

Open Letter: Switzerland Must Stop Turning a Blind Eye to Israeli Settlements

As Israeli citizens convinced that ending the occupation of Palestinian territories is the condition for lasting peace, we closely follow European debates on halting trade in goods originating from Israeli settlements. We urge Switzerland to commit to this path.

For decades, Switzerland has consistently reiterated the illegality of Israeli settlements under international law and the fact that they undermine any prospect of a two-state solution. This position was upheld by the highest international judicial authority: in its advisory opinion of July 19, 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled the occupation of Palestinian territories unlawful and demanded that Israel bring it to an end.

Far from complying with this opinion, the Israeli government is accelerating settlement expansion in the West Bank, displacing Palestinians from their land — often by force of arms — and allowing violent settlers to attack Palestinian populations with complete impunity. More alarmingly, senior Israeli officials have openly stated their intention to establish settlements in areas of Gaza seized by the military during the devastating war that followed the brutal Hamas attack on October 7, 2023.

Despite this reality, Switzerland has still not translated its principles into action. The ICJ was clear: all States have an obligation not to provide any aid or assistance in maintaining this unlawful situation, and to take measures to prevent trade or investment relations that contribute to it.

The persistent disregard for international law by successive Israeli governments has been made possible by an international community content with words alone. This impunity has brought neither security nor stability: it has fueled the cycle of violence and compromised the safety of Israelis. Those of us who aspire to live in peace with our Palestinian neighbors know this: impunity distances Israel from peace.

Several European states — Spain, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Norway — have already ceased trade in goods from illegal settlement. Faced with this collective movement, Switzerland remains on the sidelines. Yet this inaction is no longer tenable. We call on Switzerland to join efforts to terminate trade relations with settlements, in accordance with the ICJ's advisory opinion.

Switzerland has long stood for peace and international law. As Israelis concerned about the future of our country, we know that our security depends on justice and respect for the law. We invite Switzerland to finally align its actions with its principles, and to work alongside us for a just and lasting peace.

Prof. Élie Barnavi, former Israeli Ambassador to France

Ilan Baruch, former Israeli Ambassador to South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe

Dr. Gershon Baskin, Columnist; Social and Political Activist

Michael Ben-Yair, former Attorney General of Israel; former Acting Supreme Court Judge

Prof. Yoram Bilu, Israeli Prize recipient (2013)

Avraham Burg, former Speaker of Knesset; former Head of the Jewish Agency

Prof. Naomi Chazan, Former MK; former Deputy Speaker of the Knesset

Prof. Itzhak Galnoor, Professor of Political Science; former head of Civil Service

Zehava Galon, former Leader of Meretz Party

Prof. Oded Goldreich, Israel Prize recipient (2021)

Dr. Ilana Hammerman, author and translator

Prof. David Harel, Israel Prize recipient (2004)

Prof. Moty Heiblum, Wolf Prize Laureate (2025)

Judith Karp, former Deputy Attorney General of Israel

Prof. Miki Kratsman, EMET Prize Laureate (2011)

Alex Levac, Israel Prize recipient (2005)

Dr. Alon Liel, former Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; former Ambassador to South Africa and Turkey

Prof. Kobi Metzger, former President of the Open University of Israel

Prof. David Shulman, Israel Prize recipient (2016)