



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

June 9, 2020

Dear Bishop Azar,

Thank you for your Pentecost statement “Liberation, not annexation” which I read with great interest but also deep concern. I am concerned, first and foremost, with the grave impact that the Israeli government’s annexation will have on the daily lives of the Palestinian people, especially the members of your church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, its schools, and all of its ministries.

But I am also concerned with the role of the White House in supporting the plan and that Prime Minister Netanyahu is [linking](#) implementation of this plan with the implementation of President Trump’s proposed “Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People.” Earlier this year, I expressed my considerable dismay about this “Deal of the Century”, as Prime Minister Netanyahu called it. In that statement I expressed fear that President Trump’s plan would “further entrench the occupation, rather than end it” as we have advocated for nearly two decades and now it is fairly clear that the Israeli annexation plan would have similar or even greater effects.

As you have noted, the Israeli plan threatens “any peace process and the future of a two-state solution” which both of our churches have long supported. Our church shares your belief “that the best possible future is one in which Palestine and Israel live side by side as neighbors, friends and partners with agreed upon 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as a city shared by two peoples and three religions (Islam, Judaism and Christianity).” I share your “worry that annexation would lead this region once again into chaos, violence, and war.”

In response to your call for advocacy from “friends, partner churches and allies”, I pledge to join with others in appeals to our elected officials, in the use of social media and in other ways to amplify your message “that the US-Israeli plan for annexation is not the way to peace based on justice. Annexation is not the way to reconciliation and living together for the people of this land, who all deserve the chance for a liberated future: Israeli and Palestinian, Jew, Christian, and Muslim.”

Like you “We still hope, and we still believe, that peace is possible.” I will continue to pray for your church in these troubling times.

God’s peace,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America