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**Statement for the Congressional Record
Introducing the Israeli Annexation Non-Recognition Act
to Protect the Palestinian People and Promote Peace
August 14, 2020**

Madam Speaker:

Yesterday, with the announcement of the agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates to normalize diplomatic relations, Speaker Pelosi issued a statement regarding the news. An important sentence in the statement was powerful, necessary, and correct: "The House continues to object to steps including unilateral annexation that will undermine future efforts to advance a just, stable, and lasting peace in the Middle East."

I agree.

For years, the centerpiece of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's political agenda has been his explicit desire and intent to unilaterally annex as much as 30% of Palestinian territory in the West Bank. He calls it a "*historic opportunity*." Even though annexation is a clear violation of international law and the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people, the Trump administration, along with right-wing Jewish groups and extremists in the evangelical Christian community in the U.S., allies of Netanyahu, have championed annexation.

Millions of Palestinians have lived for decades under Israel's military occupation. Now the Palestinian people fear that any hope for self-determination or the opportunity to live with dignity, equality, and justice will be extinguished through the annexation of their land by Israel with the support of an American president.

Today, I am introducing legislation in the U.S. House – the ***Israeli Annexation Non-Recognition Act*** – to prohibit appropriated U.S. funds from being directed to any area in the occupied West Bank annexed by Israel. I want Palestinians and Israelis to have their human rights respected, their right to self-determination realized, and a future with peace, security, equality, and justice. Annexation is antithetical to these goals and will

fuel conflict, injustice, and an abhorrent system of apartheid. This is an intolerable outcome for Palestinians, Israelis, and Americans.

I reject annexation. I condemn annexation. And, I will work to ensure the U.S. does not support, defend, or legitimize any plan or action by Israel to illegally annex Palestinian lands.

Yesterday's diplomatic agreement between Israel and the UAE changes nothing. Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Trump have taken nothing off the table. Their promises and commitments are worthless. They have both proven time and time again that they cannot be trusted.

The Israeli newspaper Haaretz ran a headline today citing comments from the U.S. Ambassador to Israel that makes it clear annexation is still being contemplated by Israeli and U.S. officials at the highest levels. Referring to annexation, the headline read, "Pro-settler Ambassador Friedman argues *'it's not off the table permanently'* after historic agreement to normalize relations between Israel and the UAE."

The same Haaretz article, included for the record, cited Prime Minister Netanyahu saying annexation is *"still on the table"* and that *"extending sovereignty will be done only alongside the United States."* A senior Israeli political source is quoted as saying, *"Applying sovereignty (to the West Bank) is on the table and we're committed to it."*

Again, nothing has changed. The annexation of Palestinian lands must be stopped and must never be aided or abetted by any U.S. administration. The Palestinian people should be fully engaged diplomatically by the next U.S. president as partners and constructive peacemakers empowered to negotiate and determine their own political and economic future. Never again should the people of Palestine be ignored, isolated, and boycotted as the Trump administration has done.

Democrats in Congress, led by the courageous and righteous co-sponsors of this bill, must act to send an unambiguous message that annexation is contrary to U.S. interests and would devastate the U.S.-Israel bilateral relationship. The Palestinian people deserve the support of Congress and the American people in this dark moment. If our nation is truly a beacon of democracy, then let us use our power for good to protect the Palestinian people from Mr. Netanyahu's illegal annexation.

Madam Speaker, I yield back.

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After Netanyahu commits to future annexation, Trump says it's 'now off the table'

Pro-settler Ambassador Friedman argues 'it's not off the table permanently' after historic agreement to normalize relations between Israel and the UAE

Noa Landau, Reuters | Aug. 14, 2020 | 1:50 AM | 3

U.S. President Donald Trump said Thursday night that Israel made a 'great concession' by agreeing to suspend West Bank annexation as part of its agreement to normalize relations with the United Arab Emirates, adding that for now 'it's off the table.'

Earlier on Thursday, Israel and the UAE reached a historic peace deal on that would lead to a full normalization of diplomatic relations between the two Middle Eastern nations in an agreement that Trump helped broker.

"Israel agreed not to annex parts of the West Bank. It is more than taking it off the table – they agreed not to do it. This is a very smart concession by Israel. It is off the table now," Trump said during a White House briefing.

This comes in contrast to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's earlier remarks that annexation is "still on the table," and that it is a pledge the prime minister said he is "committed to."

In addition, an Israeli senior political source said that "Applying sovereignty [to the West Bank] is on the table and we're committed to it. The Trump administration requested to temporarily suspend the announcement [of annexation] to first implement the historic peace agreement with the UAE."

Asked about Netanyahu's statement that he considers this a 'temporary suspension,' and that the option of annexation will still exist in the future, Trump responded that "Right now it's off the table, I can't talk about sometime in the future, that's a big statement, but right now it's off the table."

U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman, however, said that "it's off the table now but it's not off the table permanently. You can't have peace and annexation at the same time."

Speaking in a televised speech earlier on Thursday, Netanyahu said that "Today marks a new era in Israel's relations with the Arab world" and that the

two countries agreed on "a full, formal peace."

"For years, Israel has been portrayed as an enemy...now more countries will join us in this circle of peace," the prime minister said.

He added that annexation is "still on the table," and that it is a promise Netanyahu said he is "committed to."

"Extending sovereignty will be done only alongside the United States," Netanyahu said. "Without coordination, in the best case, will do nothing, and in the worst case, will harm relations between us. The United States asked that Israel temporarily postpone annexation."