

Over 320 Latin American figures call for sanctions on Israel



Brasilia, July 5 (RHC)-- More than 320 distinguished figures from Latin America including former political leaders have signed a statement, calling for imposition of sanctions against Israel over its controversial plans to annex large parts of the occupied West Bank and Jordan Valley.

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement announced that the statement, underwritten by former Brazilian presidents Dilma Rousseff and Lula da Silva, former Bolivian president Evo Morales, former Ecuadorian president Rafael Correa and Argentine Nobel Peace Prize laureate Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, was part of a South American initiative to unify efforts from all over the world for the punitive measures.

The statement also calls for the re-activation of the UN Special Committee against Apartheid in order to put an end to the Tel Aviv regime's apartheid policies against Palestinian people in the occupied lands.

"The proposed annexation of Palestinian territory by Israel is not only an offense against international law and a threat to peace; it is an attack against women and men who fought against colonialism and apartheid," Brazil's former foreign minister Celso Amorim, a signatory to the statement, said.

Separately, the Elders founded by South African anti-apartheid figure Nelson Mandela in 2007 said in letters to the leaders of France, Germany, Britain and the European Union that they should insist to Israel

that annexation would have negative political and economic consequences for bilateral and regional relations.

The Elders -- led by former Irish President Mary Robinson with Mandela's widow Graca Machel and former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as co-chairs -- said annexation "is fundamentally contrary to the long-term interests of both the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples."

They said annexation "will not dampen future Palestinian demands for rights and self-determination, but destroying hopes in a [so-called] two-state compromise will increase the risks of future violence in one of the most combustible areas in the world."

The Elders called on EU leaders to consider suspending the 27-nation's Association Agreement with Israel if annexation goes ahead in any form.

They also recalled the United Kingdom's "historical and abiding responsibility" as the colonial power in pre-1948 Palestine.

Palestinians believe Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plans to annex one-third of the already illegally occupied West Bank, including parts of the strategic Jordan Valley, is only a formality and a de facto Israeli occupation of their land has been under way for many years.

"Israel's annexation plan has been in process since 1967," according to Salah Khawaja, coordinator of an anti-occupation campaign called the Popular Committee to Resist the Wall and the Settlements. "Israel has since built settlements and the wall. And so, annexation has been ongoing for a long time," he added.

July 1st was set by Netanyahu to start annexation of parts of the West Bank, but Tel Aviv failed to launch the scheme on the set date amid differences between Netanyahu and key members of his cabinet, whose consent the White House says is needed for the annexation to go ahead. Netanyahu's office announced that he will continue to discuss the plan with the US administration.

U.S. President Donald Trump gave Tel Aviv the green light for the land grab in his self-proclaimed "Deal of the Century," which was unveiled in January with the aim of legitimizing Israel's occupation and re-drawing the Middle East map.

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