



## A general trade boycott against Israeli settlements in the West Bank is misguided and counterproductive

The United Kingdom, France, and ten other countries intend to impose a general ban on goods from Israeli settlements in the West Bank. This boycott policy is unjust, has no basis in international law, and is counterproductive.

by Sacha Wigdorovits

British Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband announced recently that the UK would ban imports from Israeli settlements in the West Bank and impose sanctions on companies and individuals who finance settlement expansion there or support it through construction and infrastructure projects. The regulations are set to take effect within six to nine months. France has also decided to impose a similar import ban; implementation is still pending.

This move is accompanied by a joint statement issued by twelve Western countries on September 8. In addition to the United Kingdom and France, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden signed the statement. The statement cites settler violence and settlement expansion in the West Bank, particularly the E1 project east of Jerusalem. It states that the two-state solution must be protected.

Israel responded to the British announcement with tough diplomatic countermeasures: The British consulate in East Jerusalem is to be closed; British representatives must leave the U.S.-led coordination center in Kiryat Gat; British participation in the training of Palestinian security forces will be terminated; and several British officials will be barred from entering Israel.

Nonviolent settlers are paying the price for the government's inaction

Violence and terror perpetrated by extremist Jewish settlers in the West Bank are a reality. And given the documented attacks, it is equally obvious that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is downplaying the situation when he refers to “merely about 150 juvenile offenders.” It is also inexcusable that these acts of terror have so far not been punished—or have been punished only hesitantly—by Israeli security authorities due to the government's partisan political considerations.

The fact that the 12 countries have now announced boycott measures is due in no small part to this “laissez-faire” attitude of the current government. By doing nothing to counter settler violence, the government has provided all those countries that are always critical of Israel—particularly Spain, Ireland, and Norway—with a



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welcome excuse to do so once again. Nevertheless, the 12 countries' threat of a boycott is misguided:

1. The majority of settlers are not violent. The price for the general boycott of goods from the West Bank is also paid by the overwhelming majority of the more than 500,000 Jewish settlers living there, who have nothing to do with the terrorist attacks against the local Arab population and do not condone them.
- Jews are permitted to live in the West Bank. The 1922 League of Nations resolution, which provided for the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine and remains legally binding to this day, explicitly designated the West Bank for Jewish settlement. Prohibiting such settlement therefore lacks a basis in international law. (By contrast, Turkey's occupation and settlement policy in Northern Cyprus is illegal, yet it is not criticized by any of the 12 countries currently participating in the boycott.)
- Palestinian workers are also affected. The announced general boycott of goods from Israeli settlements in the West Bank also affects some 20,000 Palestinian workers who earn their livelihoods in the Jewish settlements. In contrast, the Israeli economy in the heartland will not suffer from the boycott measures. (This is the same economy whose technological leadership in missile defense, cybersecurity, and intelligence—which the 12 countries now condemning Israel readily utilize for their own defense and security—is being targeted by the boycott.)



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Posturing by countries that have no say in the Middle East

A general import ban on goods produced in Israeli settlements in the West Bank is therefore not supported by international law; it is unilateral, ineffective as a means of pressuring Israel, and counterproductive, because it particularly affects the very population group namely the Palestinians, whom it is supposedly intended to help.

It is therefore typical that the threat of a boycott comes from countries that are politically insignificant in the Middle East—and will remain so with such a policy.