



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office



Department for
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The Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP
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House of Commons
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26 February 2026

Dear Liam,

Thank you for your letter dated 12 February regarding UK trade with Israeli settlements addressed to the Department for Business and Trade; the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and HM Customs and Revenue (HMRC). We are replying as Minister for the Middle East for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Minister of State for Trade for the Department for Business and Trade.

Your letter comes at an important and deeply concerning time for the West Bank. In the past weeks, the Government of Israel has introduced sweeping extensions to its control of the West Bank. These changes, including to land registration and land purchases, will further facilitate and entrench the settlement enterprise. We condemn these decisions. The UK is clear that Israel's illegal settlements and decisions designed to further them are a flagrant violation of international law. We will take concrete steps in accordance with international law to counter settlement expansion and to challenge policies and threats of forcible displacement and annexation.

Since coming into office, Israel and Palestine have been a priority for the Government. In pursuit of our objectives, and consistent with international law, we have taken important steps. We have stopped relevant exports to the IDF that might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law in the conflict in Gaza. We have suspended negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement with Israel. We have also introduced sanctions related to settler violence in the West Bank, including sanctions on Ministers Ben-Gvir and Smotrich in their personal capacity for inciting violence towards Palestinians.

As part of the Government's commitment to the two-State solution, the United Kingdom recognised the State of Palestine in September 2025. It was one of the great honours of my career to celebrate that occasion with the now Embassy of the State of Palestine. We

are committed to building our relationship with the Palestinians further, including through strengthening business and trade ties.

In response to your specific questions:

1. What steps has HMG taken because of the ICJ advisory opinion on trade with the OPTs?

There is much in the July 2024 ICJ Advisory Opinion that is already government policy. We agree settlements are illegal and have taken action to tackle settler violence. We agree that we should distinguish between Israel within its 1967 borders, and illegal settlements in what is Occupied Palestinian Territory. The steps in respect of our trade policy detailed below under question 6 are consistent with this. And we agree that Israel should bring an end to its presence in Palestine as rapidly as possible in line with our support for a two-state solution and recognition of a Palestinian State in September 2025. Alongside these existing measures, the UK continues to carefully consider the broader implications of the Advisory Opinion.

2. Has HMG considered the merits of a ban on UK imports from the OPTs?

We have considered, and continue to consider, a wide range of options in relation to the West Bank. We have not yet come to a definitive conclusion but will inform the House and the Committee of any developments as soon as possible.

3. What steps do UK authorities undertake to ascertain whether an import originated from the OPTs and therefore should not receive preferential tariff treatment?

Importers seeking to claim preferential tariff treatment under the UK–Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement (the ‘Agreement’) are required to make a legal declaration confirming that the goods were not produced in any of the settlements listed in the 31 December 2020 notice as ‘noneligible locations’ ([List of non-eligible locations - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/notice-to-importers-treatment-of-goods-from-israeli-settlements/list-of-non-eligible-locations))¹.

Imports entering the UK are processed through HMRC’s Customs Declaration Service (‘CDS’), a digital system. Verification of origin (for the purposes of whether preferential tariffs have been correctly claimed) may be triggered on or after importation, on a risk and intelligence-led basis. This may be as a result of routine checks or where HMRC or Border Force officers have reason to doubt that the requirements for preferential treatment under the Agreement have been fulfilled. In such cases, HMRC may request further evidence from the importer or, where necessary, initiate a formal verification process with the exporting authority. Where HMRC is not satisfied that the goods meet the conditions for preferential tariff treatment, including where origin cannot be confirmed or evidence indicates that the goods originate from a noneligible location, preferential tariff treatment is refused, and the goods are subject to the standard Most Favoured Nation tariff rate.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/notice-to-importers-treatment-of-goods-from-israeli-settlements/list-of-non-eligible-locations>

4. What assessment of international law underlay the decision to impose targeted import bans on Russia, and why does HMG consider that the same rationale should not apply to trade with the OPTs?

