



### [Human Rights Watch Urges the European Union to Ban Trade with Universally-Condemned Illegal Israeli Settlements](#)

International advocacy organization Human Rights Watch and other groups have urged the European Union to ban trade with illegal Israeli settlements in occupied Palestine. The ban would include imports to the unlawful settlements and any exports made from companies who operate in or are linked to them. Human Rights Watch has highlighted how these businesses benefit from favorable Israeli government policies and contribute to land confiscation, forcible displacement, natural resource exploitation, and discrimination against the local Palestinian population. Furthermore, allowing trade between entities like the European Union and companies with connections to illegal Israeli settlements exacerbates human rights abuses, providing an incentive and making it economically viable to continue the aforementioned practices. It also legitimizes the influx of settlers which is problematic since the transfer of an occupying force's civilian population to a territory violates the Fourth Geneva Convention and is considered a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The Human Rights Watch-led effort calling for a ban on trade with illegal settlements comes as an increasing number of international watchdogs and rights groups condemn Israeli policies in occupied Palestinian territory. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and others have denounced the systematically discriminatory nature of these, labelling Israel as an apartheid state and speaking out against the transfer of settlers to illegally-occupied lands. This reprehensible behavior seeks to rob Palestinians of their land, resources, and livelihoods. Israeli authorities continue to engage in mass land confiscations, confining Palestinians to disconnected enclaves where they are denied freedom of movement and basic civil rights. Human Rights Watch's endorsing of the European Citizens' Initiative, if signed by 1 million people, would legally obligate the European Commission to consider a ban on the trade of settlement goods.

It has been justifiably pointed out that trade with illegal Israeli settlements also works to legitimize institutional discrimination as a whole. The categorical denial of building permits to Palestinians, forced evictions, lack of a fair and equal judicial system, arbitrary arrests and imprisonments, and many other discriminatory practices can be linked back to the illegal settlements. A strategy commonly used by the Israeli government is to declare privately-owned Palestinian land as state land and then allocate it to Jewish Israelis. Reports show that more than 99% of state land is given to Israeli civilians. Palestinian homes are also often razed for lacking building permits through no fault of their own, as less than 1.5% of these permits are given to Palestinians. This leaves thousands of families displaced and unable to rebuild. Since 1948, Israeli authorities have seized 65%-75% of generational Palestinian lands, with the government also authorizing the creation of hundreds of illegal settlements in this same period of time.

The European Union has previously condemned the actions of Israeli authorities, but has taken little concrete action to punish the entities engaging in systematic land theft from Palestinians. Banning trade with illegal Israeli settlements would allow the European Union to "put its money where its mouth is."