



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

The Rt Hon. James Cleverly MP
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Rt Hon. Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
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30 June 2021

Dear George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 17 June to the Foreign Secretary, on behalf of a number of your constituents, about Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). I am replying as the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa.

The UK's position is that settlements are illegal under international law and are damaging to renewed efforts to launch peace negotiations. For this reason, the settlements are not covered by the UK-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement, which now governs our trade. Products from Israeli settlements are not eligible to receive preferential tariff treatment. We routinely update our guidance to British businesses on the Overseas Business Risk website. We advise British businesses to bear in mind the British Government's view on the illegality of settlements under international law when considering their investments and activities in the region. When approached by businesses, we set out the UK's clear position on Israeli settlements, and share with them our online guidance. This is voluntary guidance to British businesses on doing business in Israel and the OPTs. Ultimately it will be the decision of an individual or company whether to operate in settlements in the OPTs, but the British Government would neither encourage nor offer support to such activity.

We understand the concerns of people who do not wish to purchase goods exported from Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). It was in order to enable consumers to make a more fully informed decision concerning the products they buy that, in December 2009, the UK introduced voluntary guidelines to enable produce from Israeli settlements in the OPTs to be specifically labelled as such. We understand that multiple British retailers who have stocked settlement produce have adopted the labelling policy recommended in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs voluntary guidance.

The British Government has made its position on boycotts/sanctions clear. While we do not hesitate to express disagreement with Israel whenever we feel it necessary, we are firmly opposed to boycotts/sanctions. We believe that imposing sanctions or boycotts on Israel or supporting anti-Israeli boycotts would not support our efforts to progress the

peace process and achieve a negotiated solution. The UK is strongly opposed to the Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions Movement against Israel. We are strongly against boycotts which divide people and reduce understanding.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'James Cleverly', written in a cursive style.

The Rt Hon. James Cleverly MP
Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa