

Dear

I am writing to express my concern about Israel's policy of constructing illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). The settlements are a major cause of poverty amongst the local Palestinian population as well as a significant obstacle to peace.

Despite regular statements of condemnation from the UK Government, settlement expansion has continued at an alarming rate, especially in the east Jerusalem region. I believe that unequivocal action is urgently required from the international community in order to preserve prospects for peace.

The 2009 DEFRA advisory on labelling of agricultural settlement produce was an important first step but it hasn't solved the problem and Israel to defy international law and opinion on this matter. A new approach is urgently required that moves from declaratory policy to concrete actions. The EU Foreign Affairs Council in December 2012 pledged that member states would 'act accordingly' on this issue but so far that has not happened.

I support Christian Aid's recommendation that the UK Government should introduce legislation against the sale of products from settlements in the UK. Settlements are illegal under international law and, therefore, it is morally wrong for their products to have access to our market. This trade supports the settlements by contributing to their economic viability.

In addition, the recent report 'Trading Away Peace' by European NGOs and churches recommends a range of actions that can be taken immediately such as issuing guidelines discouraging companies investing and doing business in settlements.

Please could you raise this concern with the Foreign Secretary and ensure that the UK leads by example and acts to cease economic relations with illegal Israeli settlements.

Yours