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IMPORTING OCCUPATION: Millions of Euros of Illegal Israeli Settlement Food Products Are Entering European Markets Through Unlawful Means

Investigation Reveals System-Wide Failures and Europe's Complicity in Palestinian Dispossession

Today, [Global Echo Litigation Center](#) released a new report based on a four-year investigation that has uncovered a complex system by which food products originating from illegal Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian and Syrian territory enter European markets, declaring preferential tax status reserved for Israeli goods and bearing "Product of Israel" labels and invalid organic and plant health certifications, undermining EU and UK laws. Global Echo, a leading litigation center specializing in international law and corporate accountability for complicity in violations of Palestinians' human rights, is launching legal action in the UK to force the authorities to act on this evidence of serious legal failures and additional litigation is planned. The investigative report, **Importing Occupation**, can be found [here](#).

"We have now confirmed suspicions raised by Palestinian and international groups for decades: settlement goods are unlawfully entering European markets in large numbers," said Emily Schaeffer Omer-Man, international human rights lawyer and executive director of Global Echo. "Under EU and UK laws, food products from illegal Israeli settlements should not receive tax breaks, plant passports, or organic certification, and they must not be on supermarket shelves marked as Product of Israel. Now we know how settlement producers, packers, and exporters regularly subvert and undermine these laws. These practices violate European consumers' and producers' rights, and Palestinians pay the highest price."

The investigation, which draws on examination of more than 30,000 export documents, cross-referenced with government data on agricultural plots, extensive field investigations, and interviews with senior industry insiders from Israeli exporters, packing houses, and producers found:

- Out of more than 5,900 Israeli shipments of citrus, dates, tahini, and other fresh produce to Europe over the past 8 years (2017 – 2026) examined by Global Echo, **1 in 6 (17.2%) shipments to the EU, UK, Norway, and Switzerland were sourced from settlements**. Because of widespread obfuscation of origin, the true scale is likely higher.
- Analysis of over 2,000 invoices revealed that **16.7% claimed Israeli origin for settlement goods for the purpose of preferential tax treatment**—amounting to **€13.1 million euros worth of settlement agricultural products**.
- When preferential tax treatment is correctly denied to settlement products, **the Israeli government reimburses exporters, rendering tariffs on settlement products practically meaningless**.
- **Invalid organic and plant health certifications are routinely accepted** by EU and UK customs authorities for settlement products, undermining European regulatory regimes.
- **Consumers are being systematically misled** about the origins of settlement products.

"As long as the EU and UK maintain this system, Europe will continue to contribute directly to the economic sustainability and expansion of the settlement enterprise and all the violence, dispossession, and oppression it brings," said Basel Adra, Global Echo's head of community engagement and Oscar-winning filmmaker. "The settlement enterprise is the single most enduring and systematic violation of Palestinian human rights."

"What our investigation shows is that the system itself is flawed: it allows settlement goods to enter European markets as if they were Israeli goods. EU and UK authorities are responsible for preventing this, but the current system makes it practically impossible," said Jessica Stober, Global Echo's legal director and international human rights lawyer. "As long as that continues, the EU, its member states, and the UK cannot credibly claim to be fulfilling their international law obligations."

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Concurrent to the release of *Importing Occupation*, Global Echo is initiating legal action in the UK – and additional litigation is planned – to force action on these violations and fix the system that allows settlement goods to enter European markets in breach of European laws. In the UK, the legal action challenges HMRC's approach to detecting settlement goods at the border. It claims the current system fails to reliably distinguish between goods from Israel and goods from illegal settlements, allowing settlement products to claim trade benefits they should not receive.

Global Echo's findings point to four interrelated violations of EU and UK laws:

- **Preferential Tariff Treatment:** No settlement goods should benefit from tariff exemptions applicable only to products originating within Israel. The current system enables Israeli exporters to declare preferential status on settlement goods, placing unreasonable burden on EU and UK customs authorities to effectively enforce rules governing preferential tariffs.
- **Organic Certifications:** No products originating in settlements should receive organic certification. Israeli authorities lack jurisdiction to certify such products, and their production violates applicable Palestinian law.
- **Phytosanitary Certifications:** EU and UK authorities should not accept plant health certificates issued by Israeli authorities for products grown in settlements. These certificates are legally invalid.
- **Consumer Protection:** Consumer protection authorities should investigate the mislabelling of settlement products, and retailers and supermarkets must comply with consumer protection law to prevent misleading consumers.

Global Echo identified three recurring practices through which the origin of the product is disguised as Israeli, contributing to all four violations of European law:

1. **“Hiding in Plain Sight”:** Exporters list the correct production location in occupied territory but describe the country of origin as “Israel”.
2. **“Sham Address”:** Exporters use a false address inside Israel's sovereign territory instead of the real settlement location in occupied territory.
3. **“Mingling”:** Israeli packing houses mix settlement goods with goods from Israel, which are then exported together under Israeli origin.

The full report can be downloaded at GlobalEcho.law/ImportingOccupation.

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