

UK Jewish Students and Youth Movement Oppose “Unilateral Annexation of West Bank”

Staying silent will raise 'serious questions regarding the relevance of the Board'

By [Lee Harpin](#)

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More than 500 UK Jewish students and youth movement members have put their names to a letter urging the Board of Deputies to speak out against what they claim are the Israeli government's plans for the “unilateral annexation of the West Bank”.

The letter, sent to the Board's honorary officers, warns that the organisation's historical support for a negotiated two-state solution with the Palestinians will be “impossible to achieve” if Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu goes ahead with the proposed annexation of a portion of the West Bank.

It goes on that the Board's “relevance” to the younger generation will be questioned if it does not speak out.

Among those supporting the letter – whose signatories say they are “a true friend to Israel” and in favour of a “Jewish and democratic state” – are J-soc members from many universities and youth movements including Habomim Dror, FZY, LJY-Netzer and Noam.

And with many signatories listing their shul affiliation, it is evident the campaign has attracted support from young United Synagogue members.

The Board's under-35 representative Noah Libson is among the signatories – alongside senior figures from Yachad and the Jewish Labour Movement.

Jack Lubner, one of the group behind the letter, told the *JC* it was initiated “because we were angry and worried about annexation and wanted the communal organisations to take a stance.”

A video circulating online to promote the campaign under the headline We Need To Talk features brief statements from supporters who say annexation would be “a violation of international law” and would risk Israel becoming “undemocratic.”

Mr Lubner, the JLM's youth and students officer, added:

“The huge response to this campaign clearly shows that young British Jews are in consensus when it comes to annexation.

“We want the Board of Deputies and other communal organisations to listen to our concerns and represent them.”

The letter claims annexation would lead to the collapse of security co-ordination with the Palestinian Authority and Jordan and highlights statements from “former Israeli generals of Shin Bet, police and Mossad” warning that “this unilateral action is a security nightmare for Israel”.

It adds that the campaign is “not about rejecting Israel and Zionism but defending a vision of them which does not compromise our broader belief in democracy and equality.

“Serious questions regarding the relevance of the Board of Deputies for our generation,” would be raised if it did not speak out.

Mr Lubner also told the *JC*: “Our community has a deep and strong relationship to Israel, based on our shared Jewish values of peace and justice.

“Being a good friend to Israel means speaking up when these values are under threat, so that we can strengthen our only Jewish state. None of us can afford to keep quiet in the face of annexation, which will endanger Israel as a secure, Jewish, democratic state.”

Last week, Board president Marie van der Zyl spoke of the UK debate around Israeli government actions, highlighting her concern “that the Jewish community stays together as a community at what is clearly a divisive time”.

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