

Gap Year Graduates Against Annexation

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We, the over 210 undersigned graduates of Israeli gap year programs, mechinot, yeshivot, and midrashot, call upon our elected representatives and American Jewish leaders to unequivocally condemn illegal unilateral Israeli annexation of the West Bank.

Though we came for a variety of reasons, we all decided that spending a year of our lives in Israel was an important step in strengthening our connection to the Jewish State. For many of us, the time we spent in Israel was the most formative year of our life. Across the country, we volunteered in local communities, learned Hebrew, and hiked with our Israeli peers. Our years' abroad inspired us to take positions of leadership within our local Jewish communities. As American and Israeli Jews, we are concerned for the safety, security, and future of the state of Israel. As leaders of America's Jewish youth, we see it as our obligation to object to the dangerous steps toward annexation being pursued by the current Israeli government.

On April 20th, 2020, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and political rival Benny Gantz signed an agreement for a unity government that endorsed the process of unilateral annexation of large parts of the West Bank to begin July 1st.^[1] President Trump's administration has given its support to this plan.^[2] As American and Israeli Jews who took gap years in Israel, we oppose this decision in the strongest possible terms.

During our gap years, we were inspired by the vision of Israel as a Jewish and Democratic state. However, we know that this can only be maintained through a mutually agreed-upon resolution between Israelis and Palestinians. Only when Palestinians' human and political rights are secured, will Israel's democratic and Jewish character be preserved. However, unilateral annexation seriously endangers the possibility for this peaceful solution. Palestinians annexed into Israel will be denied the rights of full citizenship^[3], permanently entrenching over 50 years of second class status. The piecemeal cutting away of West Bank land will destroy its territorial continuity, making the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state impossible. In effect, Israel will be forced to decide whether it will be a Jewish, non-democratic state which denies political rights to millions of Palestinians or a democratic state which loses its Jewish character. That's why a majority of Israeli Jews oppose this dangerous plan.^[4] For the sake of the irrevocable rights of Jewish and Palestinian self-determination, this plan must be condemned.

Furthermore, our time in Israel gave many of us a deep appreciation of the need for Israeli security. However, we know that in the long run, Israel's security can only be truly secure through negotiation and cooperation with Palestinian and regional partners. Former Israeli military leaders have

already pointed out that unilateral annexation will threaten regional security cooperation with Jordan, strengthen Hamas, and cost Israel billions of dollars annually.^[5] For the sake of our friends and families who would be directly affected by renewed violence, we condemn this dire threat to Israeli security.

Finally, as young Jews deeply invested in both Israel and America, we fear that unilateral annexation threatens to irreparably damage the relationship between these two allies. The cornerstone of the US-Israel relationship is American Jewry's strong bipartisan support for Israel^[6] and most American Jews back a two-state solution.^[7] As leaders of America's Jewish youth, we feel that it is especially important for us to emphasize our generation's expectation that Israel live up to the commitment envisioned in its declaration of independence – to be a state “based on freedom, justice, and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel”^[8]. However, unilateral annexation is antithetical to these values and threatens to erode over seven decades of bipartisan support. If it is enacted, we know that much of American Jewry, and our generation especially will become disillusioned with Israel. Support for Israel cannot be sustained as a partisan issue. Without broad, bipartisan American-Jewish support, the Israeli-American relationship will never recover.

As young American Jews, who spent a formative year of our lives in Israel, we unequivocally condemn the threat of unilateral annexation. We know that this plan undermines the dream of Israel as a Jewish and Democratic state, threatens Palestinian human rights, and endangers Israeli security. If enacted, it will irreparably harm the strength of the US-Israel relationship. Therefore, we believe it is our obligation to oppose this plan. We demand that our elected officials and leaders of American Jewish organizations stand with us, and issue public statements condemning annexation.

Sign the letter [here](#).

