

Israel Awaits US Authorization to Annex West Bank

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Since the beginning of June, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has threatened to annex the West Bank, even calling on the armed forces to prepare for an invasion. Netanyahu's plan, he said, was to annex the territory of the West Bank partly, first annexing Jewish settlements in the region and then the entire Jordan Valley, totaling a 30% takeover of the West Bank. The project envisaged the beginning of Israel's operations on July 1, fulfilling the date set in the "Deal of the Century" – agreement proposed by Washington to Tel Aviv to end the conflict in Palestine with an Israeli regional hegemony. However, as we can see, the annexation did not happen.

Since the beginning of the Israeli project, Netanyahu has received a lot of criticism from the most diverse countries around the world. In the Middle East, Jordan and Saudi Arabia interceded trying to stop the annexation plans, saying it would cause terrible and unprecedented damage to the peace of the region. In Europe, the Belgian Parliament has formally asked the European Union to impose sanctions on Israel, should the annexation occur. In addition, a document with the signatures of more than 1,000 parliamentarians from 25 different European countries was published requesting the same. In the UK, Prime Minister Boris Johnson issued an alert to Israel, classifying the annexation as "illegal". In contrast, Mike Pompeo, Secretary of State for the Trump administration, said that the decision on the annexation rests solely with Israel, ignoring the views of the international society.

Before July 1, the scenario showed a somewhat uncomfortable situation for Israel. The country saw itself alone in its annexation project, relying exclusively on American support. For its part, Washington is dealing with a devastating pandemic and a serious political, social and economic crisis. The worst-case scenario for the US now would be the involvement in another war. If Israel continued with its plans, it could trigger a situation of intense regional conflict, where the lack of external support could lead to a serious defeat for the Zionist State.

Perhaps all these factors were taken into account so that, at the end of June, Israel's defense minister, Benny Gantz, would act in opposition to Netanyahu, saying that the July 1 date was not "sacred", indicating that there could be changes in the plan and a possible delay in annexation. Gantz points out that July 1 was something like an estimate and that the date could be changed. So, considering that the annexation did not happen yesterday, Israel would not be renouncing the attack, but planning to invade on another, unknown date, raising more tensions and concerns.

Some experts suggest that Israel has not yet received a real authorization to carry out the operation. Despite public pronouncements in favor of Tel Aviv, the White House has not

given a real carte blanche for the annexation to take place. The act would be the sole responsibility of the Israeli government, which would have to deal not only with its military consequences (reactions from the Palestinians and Iranian reprisals), but also with its legal and economic ones, facing severe sanctions from several countries. So, it is simple to understand that, without this final carte blanche from Washington, Israel does not want to act alone.

Anyway, the reactions have already started. Multitudes of Palestinians yesterday occupied the West Bank territory that was planned to be annexed. The aim was to form a great barrier against the Israeli army through a mass protest. Even though the operation has not been carried out, the Israeli armed forces can see a small harbinger of the strong resistance they will face with the Palestinians. In fact, it is impossible to carry out the annexation without the cost of many lives, increasing the delicacy of the case.

While Tel Aviv awaits a carte blanche, Palestinians are mobilizing in demonstrations and the world is drawing up sanctions against Israel, there is no alternative to Netanyahu but to postpone his plan secretly. The new date indicated for the annexation will remain a state secret among the Israeli military – if there really is a date. In the meantime, a question remains: will the American carte blanche really come? If not, will Israel intervene in the same way, acting sovereignly and unilaterally, or will it retreat and permanently cancel the annexation? Certainly, the second decision would be the most desirable for the peace in the Middle East, but the scenario is full of uncertainties and it is impossible to predict what the next steps will be.

If Washington's carte blanche happens, it is likely that it will not go public, just as it is unlikely that the Israeli armed forces will reveal the day of the invasion in advance, avoiding further protests like those that took over the West Bank this week. Soon, from all points of view, tensions will continue, and the conflict will not end anytime soon.

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