The UK has the power to create its own sanctions regimes under the Sanctions and Anti Money Laundering Act 2018. Using these powers, the UK introduced the Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 which carried the EU's Russia sanctions regime (established after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014) over into UK law following EU Exit. These Regulations now provide the legal basis for the UK's Russia sanctions and their purposes and are consistent with international law. In response to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the UK has continued to expand these Regulations and has imposed an unprecedented package of sanctions, including import prohibitions, constraining the funding for Putin's war machine, inflicting economic cost at scale and demonstrating support for Ukraine along with our international partners. We keep our sanctions powers, regimes, designations and measures under review to respond to new developments and changing circumstances.

5. Is the UK exploring joint initiatives with EU partners to address imports from illegal settlements?

Spain and Slovenia have reportedly already introduced bans on trade with settlements. Ireland and Belgium are amongst other European countries where we understand a ban is under consideration. Fellow Ministers and I regularly discuss key issues with our partners. However, I cannot comment on whether the UK has explicitly explored joint initiatives on trade.

6. What other actions is the UK taking to address illegal settlement trade?

Goods originating from illegal Israeli settlements are not entitled to tariff preferences under either the existing agreement between the UK and Israel or in our agreement with the PA. Where there are doubts about the declared origin of goods, HMRC undertakes checks to verify the origin and ensure fiscal compliance. The overseas business risk guidance, available at [Overseas business risk: Palestine - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-business-risk-palestine/overseas-business-risk-the-occupied-palestinian-territories#human-rights)² sets out the clear risks to UK operators related to economic and financial activities in the settlements and states: *"UK citizens and businesses should be aware of the potential reputational implications of getting involved in economic and financial activities in settlements, as well as possible abuses of the rights of individuals"*. We do not encourage or offer support to such activity and advise that those contemplating any economic or financial involvement in settlements should seek appropriate legal advice.

As of September 2025, the UK requires document code Y864 as a condition to claiming Israeli preference on GB imports in addition to the existing preference document code. Document code Y864 is a declaration that the proof of origin indicates that the production conferring originating status has not taken place in a location within the territories brought under Israeli administration since June 1967.

Additionally, you asked:

1. What evidence is required to identify goods originating in non-government controlled Ukrainian territory? How are these measures enforced?

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-business-risk-palestine/overseas-business-risk-the-occupied-palestinian-territories#human-rights>

UK trade with the non-government controlled Ukrainian territories is subject to a range of prohibitions under the UK's Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Full guidance is included in the UK's statutory guidance to the Russia Regulations: [Russia sanctions: guidance - GOV.UK](#)³.

The import of any goods from non-government controlled Ukrainian territories (NGCUTs - defined as "Crimea and non-government controlled areas of the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts" under Regulation 2 of the Russia Regulations) are sanctioned (under Regulation 47), unless accompanied by a certificate of origin (Regulation 62), defined as "a document issued by the Government of Ukraine or a person acting on behalf of the Government of Ukraine confirming that the goods originate in Ukraine"

HMRC uses risk and intelligence-based checks to ensure that goods imported to the UK do not originate from these territories. To verify where goods originate from, HMRC considers a range of evidence relating to the goods and their supplier.

2. Could similar measures be introduced to identify OPT-made products imported from Israel?

We keep our sanctions powers, regimes, designations and measures under review to respond to new developments and changing circumstances.

Please be assured that Israel and Palestine will continue to be a priority for the Government. We will continue to do all that we can to seize this chance for a better future and to secure lasting peace and security in the region, both for the people of Israel and the people of Palestine. Given the rapidly evolving situation in the region, the UK Government regularly publishes details of its engagements and statements on GOV.UK: - [Israel and the UK - GOV.UK](#), [Palestine and the UK - GOV.UK](#)⁴.

Yours ever,



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Minister for the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan



SIR CHRIS BRYANT MP
Minister of State for Trade for the Department for Business and Trade

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/russia-sanctions-guidance/russia-sanctions-guidance>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/world/palestine/news>