

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 8 September 2026, 20:15 BST

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Global Echo Welcomes UK Settlement Trade Ban — Says It Can Be Enforced

Importing Occupation investigation identifies sham addresses and mingling as key areas for the new UK regime to target

8 September 2026

[Global Echo Litigation Center](#) welcomes today's announcement by the UK Government that it will ban imports of goods from illegal Israeli settlements and take action targeting companies and individuals that finance or facilitate settlements in occupied territory.

Global Echo particularly welcomes the Government's recognition that Israel's occupation is itself unlawful and that this must be reflected in the UK's economic relationships with "the occupied territories". This is an important step towards giving practical effect to the International Court of Justice's landmark July 2024 Advisory Opinion. The Court made clear that states must distinguish in their dealings between Israel and the territory it occupies, must not aid or assist the maintenance of the unlawful situation, and must take steps to prevent economic relations that help sustain it.

Global Echo's recent report, [Importing Occupation](#), revealed never-before-seen evidence of the prevalence of settlement goods in European markets. The investigation analysed around 30,000 export documents relating to more than 6,800 shipments of Israeli agricultural products between 2017 and 2026. Of approximately 5,900 shipments destined for Europe, **17.2% — around one in six — contained settlement products.**

The investigation examined 511 shipments to the UK and confirmed beyond doubt settlement products in 19 of them, worth at least US\$307,678. Global Echo also identified 368 declarations claiming Israeli preferential treatment on shipments entering UK ports, 15 of which were confirmed to relate to consignments containing settlement products. The confirmed rate of settlement products in the UK sample was 3.7%, considerably lower than the 17.2% identified across Europe. While this data does not prove the effectiveness of UK enforcement, it may indicate that existing UK differentiation controls have already had some effect. It may also reflect growing concern on the part of UK consumers and retailers about the sourcing of the products on their shelves.

Global Echo cautions that the UK figure is conservative. Its investigation applies a high evidential threshold before classifying goods as settlement-origin, while some settlement goods

may also reach the UK indirectly through other major European ports. In Global Echo's wider dataset, 71% of all settlement goods tracked entered Europe through Rotterdam, Marseille Fos, Hamburg, or Munich.

Global Echo's evidence also challenges claims that distinguishing settlement goods from Israeli goods is impractical. The investigation identified three recurring ways in which obscured settlement origin can be detected: **"hiding in plain sight"**, the most common of the three, where the true production location in occupied territory appears in the paperwork but the goods are nevertheless declared as Israeli; **"sham addresses"**, where an address inside Israel is substituted for the true settlement origin; and **"mingling"**, where settlement produce is mixed with produce from Israel before export and all marked as Israeli.

Emily Shaeffer Omer-Man, Executive Director of Global Echo, said:

"The findings of Global Echo's investigation should dispel any claim that a settlement trade ban cannot be enforced. The most common method of obscuring origin we found was simply 'hiding in plain sight' — until now. The less common, but tougher cases are sham Israeli addresses and settlement produce being mixed with Israeli produce. But the new ban should address these too. It changes the commercial incentives and consequences of trading with settlements for businesses throughout the supply chain. Political will is the only barrier to enforcement now."

Furthermore, the UK already has practice detecting settlement goods. HMRC has been required to make the distinction between Israeli and settlement goods under the UK's existing tariff and origin rules. The new ban changes the consequence of getting that distinction wrong.

Jess Stober, Legal Director of Global Echo, said:

"There will always be those who try to get around trade sanctions. That is not a reason not to enforce the law or meet the UK's international obligations. HMRC has already had to distinguish between Israeli and settlement goods for decades, including for preferential tariffs and so does DEFRA for origin labelling. This is not a new task."

"No trade regime is impossible to circumvent. The question is whether cheating the system is made difficult, risky, and expensive. A well-designed ban can do exactly that."

Global Echo now awaits the detailed legislation and will examine closely how the Government proposes to verify origin, prevent circumvention, deal with mixed consignments and sham addresses, impose duties on businesses, and penalise non-compliance. Global Echo stands ready to share the evidence and enforcement analysis contained in *Importing Occupation* with the UK Government as the new regime is developed.

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