



Ireland supports EU ban on settlement goods

“I would support any move at EU level to exclude settlement products from entry to the EU.”

Those were the words of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore, in Dáil Éireann on 25 October 2011. He was answering a written question from Pádraig Mac Lochlainn of Sinn Fein, who asked him “if he supports the exclusion from the EU of produce from Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territories; and if he will make a statement on the matter”.

His full reply was as follows:

“The Government’s firm views on the establishment and continued expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories are clear and well known. I would support any move at EU level to exclude settlement products from entry to the EU. However, it is clear that such a proposal would not at this point have any prospect of commanding sufficiently wide support.” [\[1\]](#)

In a later question on 2 November 2011, Pádraig Mac Lochlainn asked the Minister “if he will initiate a discussion at EU level on the possibility of produce from Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territories being excluded from the EU”. He replied:

“Further to my reply to the Deputy on 25 October, I have made my views known to my EU colleagues, and will continue to do so, when there are suitable opportunities, bilaterally and at EU level. However, as I have stated, it is clear that at this point this suggestion would not command sufficiently wide support.” [\[2\]](#)

So, Ireland is committed to

- (a) the exclusion of settlement produce from the EU, and
- (b) seeking to persuade other member states to this point of view in order to make exclusion a common policy of the EU.

* * * * *

Sadaka, Christian Aid and EAPPI wrote to the Minister on 31 August 2011 posing a number of questions about settlement produce. We wrote:

“We believe that Ireland should ban the import of settlement goods altogether. Ireland has long accepted that the establishment and continued expansion of these settlements is contrary to international humanitarian law, specifically to Article 49 (6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which forbids an occupying power from transferring parts of its own civilian population into territory it occupies.

“Under Article 146, parties to the Convention, including Ireland, are required to ‘take measures necessary for the suppression of all acts contrary to the provisions’ of the Convention. The importation of settlement goods clearly bolsters settlements economically and is therefore a positive encouragement to settlement building. In our opinion, this flies in the face of Ireland’s duty under Article 146 to discourage acts contrary to the provisions of the Convention.”

We asked:

“Would Ireland be in breach of EU legislation if it were to ban the import of settlement goods into Ireland? If not, would Ireland be prepared to consider doing so? If so, would it be prepared to seek to persuade the EU to introduce an EU-wide ban on the import of settlement goods?”

We were delighted by the Minister’s reply:

“Ireland could not unilaterally ban the import of settlement goods; such a move would require a common EU position. The Tánaiste views the relentless settlement expansion as one of the most significant obstacles to achieving a comprehensive peace agreement and would support discussing the possibility of excluding settlement produce from the EU, although it is clear that this would not command general support among other EU Member States at the present time.”

And we are delighted that the Minister has now confirmed in Dáil Éireann that Ireland is committed to banning the import of settlement produce into the EU and will seek to persuade member states to adopt this as EU policy.

David Morrison
November 2011

References

[\[1\]](http://debates.oireachtas.ie/dail/2011/10/25/00071.asp) debates.oireachtas.ie/dail/2011/10/25/00071.asp

[\[2\]](http://debates.oireachtas.ie/dail/2011/11/02/00033.asp) debates.oireachtas.ie/dail/2011/11/02/00033.asp

Sadaka supports a peaceful settlement in Israel/Palestine based on the principles of democracy and justice, be that in two states or in one state. We maintain an independent position on internal politics within Palestine, favouring neither Fatah, Hamas nor any other Palestinian political organisation.