1. Zachary Harris, Mechinat Nachshon 21
2. Adam Shaham, Mechinat Rabin 20
3. Zev Mishell, Yeshivat Ma'ale Gilboa 2017-2018
4. Alex Harris, Nativ 35
5. Afik Zaarur, Mechinat Rabin 21
6. Shahar Hartman, Mechinat Rabin 21
7. Sam Hirschhorn, Yeshivat Orayta 11
8. Zack Hirschhorn, Yeshivat Orayta 11
9. Aaron Sher-Schiff, Chevruta 4
10. Seiji Shaw, Technion 2018-2018
11. Rachel Fishman, Habonim Dror Workshop 63
12. Aaron Kay, Habonim Dror Workshop 62
13. Hanna London, Habonim Dror Workshop 66
14. Hannah Chonkan-Urow, Habonim Dror Workshop 66
15. Elizabeth Kirshner, Nishmat 2012-2013
16. Meital Smith, Habonim Dror Workshop 66
17. Helen Landau, Habonim Dror Workshop 69
18. Anya Friedman-Hutter, Habonim Dror Workshop 62

19. Leah Shwartz, Habonim Dror Workshop 64
20. Mattan Berner-Kadish, Mechinat Telem 2014-2015
21. Noam Jacobs, Habonim Dror Workshop 67
22. Nicholas Levy, Habonim Dror Workshop 62
23. Marina Levy, Habonim Dror Workshop 65
24. Tzivvia Gross, Habonim Dror Workshop 65
25. Erica Kushner, Habonim Dror Workshop 65
26. Eli Katzman, Habonim Dror Workshop 64
27. Ariel Hasak-Lowy, Habonim Dror Workshop 66
28. Naomi Goldman-Nagel, Habonim Dror Workshop 64
29. Anya Friedman-Hutter, Habonim Dror Workshop 62
30. Hannah Lieberman, Habonim Dror Workshop 61
31. Eliza Smith, Habonim Dror Workshop 67
32. Julia DeVarti, Habonim Dror Workshop 62
33. Ronnie Hecht, Habonim Dror Workshop 64
34. Freida Greenthal, Habonim Dror Workshop 65
35. Aviel Fradkine, Yeshivat Ma'ale Gilboa 26
36. Jonah Anderson, Nativ 34
37. Lonny Moses, Workshop 55
38. Hannah Faber, Workshop 63
39. Zak Newbart, Workshop 62
40. Sarah Pincus, Workshop 65
41. Yona Benjamin, Maale Gilboa '16
42. Bekah Diamond-Bier, Workshop 63
43. Jake Newbart, Workshop 64
44. Jacob Ball, Career Israel 2016
45. Tom Benamram, Workshop 64
46. Eden Olsberg, Mechinat Telem 15
47. Ilan Cohen, Mechinat Orayta 12
48. Jeremy David Voss, BBYO Beyond '16
49. Cameron Pearl BBYO Beyond '15
50. Noam Katz, Mechinat Nachson '18
51. Manuel Zimberoff, Aardvark '15
52. Noah Zimberoff, BBYO Beyond '15
53. Mandela Franciscono, Shnat Hachshara Hashomer Hatzair '17
54. Mandela Franciscono, Shnat Hachshara Hashomer Hatzair '17
55. Ben Marsh, Habonim Dror Workshop 58
56. Sarah Joyce, Habonim Dror Workshop 68
57. Yonatan Shargian, Bina 11
58. Joshua Rosen, Beyond 15
59. Lior Ben-Zvi, Shnat Hachshara Hashomer Hatzair '15
60. Avi Porath, Bina 2016-17
61. Adina Teibloom, Nativ 25
62. Miriam Lucking, Habonim Dror Workshop 67
63. Eve Lifson, Habonim Dror Workshop 58
64. Gabriella Grunfeld, Chevruta 6
65. Ze'ev Dvir, Habonim Dror Workshop 58
66. Nehama Dormont, Bina 2019
67. Maddy Connelly, Shnat Hachshara Hashomer Hatzair '18
68. Lili Greenberg, Bina 2019-2020
69. Donna Shashoua, Aardvark 2017-2018

