthen the "leg" of enforcement while providing authorities and resources to the relevant bodies, including strengthening the bodies of the Manahaz, Pakmaz, the Police, the supervisory systems of the Ministries of Infrastructure, Agriculture, and the Environment, the legal advisory system. This, while decentralizing supervisory powers and granting additional enforcement powers to the military. In doing so, the focus should already be on providing an urgent response to the following issues:

1. Creating simplifying tools and providing effective approvals for enforcement in hospitals, providing a solution to enforcement against "assisting the offense" - consumers of agricultural produce, consumers of stone from the illegal quarries. Expansion of a

system of regulations/supervision that allows for the reduction of transportation of goods and confiscation of tools, the aggravation of the punishment for environmental offenses, the enforcement of the Road Inspection Law, the extension of the validity of an order for the removal of new buildings.

2. Creating a mechanism for effective enforcement and treatment of invaders to restricted areas designated for the army (since the appearance on the site of clusters of small residents causes neglect by the army of vast areas because it can not be used for training purposes).

76. Providing the security establishment with clear enforcement missions that are consistent with government policy, priorities for enforcement action, and measurable benchmarks. With respect to response priorities, analysis of trends on the ground so far indicates enforcement efforts should concentrate on the following priorities:

1. Enforcement in areas located near major traffic arteries with an emphasis on the Trans Samaria Highway [Highway 5 and 505], the Trans Judea Road [Road 35] Road 60, Road 1 Jerusalem - Dead Sea up to the intersection with Road 90;
2. Enforcement in the Jordan Valley, particularly in areas located near Road 90, with an emphasis on the Jiftlik Argaman area and/or responses to agricultural takeovers;
3. Areas between [Israeli] communities inside [settlement] blocs, areas between [settlement] blocs and areas between [settlement] blocs and Jerusalem (Gush Etzion, the Shilo bloc, the east Binyamin settlements);
4. The Seam Zone and crossings in general, particularly the Ari'el area, the southern area and the South Hebron Hills settlements.
5. Enforcement in areas with security significance (control, infrastructure, intelligence and communication) and/or in areas with scenic/historical value and enforcement in firing zones.

77. The [Palestinian] takeover of Area C is a deliberate effort with clear security elements, actively created by the rival system. Because of this, we recommend that Israel should also integrate into this battle [over Area C] some of the same intelligence tools which are used in the battle against terror. This should include an effort to cut off course of funding from foreign government and private donors that fuel the battle [over Area C], by incriminating the individuals and organizations who enjoy foreign funding, tarnishing their reputation, and exposing their connections to terrorist elements.

78. A plan for reshaping the area [Area C] by building a road system (similarly to the new bypass road system built after Oslo). The plan would have to balance reshaping needs against the development of Jewish and Arab security and transportation needs. Importantly, it is advisable for the plan to incorporate additional infrastructure elements such as trains, tunnels, etc.

79. Given the focus on this issue by the Palestinians, as well as European officials (as seen, in part, in the Khan al-Akhmar case), we recommend that the plan include an element addressing regularization of Bedouin settlement in Area C to avoid having the Palestinian Authority take the Bedouin community under its wings and to provide the Bedouin community with a suitable solution that is consistent with Israeli policy.

80. The Jordan Valley is emerging as a region that retains significant potential for reshaping. Note that the Abraham Accords laid the groundwork for economic connections between Israel and Gulf countries via Jordan. Developing the Jordan Valley as the “eastern gateway” for economic connections between the Arab east and Israel and the Palestinian Authority could serve the interests of the various parties and legitimize Israeli development in the Jordan Valley.

81. Action should be taken to reduce illegal activities on the ground by Palestinian security forces advancing the campaign’s objectives using secret methods, particularly reducing their involvement in the Civil Administration (vis-à-vis low-ranking officials, in keeping with the recommendations of the State Comptroller report from August 2020).

82. Palestinian maneuvers deliberately ignore the divisions between Areas A, B and C, and therefore, takeovers in Area C are considered a logical progression of “permitted” acts in Areas A and B. Therefore, we recommend that all Israeli action be planned through a prism that includes monitoring of (and responding to) Palestinian activities in Areas A and B, with a focus on locales with proximity to and potential future security implications for Area C.

83. Palestinian campaign efforts include public advocacy. We recommend the State of Israel lead a public advocacy campaign targeted both at western donors (focusing on the illegal nature of Palestinian activity) and the local population (illustrating the futility of civilians mobilizing for a Palestinian Authority campaign that does not serve them).