



Brussels, 21 January 2016

Martin Schulz, President

Subject: EU Guidelines on Israeli settlements

Mr President,

We are writing to express our disbelief following your reported [comments](#)¹ in the Israeli press opposing the [EU guidelines](#)² adopted on 11 November 2015, namely the EU decision to label products that are imported from Israeli settlements in the occupied territories as "Israeli settlements".

As you are well aware, the European Parliament has unequivocally expressed its support for the Labelling Guidelines, including in its latest [resolution](#)³ on the Middle East Peace Process, which was co-signed by all political groups last September. The European Parliament's position was reflected in the decision taken by the European Commission to label illegal Israeli settlements' goods as "Israeli settlements" rather than "Made in Israel" due to the latter being "incorrect and misleading" to European consumers, to quote the European Commission's decision.

Therefore International Trade Committee Chair Bernd Lange and Standing Rapporteur Marie Arena have publicly [stated](#)⁴ the committee's support on this matter, on 11 November. Moreover, the [EU Foreign Affairs Council](#)⁵ of 17 November welcomed the publication of the Guidelines and on Monday 18 January reiterated its firm support.

As you personally endorsed the EU Guidelines in your letter of 22 December 2015 to Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, you were right to remind him of the facts that the labelling only affects 1% of the total trade between the EU and Israel, that settlement products are not even blocked from entering the EU and that Israel's internationally recognised trade is not affected. Last but not least, you stressed that they were the result of repeated requests by our citizens and the EU Member States.

Therefore, we are very surprised to learn that, during a public meeting in Berlin with the Speaker of Israel's Knesset on 14 January, you were reported stating "I oppose labeling products from the territories. It will mainly hurt the Palestinians, who make an honest living there." Notwithstanding the fact that you should represent the Parliament's position, we do not understand your newly declared opinion based on your belief

¹<http://www.jewishpress.com/news/european-parliament-president-schulz-labeling-israeli-products-hurts-palestinians/2016/01/15/>

²http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/israel/documents/news/20151111_interpretative_notice_indication_of_origin_of_goods_en.pdf

³<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=P8-RC-2015-0836&language=GA>

⁴<http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/Assetdetail.aspx?ref=I111892>

⁵<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2015/11/16-17/>

that the settlements are an economic benefit to Palestinians. We remind you that all Palestinian trade unions have welcomed the EU guidelines, as well as [550 leading Israeli figures](#)⁶ including Israel's Nobel Prize in economics, Daniel Kahneman. Israel's occupation is estimated to cost the Palestinians [85% of their GDP](#)⁷, monopolising the bulk of Palestine's land and water resources - the very point which you have had the courage to raise in front of the Knesset in February 2015, asking "why an Israeli can use 70 cubic litres of water daily and a Palestinian only 17". We are well aware that the settlement enterprise is largely responsible for the high unemployment of Palestinians and for severely undermining Palestine's economic base.

In light of the above, we urge you to clarify such unexpected and distressing statements as the beholder of a position that entails a clear representation of our institution, a body of law. Surely you have been misquoted? We hope your comments have been taken out of context and we trust you will reiterate your support for the EU's labelling guidelines in an official statement.

Opposing such reasonable and moderate steps would be counter-productive at a time when Israel's increasingly authoritarian government is engaging in unprecedented settlement [construction](#)⁸, further jeopardizing any prospect of a two-state solution.

Yours sincerely,

Alyn Smith MEP, Marie Arena MEP, Martina Anderson MEP, Ana Gomes MEP, Reinhard Bütikofer MEP, Barbara Lochbihler MEP, Klaus Buchner MEP, Mark Demesmaeker MEP, Javier Nart MEP, Ivo Vajgl MEP, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica MEP, Afzal Khan MEP, Nessa Childers MEP, Judith Sargentini MEP, Yannick Jadot MEP, Bart Staes MEP, Eva Joly MEP, Heidi Hautala MEP, Philippe Lambert MEP, Lynn Boylan MEP, Bodil Valero MEP, Matt Carthy MEP, Karima Delli MEP, Pascal Durand MEP, Liadh Ni Riada MEP, Marie-Christine Vergiat MEP

⁶ <http://www.scribd.com/doc/289329095/Israeli-Petition-in-Favour-of-EU-Labeling-of-Settlement-Products>

⁷ <http://www.un.org/depts/dpa/qpal/docs/2012Cairo/p2%20jad%20isaac%20e.pdf>

⁸ <http://peacenow.org.il/eng/MinistryofHousing>