

MEDIA STATEMENT

Over 250 prominent South Africans, including Former President Kgalema Motlanthe, endorse the [Global South Statement](#) call to stop Netanyahu and Trump's annexation scheme.

Press Briefing: Thursday 18 June, 11am

Other prominent signatories include: S'bu Zikode (President: Abahlali baseMjondolo), Makoma Lekalakala (Environmental Activist), Zak Yacoob (Retired Judge of SA Constitutional Court), Pregs Govender (Former Commissioner at SA Human Rights Commission, Former MP), Navi Pillay (Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights), Leigh-Ann Naidoo (Social activist, Olympic Athlete), Zwelinzima Vavi (General Secretary: South African Federation of Trade Unions) and Irvin Jim (General Secretary: National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa) and Oscar Monteiro (Former Mozambican Minister), amongst many others.

In recent weeks, the world has demonstrated its solidarity with people in the United States of America (USA) who are expressing their outrage at systemic racism and the brutal killing of black people by the police in the USA. The rallying call 'Black Lives Matter' has drawn hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets across the world in the midst of a pandemic in which people are supposed to be physically distancing. As a result of this mass mobilisation, a tipping point in the struggle for equality in the USA has been reached. At the same time, growing numbers of South Africans have expressed shock and outrage at the many instances of police brutality at home, including, most recently, the murder of Collins Khosa, Sibusiso Amos, Ntando Elias Sigasa, Adane Emmanuel and others.

However, the same systemic violence against Palestinians has consistently been overlooked. According to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, "[A] few days after the savage killing of George Floyd, on Saturday morning, in Jerusalem's Old City, Eyad Hallaq, a 32-year-old autistic man, was on his way to the Elwyn Center for disabled people. Border Police officers claimed they believed he was holding a gun – there was none – and when they called out for him to stop, he started running. The penalty was death. The Border Police, the most brutal of all units, knows no other way to overpower a fleeing autistic Palestinian except to execute him. The cowardly Border Police officers fired some 10 bullets into Hallaq as he fled, until he died. That's how they always act. That's what they've been trained to do". Eyad is one of many innocent Palestinians who have been brutally killed by Israeli forces, but his murder and those of thousands of other Palestinians have been met with deafening silence.

It is time for the international community to demonstrate that it is not oblivious to the suffering of Palestinians, who have been the main victims of Israel's systemic racism and injustices for decades, and whose oppression is about to be further intensified.

On 1 July, Benjamin Netanyahu's government is threatening that Israel will, in flagrant violation of international law, commence the annexation of a large part of Palestinian territory in the West Bank – with the support of the Trump administration and the complicity of the European Union

(EU). For 72 years, Israel has systematically undermined international law with impunity through the theft, colonization and annexation of Palestinian property and territory both de jure, as with East Jerusalem in 1967 and the Syrian Golan Heights in 1982, and de facto through a matrix of illegal settlements, settlement infrastructure and the Apartheid wall in the West Bank.

This planned annexation of 30% of the West Bank and the Jordan Valley will culminate years of gradual theft and occupation through the appropriation of land, the forcible displacement of the Palestinian population and the settling of Israelis in the occupied territories. The continued oppression of Palestinians has been facilitated by the imposition of an apartheid regime of racial discrimination, segregation and territorial expansion that is enshrined in Israel's domestic law.

Palestinian civil society unions, organizations, and human rights and advocacy groups, assert that the “looming annexation is a political litmus test for the international community and for its ability to uphold international law”. This is expressed in a recent statement [“Palestinian Civil Society Calls for Effective Measures by all States to Stop Israel’s Illegal Annexation of the Occupied West Bank and Grave Violations of Human Rights”](#). In response to this call, the South African Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (SA BDS) Coalition Statement has attracted the endorsements of more than 250 prominent South Africans, based on the one prepared by the Palestinian civil society organisations. In addition, whilst initially endorsements were collected from leaders in South Africa, endorsements have also started to come in from the rest of the continent. We are honoured to include the first few names of other African leaders here too. The [Statement](#) calls on the South African government to spearhead a campaign in the United Nations (UN) to impose countermeasures and sanctions against Israel for its violations of fundamental principles of international law, its denial of the Palestinians rights to self-determination and its forceful and violent annexation of Palestinian territory.

The endorsers include retired and current members of the judiciary, the Deputy Speaker of National Assembly, religious leaders, former and current university vice chancellors, former cabinet ministers, veterans of the liberation struggle, retired military generals including a former commander of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), senior academics, social activists, human rights defenders, community leaders, members of the business community, arts and culture activists, journalists, and ex-political prisoners. The Statement calls on the South African government and the African Union, of which President Cyril Ramaphosa is currently Chair, to expend their full and untiring effort to ensure that African governments fulfil their obligations under international law and to demonstrate their support for justice, human rights and Palestinian liberation by:

- *Ensuring the adoption of a resolution at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) that renews the call for, and provides the means to implement, targeted sanctions on Israel, including a boycott on all products from the illegal settlements, suspension of trade agreements with Israel, and a military embargo, as countermeasures to halt its annexation of occupied Palestinian territory and its other egregious violations of international law - similar to the measures repeatedly adopted by the UNGA and the UN Security Council in against Apartheid South Africa, labelling apartheid a crime against humankind and a serious threat to international peace and security.*
- *Campaigning for the activation of the UN Special Committee on Apartheid to address Israeli policies over the indigenous people of Palestine.*

- *Guaranteeing the effectiveness and regular updating of the UN database of companies involved in business with Israel's illegal settlement enterprise.*
- *Supporting the International Criminal Court's probe into Israel's war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.*

As South Africans who have a long and glorious history of struggle for national liberation, freedom and democracy, and against colonialism and apartheid, we raise our voices and our fists in deep solidarity with the Palestinian people in their quest for liberation and self-determination, a people who have suffered for more than seven decades with apartheid, occupation and colonization as the world watched and allowed the violations of international law and human rights. We, the undersigned, together with prominent leaders in the Global South, will not allow Israel, in partnership with the Trump regime, to triumph against justice and international law. At a time when the world is highlighting racism and the legacy of slavery and colonialism, when colonial icons are being pulled down by the actions of citizens 'gatvol' with a world order that tolerates injustice against the poor and vulnerable, we will tirelessly pursue the struggle of the Palestinian people for their freedom from racism, occupation, colonialism, and apartheid. Theirs is a struggle, together with that of other oppressed groups such as Black people in the USA, whose character defines the ethics and morality of our time. We will be on the right side of that equation!

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