States must ban Israeli settlement products to help end half a century of violations

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The international community must ban the import of all goods produced in illegal Israeli settlements and put an end to the multimillion dollar profits that have fuelled mass human rights violations against Palestinians, said Amnesty International today.

To mark the [50th anniversary of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/06/Israel-Occupation-50-Years-of-Dispossession/), the organization is launching a new campaign calling on states across the world to prohibit settlement goods from their markets and to prevent their companies from operating in settlements or trading in settlement goods.

“For decades, the world has stood by as Israel has destroyed Palestinians’ homes and plundered their land and natural resources for profit. While the Palestinian economy has been stunted by 50 years of abusive policies, a thriving multimillion dollar settlement enterprise has been built out of the systematic oppression of the Palestinian population,” said Salil Shetty, Secretary General of Amnesty International.

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“Fifty years on, merely condemning Israel’s settlement expansion is not enough. It’s time for states to take concrete international action to stop the financing of settlements which themselves flagrantly violate international law and constitute war crimes.”

Hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of goods produced in Israeli settlements built on occupied Palestinian land are exported internationally each year, despite the fact that the vast majority of states have officially condemned the settlements as illegal under international law. Over the years, Israeli and international businesses have also enabled and facilitated settlement construction and expansion.

Israel’s policy of settling Israeli civilians on occupied Palestinian land has led to a myriad of human rights violations. Tens of thousands of Palestinian homes and properties have been demolished by Israel and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have been forcibly displaced; many families were pushed out of their homes or land to clear areas for settlement construction. At least 100,000 hectares of Palestinian land have been appropriated for exclusive settlement use.

 Israel has also unlawfully seized control of Palestinian natural resources, such as water, fertile land, stone quarries and minerals, and diverted these to benefit settlement industries to produce agricultural products, construction materials and manufactured goods that are often exported abroad. At the same time, Israel has imposed arbitrary restrictions depriving Palestinians of access to and use of their own water, land and other resources, restricting their economic development and violating their economic and social rights.

Across the West Bank, settlement infrastructure, including “settler-only” roads, have divided Palestinian towns and villages and have severely limited the ability of Palestinians to move around freely. Israel has also maintained an illegal air, sea and land blockade of the Gaza Strip for nearly 10 years, locking two million people into an area just under half the size of New York City.

“One of the tragedies of 50 years of ceaseless occupation-related violations is that the world has become accustomed to the shocking level of oppression and humiliation that Palestinians face in their daily lives in the occupied territories,” said Salil Shetty.

“But how can states continue to allow financial backing to an inherently cruel, discriminatory and criminal settlement policy that enables Israeli settlers to live on stolen land in homes with irrigated lawns and swimming pools, while Palestinian communities on their doorstep are deprived of access to enough clean water or electricity to cover their basic needs?”

All states have a clear obligation to ensure respect for international humanitarian law. They must also not recognize or assist in any manner the illegal situation that Israel’s settlement policy has created and, in fact, they should use their influence to stop such violations.

“States that continue to help settlements flourish economically are blatantly undermining their international obligations and the very policies they have pledged to uphold. It is a state’s duty under international law to ensure that their actions and those of their nationals do not recognize or aid illegal situations or acts,” said Salil Shetty.

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Over decades, multiple UN resolutions have confirmed that Israeli settlements violate international law. Most recently, [a UN Security Council resolution](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/12/un-security-council-resolution-on-israeli-settlements-in-opt/) was passed in December 2016 calling on Israel to cease all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The resolution also called on all states to distinguish in all their dealings between the state of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967.

Despite this, Israel has accelerated its expansion and support of settlements in recent months, announcing plans for thousands of new homes in existing settlements, as well as plans to build thousands more homes in two new settlements in the occupied West Bank.

“Israel has made it abundantly clear that maintaining and expanding settlements takes priority over respect for international law. It’s time for the world to send a clear message that it will no longer tolerate the Israeli authorities’ blatant disregard for international law,” said Salil Shetty.

Since the occupation first began in 1967, Israel has consolidated its repressive military rule of the Occupied Palestinian Territories through thousands of military orders. Many of them criminalize peaceful activities and place excessive restrictions on Palestinians, disrupting their daily lives.

Military orders have also been used to provide cover for widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including the extensive appropriation of property and natural resources, the demolition of homes and businesses, arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, and the collective punishment of millions of Palestinians. There have also been scores of unlawful killings of Palestinians at the hands of Israeli forces over the years.

“It is utterly shocking that, since the occupation began 50 years ago, there has been virtually total impunity for the decades of war crimes, crimes against humanity and human right violations committed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories,” said Salil Shetty.

“The world has seen the terrible toll of 50 years of ignoring gross violations and the relentless spread of illegal settlements. That’s why it’s crucial for states to take effective steps to end and redress these violations.

“They should start by imposing an international ban on settlement products, a comprehensive arms embargo on Israel and Palestinian armed groups and bring an end to impunity for decades of crimes, including through genuine investigations by the International Criminal Court. Palestinians must not be condemned to endure a further half century of oppression and injustice.”