



Pax Christi International calls for more effective action against settlements

Press Release

Since 1967, Israel has occupied Palestinian territories and has committed gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Pax Christi, the international Catholic peace movement, supports the call of the United Nations Special Rapporteur for additional action to halt the illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. UN Rapporteur Richard Falk has called for a boycott of Israeli and international businesses that profit from Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands until the enterprises bring their operations up to par with international human rights standards and humanitarian law.

1. Pax Christi International would like to bring attention to the fact that Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, have been deemed illegal under international law, and that the international community has the duty to ensure Israel's respect for international humanitarian law. In the advisory opinion on the Wall in 2004, the International Court of Justice reconfirmed the illegality of the Israeli settlements, and highlighted that the members of the international community have the 'duty of non-recognition.' These settlements permit more than half a million Israeli citizens to live in occupied Palestinian territory and systematically obstruct the possibility of a two-state solution with an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. It does not suffice that the EU and the US denounce the settlements; they should also take concrete measures against them if they want to preserve the two-state solution in accordance with international law.
2. Elder statesmen such as Felipe Gonzales, Lionel Jospin, Romano Prodi, Mary Robinson, Helmut Schmidt, and Richard von Weizsäcker, as well as many NGOs, are asking the EU to fulfil its obligations. Two recent reports, "EU Trade with Israeli Settlements" and "Trading Away Peace: How Europe Helps Sustain Illegal Israeli Settlements," demonstrate the daily impact that Israeli settlements have in the occupied territories. Settlement exports to the European Union amount to 230 million Euro, according to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in comparison with Palestinian exports to the EU amounting to a mere 15 million Euro; Israeli exports from the illegal settlements are 15 times higher than Palestinian exports.
3. The Israeli government is preparing the settlements for international competition through subsidisation. Settlement products include agricultural items such as dates, citrus fruits, paprika, potatoes, and herbs, as well as manufactured products like cosmetics, carbonation devices, plastics, textile products, and toys. Over 43 per cent of land in the West Bank, along with the vast majority of water and natural resources, have been seized from Palestinians and allocated to settlements. Palestinian trade and the economy are severely restricted by various physical and administrative obstacles

imposed by Israeli authorities, which significantly diminish the competitiveness of Palestinian goods while increasing the unpredictability of delivery time and quality.

4. Therefore, Pax Christi International asks President Obama, along with the Commission of the European Union and the European member states, to reconfirm the illegality of Israeli settlements and to take effective action guaranteeing that they do not in any way support the settlement enterprise. In the Foreign Affairs Council of May 2012, the EU member states supported the correct labelling of Israeli settlement goods. As done by the UK and Denmark, each member state, should, as a minimum measure, come forth with concrete procedures to ensure correct labelling of all settlement products. Furthermore, the EU should develop the Heads of Mission recommendations to prevent financial transactions from member state actors to supporting settlement activity; compile non-binding guidelines for EU tour operators to prevent support for settlement business; ensure that the EU-Israel Association Agreement is not used to guarantee the export to the EU of products manufactured in settlements; and inform EU citizens of financial risks involved in purchasing property in settlements.

National Member Organisations are invited to forward similar messages to their national governments.

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