



12th October 2012

Minister Éamon Gilmore, T.D.
Iveagh House
St. Stephen's Green
Dublin 2

Dear Tánaiste,

Our organisations would like to highlight our concern about ongoing human rights abuses in the occupied Palestinian territories. Trócaire, Christian Aid, ICTU, Sadaka and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) witness the devastating effects of the continued growth of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

There are now more than 500,000 Israeli settlers living on occupied Palestinian land, and 42% of West Bank land has been allocated for settlements. Israeli settlements are expanding on the back of land confiscations and house demolitions, and they threaten to destroy any chance of lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Last May, the EU Foreign Affairs Council condemned developments “which threaten to make a two-state solution impossible”. They reiterated that “settlements remain illegal under international law”. However, while the EU condemns Israeli settlements, it continues to trade with them. Settlement goods, such as agricultural produce and manufactured goods are ending up on the shelves of EU retailers. Trade between the EU and the settlements is estimated to be at least €96 million a year.

By trading with settlements, the EU undermines its own policy of opposing and condemning settlements. EU trade in settlement goods helps to bolster settlement economies and helps such settlements become financially viable and more permanent entities. Ending this trade with settlements would have a strong economic, legal and political impact.

We welcome your strong statements on settlements following your visit to the region earlier this year. In particular we welcome you raising the option of calling for an EU ban on goods coming from the Israeli settlements. In May 2012, you stated that “if there isn't a change in Israeli policy in relation to the settlements” by Autumn 2012, the EU should “look at the question of banning products from settlement areas into the EU”.

On the 15th October, EU Foreign Ministers will meet at the Foreign Affairs Council. This meeting marks an important opportunity to follow up on the May Foreign Affairs Council conclusions, and for Ireland to push for the introduction of an EU ban on trade with Israeli settlements.

We strongly encourage the Irish Government to push for an EU ban on settlement goods. Taking action on settlement trade would send a strong signal to Israel that EU-Israel relations are based on respect for human rights and

international law. Furthermore, Ireland's EU presidency in 2013 offers an important opportunity to prioritise this issue and for Ireland to use its influence to advocate for an EU-wide ban.

However the urgent situation on the ground of expanding settlements also requires more immediate action. We believe the Irish Government should demonstrate further leadership by implementing a national ban on settlement produce. A recent legal opinion by James Crawford, professor of international law at Cambridge University, has argued that it is lawful for individual EU member states to ban trade with settlements. Taking such an action would set a strong political, economic and legal precedent which could encourage other member states to follow suit.

Yours sincerely,



Justin Kilcullen,
Director, Trócaire



David Begg,
General Secretary of the Irish
Congress of Trade Unions



Rosamund Bennet,
Chief executive,
Christian Aid Ireland



Marie Crawley,
Chairperson, Sadaka -
The Ireland-Palestine Alliance



Joe O'Brien, Ireland Advocacy Coordinator,
Ecumenical Accompaniment
Programme for Palestine and Israel (EAPPI)

Cc: Mr. Patrick Kelly, Director, Middle East and North Africa, Department of Foreign Affairs