70. Elijior Waskow, Conservative Yeshiva 2019-2020
71. Yasmine Porath, Bina 2019-2020
72. Sarah Pomeranz, Aardvark 2015-2016
73. Talia Inbar, Bina 2014
74. Naomi Heiman Bina '16
75. Ariela Katzman-Jacobson, Bina 2016-2017
76. Mika Yaakoba-Zohar, Shnat Hachshara Hashomer Hatzair '15
77. Benzion Sanders, Yeshivat Yesodei Hatorah 2009-10
78. Jacob Portman, Yeshivat Eretz HaTzvi '09-'10
79. Helen Bennett, Nativ 25
80. Monica Blitzler, Young Judaea Year Course 2009-10
81. Revital Bernstein, Shnat Hachshara 2012-2013
82. Molly Kulwin, Aardvark 2012
83. Leah Weinstein, Mechinat BINA, 2014
84. Aliza Nussbaum Cohen, Hevruta 4
85. Jonathan Horowitz, Young Judea 08-09
86. Sophie Haeuber, Kivunim, '14-'15
87. Charlotte Apter Kivunim '17-'18
88. Max Deutsch, Reishit '16-'17
89. Ben Markbreiter, Habonim Dror Workshop 66
90. Naomi Tamura, Habonim Dror Workshop 63
91. Katyann Harris, Habonim Dror Workshop 66
92. Paul Weissfellner, Habonim Dror Workshop 65
93. Nathan Young, Yeshivat Eretz HaTzvi 2010-2011
94. Ari Farber, Bina '16-17
95. Moshe Gelberman, Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh in '13/'14 and in '14/'15
96. Julie Ugoretz, BINA 2013-2014
97. Leah Miller, Nativ 19-20
98. Ellie Shiovitz, Aardvark 2017-2018
99. Shahar Sztainer, Habonim Dror Workshop 2013
100. Aliza Lifshitz, Nishmat 2015-2016
101. Ilan Friedland, Habonim Dror Workshop '16
102. Natasha Marder, Habonim Dror Workshop '18
103. Yasaf Warshai, Workshop 61
104. Ellie Shiovitz, Kivunim Gap Year '20
105. Elisheva Malomet, Kivunim Gap Year '20
106. Samantha Allie, Aardvark '15
107. Elias Asher, Aardvark 16'
108. Clara Epstein, Habonim Dror Workshop 67
109. Mike Schwartz, Young Judaea Year Course '05
110. Eliana Franks, Aardvark Israel '20
111. Rebecca Charlotte Perl, Nativ '16
112. Akiva Lichtenberg, Yeshivat Ma'ale Gilboa '11
113. Joshua Lewis, FZY '10
114. Eli Krule, Nativ '16
115. Aaron Portman, Yeshivat HaKotel, '12
116. Jacob Fortinsky, Hevruta '17
117. Donna Shashoua, Aardvark '18
118. Marina Cemaj, Nativ '16
119. Jory Harris-Blumenthal, Nativ '16
120. Beckey Portman, Midreshet Harova '16

121. Daniel Kraft, Young Judaea Year Course '09
122. Jacqueline Shwartz, Nativ '16
123. David Schwartz, Nativ '82
124. Ascher Goodman, Habonim Dror Workshop '15
125. Rebecca Krevat, Midreshet Lindenbaum '09
126. Samantha Brody, Nativ 39
127. Cliel Shdaimah, Habonim Dror Workshop '15
128. Liana Berlin-Fischler, Aardvark '15
129. Amichai Feit, Ma'ale Gilboa '18
130. Ben Gelman, Ma'ale Gilboa '18
131. Henry Wolle, Hevruta '18
132. Sam Strickberger, Hevruta '18
133. Jenny Steinberg, Habonim Dror Workshop '16
134. Mathew Nelson, Nativ 33
135. Gabriel Klapholz, Hevruta '18
136. Avital Krifcher, Hevruta 4
137. Manny Weinstein, Aardvark '17
138. Dani Goodman Rabner, Hevruta 4
139. Toby King, Habonim Dror Workshop '14
140. Aaron Marans, Yeshivat Ma'ale Gilboa '12
141. Matan Skolnik, Nativ '12
142. Jake Kosowsky, Yeshivat Ma'ale Gilboa '18
143. Marah Birnbaum, Shnat Hachshara Hashomer Hatzair '17
144. Lily Sheldon, Mechinat Bina '19
145. Josh Pitkoff, Yeshivat Maale Gilboa '12
146. Eve Strickberger, Hevruta '19
147. Racheli Cohen, Hevruta '19
148. Meira Chasman, Hevruta '19
149. Dina Kirshner, Hevruta '19
150. Iris Berman, Hevruta '19
151. Judah Ariel, Young Judaea Year Course '00
152. Shaina Wasserman, Habonim-Dror Workshop '99
153. Nadav Raz, Aardvark '15
154. Matan Bilavsky, Aardvark '15
155. Miriam Michaels, Habonim-Dror Workshop '11
156. Michael Guggenheim, Yeshivat Orayta '12
157. Beth Badik, Young Judaea Year Course 1997
158. Talia BarNoy, Hashomer Hatzair Shnat Hachshara '18
159. Amy Brotslaw Schweiger, Workshop '74
160. Elisheva Goldberg, Midgal Oz '07
161. Lilly Rivlin, Machon Le'Madrichi Chutz 54-55
162. Yael Dormont, Jenna Abrams, Hashomer Hatzair Shnat Hachshara '16
163. Jenna Weinberg, Habonim Dror Workshop 65
164. Ada Marcovitz, Habonim Dror Workshop '18
165. Liana Slomka, Hevruta '19
166. Hyatt Aronoff, Hevruta '19
167. Mordy Labaton, Eretz HaTzvi, '10, '1q
168. Aviva Michaeli, Hevruta '18
169. Yael Marans, Hevruta '17
170. Madeline Nelkin, Hevruta '17
171. Sara Zebovitz, Habonim Dror Workshop 2009-10

