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Trump‘s piece plan

Trump’s ‘deal of the century’ offers Palestinians only scattered islets of land. It will bring everything but peace to the region

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The plan for peace between Israelis and Palestinians – presented on Tuesday by US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington – was actually considered long dead. Its announcement had been delayed too many times and, above all, the Palestinian leadership hadn’t been involved in developing it. Accordingly, they had announced in advance that they would reject it. Since then, the plan has been considered a kind campaign boost by ‘Donald’ for ‘Bibi’, as the two heads of state affectionately called each other during the presentation.

The Israeli prime minister has been officially charged with fraud and corruption in Israel in three cases since Tuesday. He’s therefore struggling not only for political survival in the elections scheduled for 2 March 2020, but also for a majority in parliament which, in the event that the charges are confirmed in court, would grant him immunity and guarantee that he goes free.

However, since Tuesday we know that the plan is far from dead but rather in the process of developing a dangerous life of its own. Notably, with America’s blessing, Benjamin Netanyahu has announced the annexation of not only the Israeli-occupied Jordan Valley, but all Israeli settlements that were built in occupied Palestinian territory illegally according to international law. Since his greatest political rival, Benny Gantz, also supports the American plan, the ‘peace plan’ is now taking on a dynamic that will bring anything but peace to the region.

The ‘peace plan’ ignores international

law

The proposed annexation would mean the unilateral implementation of parts of the American plan, which allows for the status quo to become more or less permanent. Israel will be permitted to annex all settlements as well as the Jordan Valley. The already annexed East Jerusalem would also fall under the total jurisdiction of Israel. It would control all external borders and airspace and continue to use the army for 'security purposes' across the entire territory of the future Palestinian state. For the Palestinians, such a scenario would preclude any feeling of independence and self-determination.

What do the Palestinians get? In fact, they would be closer than ever to having a state of their own, recognised by Israel and the US. The Americans also envisage a massive investment program of over USD 50bn that would help set up a future Palestinian state. However, this state would amount to a patchwork of territories connected by a network of bridges and tunnels. Fundamental sovereign rights would be limited and the Palestinians would have to forego substantial, internationally guaranteed claims in East Jerusalem and the right of their refugees to return.

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Trump's 'peace plan' ignores international law and all peace initiatives that were mutually negotiated in the past. For the Palestinians, its creation, presentation and forced implementation represent a humiliation. And they reacted accordingly, since they firmly opposed the plan and called on the international community to take a stand. The plan is forcing the Palestinian leadership into a corner. To a frustrated Palestinian society, the leadership must present some form of capacity to act; if not, the situation could turn violent.

Besides forcefully rejecting the American plan, they could finally hold elections, which were announced long ago but have repeatedly been postponed. A new leadership with new legitimacy and international support – beyond that of the US – could perhaps enter into genuine peace talks with Israel.

A good deal for Netanyahu

At any rate, one positive side effect of the situation is that, for the first time in recent memory, all Palestinian factions met – inluding Hamas –

to follow the release of the plan and discuss their reaction. The reconciliation of the hostile groups in the West Bank and Gaza is seen as an important first step in reaching Palestinian unity, which would lay the foundation for elections and serious peace negotiations with Israel.

A sustainable peace solution must try to take into account the needs of all people between the Jordan and the Mediterranean. The danger of Trump's plan is that now every Israeli government will always use it as the basis for negotiations, which is unacceptable from the Palestinian perspective. The unilateral implementation of parts of the plan, such as the annexation of the settlements and the Jordan Valley, poses even more serious risks. Many experts in Israel also see it that way.

Amos Yadlin, a security expert and former head of Israeli military intelligence, warns that this policy would lead to a one-state reality between the Jordan and the Mediterranean and would force Israel to choose between democracy and the Jewish state. The annexation plans might also jeopardise the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan.

The Israeli left has long sounded alarm with regards to this scenario. It's increasingly using the controversial term 'apartheid state'. The Israeli right seems to have no problem with that. Israel's Prime Minister indicated that he had not yet legally implemented the annexation only because the UN Security Council would have threatened Israel with sanctions. Now that he has a guarantee from the Americans that they will block such a development, Israel needs to take advantage of this 'historical opportunity'. What Donald Trump called the 'deal of the century' might just be a good plan for Netanyahu – but by no means for the Palestinians, for Israel or for peace in the region.



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