

German Foreign Minister to Land in Israel, Expected to Warn Netanyahu Against Annexation



German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas in Berlin, June 2, 2020 Credit: FABRIZIO BENSCH/ REUTERS

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas on Wednesday will land in Israel ahead of his expected meeting with his Israeli counterpart, Gabi Ashkenazi.

The visit's official capacity is for Maas to acquaint himself with Ashkenazi. Unofficially, Maas intends to caution Israel against its stated intentions to begin annexing parts of the West Bank on July 1.

Maas is expected to meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Benny Gantz, and Ashkenazi. He will later also confer with Palestinian leadership over video conference after Israel cited its coronavirus quarantine orders to prevent Maas from visiting the West Bank. He will then travel to Jordan in the evening for additional talks.

This is Maas' first trip outside of Europe since the outbreak of the coronavirus.

According to sources within the Foreign Ministry, Israel's intent to annex West Bank settlements is a grave concern for Germany, which seeks to mediate between Israelis and Palestinians and prevent a violent escalation in the region.

Germany is a key ally of Israel in international organizations but is also a staunch defender of international law institutions.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's declarations that annexation will be promoted on July 1, in less than one month, have put Berlin in a major quandary. On July 1, Germany will be taking over the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union and will be assuming the presidency of the UN Security Council. These two roles will require the Germans to choose between their

allegiance to international law and UN resolutions on the one hand and their historical commitment to Israel on the other.

- West Bank Annexation Will Harm Israel's Relations With Germany but Berlin Will Oppose Sanctions, Officials Believe
- Trump's Troop Cut in Germany Blindsided Senior U.S. Officials, Sources Say
- Germany's Foreign Minister to Visit Israel, Warn Against West Bank Annexation

In late May, Germany and the Palestinian Authority released a joint statement expressing "grave concern" over Israel's declared intention to begin annexing parts of the West Bank and the Jordan Valley.

Source:

<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-german-foreign-minister-lands-in-israel-expected-to-warn-netanyahu-against-annexation-1.8910253>

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