

European Court of Justice: Products From Israeli Colonies in Palestinian Territories Cannot Receive Preferential Trade

By [Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East](#)
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Toronto – On February 25, the European Court of Justice ruled that products from Israeli colonies in the Occupied Palestinian Territories cannot benefit from the preferential treatment accorded Israeli products under the European Community-Israel Association Agreement. This sets an important precedent with possible implications for Canada and the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement (CIFTA.) Currently, a wide range of Israeli products enjoy preferential status in Canada, as do products from Canada’s NAFTA partners-Mexico and the US-as well as from Chile, entering Canada duty-free or with greatly reduced tariffs.

Given that the colonies in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are not within Israel’s internationally-recognized boundaries, products originating there should not be entering Canada free of the tariffs that apply to other nation’s products. However, due to the deliberately misleading labelling of these goods as “Product of Israel,” they do in fact enter Canada under CIFTA, thus indirectly encouraging the ongoing expansion of Israel’s illegal colonies. The resultant usurpation of Palestinian land further exacerbates tensions and contributes to the escalation of violence in the Occupied Territories. Israel’s March 9 announcement of new settlements in East Jerusalem, also regarded as Palestinian territory under international law, but illegally annexed by Israel in 1967, highlights the importance of taking a firm stance against the expansion of Israeli colonies.

“It’s high time Canada got serious about preventing goods produced in Israel’s illegal colonies in Palestinian territory from entering the Canadian market under CIFTA,” asserted Thomas Woodley, President of Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME). “The Canadian government should apply full tariffs to such products, and insist that Israel stop labelling products from the Occupied Territories as Israeli products. If Israel refuses to comply with a request for honest labelling, then the Canadian government should consider more drastic measures to ensure compliance,” he urged.

CJPME calls upon the Canadian government to investigate the origin of Israeli products currently entering Canada, to determine which ones are produced in the Occupied Territories, and to take appropriate action to get them off Canadian shelves. Since the 1997 Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement, the volume of Israeli exports to Canada has skyrocketed. Canada currently runs a large trade deficit with Israel. “Our government must not turn a blind eye to the presence of the fruits of military occupation on our shelves. Canadians want justice and peace in the Middle East. Allowing the products of a military occupation to be sold preferentially in Canada contradicts our long-standing policy against

Israel's occupation of the West Bank," notes Woodley.

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) is a non-profit and secular organization bringing together men and women of all backgrounds who labour to see justice and peace take root again in the Middle East. Its mission is to empower decision-makers to view all sides with fairness and to promote the equitable and sustainable development of the region.

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