172. Jonathan Oppenheimer, Kivunim '16
173. Danny Moss, Kivunim '16
174. Gila Sheldon, Nativ
175. Adin Field, Eretz HaTzvi '16
176. Anna Kalm, Nativ '15
177. Shira Michaeli, Midreshet Amudim '20
178. Lia BenYishay, Habonim-Dror Workshop '13
179. Netanel Hutman, Yeshivat Maale Gilboa '18
180. Michaela Davenport, Young Judaea Year Course '16
181. Sophia Katz, Hevruta '17
182. Elisheva Goldberg, Masa Kibbutz Ulpan '18
183. Gabriella Cantor, Mechinat Beit Yisrael '18
184. Jonah Levitt, Mechinat Bina '17
185. Lital Weizman, Bina '16
186. Clara Sandler, Midreshet Lindenbaum '20
187. Daniel Roth, Hashomer Hatzair Shnat Hachshara '00
188. Joshua Fishman, Yeshivat Birkat Moshe '15
189. Ariel Brickman, Young Judaea Year Course '09
190. Yaneev Hacoheh, Mechinat Galil Elyon '18
191. Shani Rosenbaum, Midreshet Lindenbaum '08
192. Benjamin Perlstein, Kivunim '09
193. Nina Price, Young Judaea Year Course '92
194. Ruth Becker, Young Judaea Year Course '92
195. Karen Goodman, Young Judaea Year Course '84
196. Hannah Greenwald, Young Judaea Year Course '13
197. Lonny Baskin, Young Judaea Year Course '76
198. Sharon Litwin, Young Judaea Year Course '93
199. Ari Weinstein, Young Judaea Year Course '93
200. Allison Brown Karabin, Young Judaea Year Course '92
201. Sivan Yair, Young Judaea Year Course '13
202. Marshall Green, Young Judaea Year Course '63
203. Kayla Lesch, Young Judaea Year Course '18
204. Barbara Pinkser, Young Judaea Year Course '75
205. Janice Isaac, Young Judaea Year Course '77
206. Avital Rachmilevitch, Habonim-Dror Workshop '96
207. Jacob Chatinover, Yeshivat HaTorah '08
208. Chelsea Garbell, Nativ '09
209. Hannah Pollack, Nativ '09
210. Elie Lauter, Kivunim '09
211. Arlen Weiner, Kivunim '09

^[1]<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/20/netanyahu-and-gantz-agree-to-form-unity-israeli-government>

^[2]<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-politics-pompeo/pompeo-says-annexation-of-west-bank-is-israeli-decision-to-make-idUSKCN2242HW>

^[3]https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-netanyahu-says-palestinians-in-jordan-valley-won-t-get-citizenship-after-annexation-1.8879420?fbclid=IwAR1UiR1MQIyH_e8TUHhglHaFIYnfpH64RDf1bxNLTngLnDX_2RzciJg7QL4

^[4] <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/HyV1LHeqI?fbclid=IwAR1NH2k9aR2B8PDKYopWFhAFG7VqF0PqVEVh0q9eAQxyCNM2kobiPsrD7CQ>

^[5] <http://en.cis.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/RAMIFICATIONS-OF-WEST-BANK-ANNEXATION.pdf>. 15-16, 33

^[6] <https://www.timesofisrael.com/rather-than-drifting-away-over-two-thirds-of-us-jews-feel-tie-to-israel-poll/>

^[7] <https://www.ajc.org/news/ajc-comparative-surveys-of-israeli-us-jews-show-some-serious-divisions>, <https://jstreet.org/polling/#.XqxtotNKg0o>

^[8] https://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/megilat_eng.htm