

21 October 2024

An Taoiseach, Simon Harris, T.D.
Department of Taoiseach
Government Buildings
Merrion Street Upper
Dublin 2

Re: Pass the Occupied Territories Bill

Dear Taoiseach,

I am contacting you as a matter of urgency to request you to steer the Occupied Territories Bill through the house before the general election.

Thousands of trade union members have been taking to the streets with many others for over a year now drawing attention to the slaughter and ongoing genocide in Gaza with more than 40,000 people killed, including women and children. And over the weekend more horrific scenes on our screens. Add to that the ramped-up theft and annexation of the West Bank, and the killing of more than 700 people there in the past year.

While we welcome some of the efforts of your Government, not least the recent recognition of the state of Palestine, it is disgraceful that all of this continues without the imposition of a single economic sanction on Israel by Western governments. On the contrary, Israeli goods entering Ireland and the EU continue to enjoy preferential trade status.

The July ICJ advisory opinion declared Israel's 57-year occupation of Palestinian territory illegal under international law and went on to state that all States must: "Take steps to prevent trade or investment relations that assist in the maintenance of the illegal situation created by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory". You yourself have stated that this is a gamechanger.

Congress is also part of the Occupied Territories Bill campaign and you will be aware of the expert legal advice that states unequivocally that EU law permits member states to adopt such a ban unilaterally, precisely because of the settlements' illegality under international law. The ICJ has now confirmed that there is such an obligation; and that it is well established that EU law must be interpreted so as to avoid a situation where it would be impossible for Member States to comply with their international law obligations.

Strong words of condemnation and symbolic gestures, though important, are no longer enough. It is our strongly held view that as a result of all of this, we cannot continue to trade with settlements and that it is imperative that the cabinet meeting tomorrow (when we understand that the updated advice from the current Attorney General on the question of trade with Israel and the illegal settlements will be considered) agrees to progress the Occupied Territories Bill and get it through Dáil before the election.

Yours sincerely,



Owen Reidy
General Secretary