



Joint Statement Regarding the Israeli Cabinet Decision on February 8th

H.L. Education for Peace and the Palestinian Peace Coalition (the Israeli and Palestinian branches of the Geneva Initiative) express deep concern and strong condemnation of the Israel cabinet decision towards advancing Israeli annexation of the West Bank on February 8th, 2026.

The changes to the existing arrangements in Areas A and B as well as in Hebron are a clear violation of agreements that Israel has signed in the past. The changes weaken Palestinian Authority control, pave the way for Jewish settlement within Palestinian population centers, and create the potential for dramatic shifts in the status quo at multiple holy sites. Such steps increase the likelihood of a significant outbreak of violence and make the path towards a negotiated comprehensive solution to the conflict much more challenging. From direct statements made by Minister Smotrich, it is evident that the latter is the primary motivation behind the policies.

Areas A and B form the core of Palestinian civil and security jurisdiction under prior agreements and are central to daily stability and to preserving the viability of a negotiated two-state solution. Paving the way to Israeli settler footholds in Palestinian cities is a recipe for instability and inequality. The consequences of unilateral changes to the status of holy sites are potentially catastrophic.

This cabinet decision is part of an ongoing framework to annex the West Bank to Israel. The discussion regarding the precise nature of this annexation – de facto or de jure – is, at this point, an academic distraction. The reality speaks for itself, and must be openly acknowledged. The current Israeli government is creating an unequal binational state in the West Bank which heightens the risk of violence for Israelis and Palestinians alike and threatens the already fragile regional stability.

Silence or inaction in the face of these destabilizing steps risks normalizing a trajectory toward deeper conflict, greater violence and permanent inequality.