



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office



**Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon
Minister of State (Middle East,
North Africa, South Asia,
Commonwealth and the UN)**

**Prime Minister's Special
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16 July 2023

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 20 June to the Foreign Secretary on behalf of a number of your constituents about the importation of goods from illegal Israeli settlements. I am replying as the Minister of State for the Middle East.

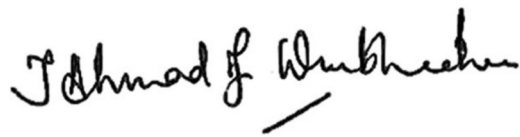
The UK's position on settlements is clearly laid out in [our recent international statement](#) regarding the Israeli government's decision to increase the number of settlements and recent changes to the settlement approval process. The continued expansion of settlements is an obstacle to peace and negatively impacts efforts to achieve a negotiated two-state solution. We call on the Government of Israel to reverse these decisions. This is something that I have raised with the Israeli chargé d'affaires on 4 July, and which the Foreign Secretary raised with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen on 5 July.

With regards to settlement products, there are currently no plans for legislation to ban the import of products from Israeli settlements. The UK does not recognise the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including Israeli settlements, as part of Israel. Goods imported from the settlements are therefore not entitled to benefit from trade preferences under the UK-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement.

Our position is that only Israeli goods originating from the State of Israel will be covered by the UK-Israel FTA. Palestinian goods originating from the West Bank and Gaza will continue to benefit from the terms of the UK-Palestinian Authority FTA. Settlement goods originating from Israeli settlements in the West Bank will be covered by neither FTA. Such trading is not allowed under the existing trade and partnership agreement, and we have no plans to change that. However, the UK supports accurate labelling of settlement goods, so as not to mislead the consumer.

Your constituent also mentions the term “apartheid.” We do not agree with the use of this terminology. Any judgment on whether serious crimes under international law have occurred is a matter for judicial decision, rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies. As a friend of Israel, we have a regular dialogue on human rights. This includes encouraging the government of Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and do all it can to uphold the values of equality for all.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

LORD (TARIQ) AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON

Minister of State

Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict