

[timesofisrael.com](https://www.timesofisrael.com)

Settlers and Palestinians unite in opposition to annexation

By Michael Blum 6 July 2020, 7:46 pm 5 Edit

5-6 minutes

AFP — Some Israeli settlers agree with their Palestinian neighbors in the West Bank that the Jewish state's plan to annex part of the territory would undermine their years-long reconciliation efforts.

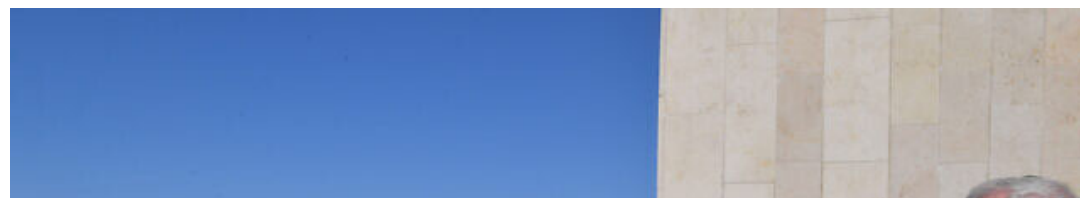
Palestinian Khaled Abu Awwad and Israeli rabbi Shaul Judelman live just a few miles away from each other in the southern West Bank, the former in Bethlehem and the latter in Tekoa, a settlement considered illegal by the international community.

The two are the joint directors of Shorashim-Judur, or Roots in Hebrew and Arabic, a movement founded in 2014 to establish dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians sharing the West Bank, which has been controlled by Israel since 1967.

[Get The Times of Israel's Daily Edition by email and never miss our top stories Free Sign Up](#)

US President Donald Trump's controversial peace plan paves the way for Israel to annex parts of the West Bank, including all Jewish settlements.

In a statement this week, Roots said unilateral annexation would constitute an "aggression" that would "stand in opposition to the principle of mutual respect," which is "the foundation for advancing peace and security."





Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, left, tours the Etzion settlement bloc in the West Bank on November 19, 2019. (Kobi Gideon/GPO)

Roots has its headquarters in Gush Etzion, a bloc of two dozen settlements and outposts near Bethlehem that some have speculated will be among the first Israel would annex.

At a recent meeting there, Abu Awwad and Judelman shared the concerns they have if Israel were to go ahead with its annexation plans.

On a terrace surrounded by olive trees, Abu Awwad compared annexation to a “declaration of war” that could bring violence.

“Any unilateral decision cannot be a sign of reconciliation, but, on the contrary, raises the level of the conflict,” he said.

“Iron Curtain”

Sitting next to him, Judelman said, “It is not enough to oppose annexation. People from both societies must unite and propose something else.”

“But it takes political leaders with courage to break the iron wall between our two societies,” said the rabbi, his head covered with a large skullcap.

“We have a generation of Israelis who never met a Palestinian, but only saw a terrorist on TV, and a generation of Palestinians who only saw an Israeli soldier and this is what Israelis are to him,”

Judelman said.

Judelman said the 1993 Oslo peace accords — which split up the West Bank into three zones — created a divide between Israelis and Palestinians by saying “you are here and you are there.”

“It cannot work because both peoples are connected to the entire land,” he said.



A view of the city of Bethlehem in the West Bank. (Maysa Al Shaer/Wikimedia Commons/via JTA)

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s center-right unity coalition government had set July 1 as the date it could begin implementing annexation, but the date passed with no announcement.

His office said separate talks were ongoing with US officials “on the application of sovereignty” and with Israeli security chiefs.

Israeli annexation plans sparked sharp criticism in the international community, Arab world, and within Israel itself, with the lack of apparent progress on the issue raising speculation that Netanyahu was not seeking immediate action.

One of the many thorny issues in the possible annexation move was the question of citizenship for Palestinians in areas Israel annexed.

“Any plan that does not put front and center the equal rights and

mutual benefits that every Palestinian and Israeli deserves will not bring us closer to peace but rather distances us from it,” the Roots statement said.

To Judelman, annexation is just the latest attempt of one side to force a solution on the other since the collapse of the Oslo accords, which were meant to be temporary and lead to the formation of a Palestinian state.

Is our work important
to you?

Does The Times of Israel give you valuable insight into Israel and the Jewish world?

If so, please join **The Times of Israel Community**.

For as little as \$6/month, you will:

- **Support** our independent journalism;
- **Enjoy** an ad-free experience on the ToI site, apps and emails; and
- **Unlock** exclusive content shared only with the ToI Community, like our new Behind the Headlines interview series with thought leaders, and weekly letters from founding editor David Horovitz.

[Join the times of israel community](#) [Join our community](#) [Already a member? Sign in to stop seeing this](#)