



Campaign to Pass the Occupied Territories Bill
Universal Period Review of Ireland – April 2026

The Campaign to Pass the Occupied Territories Bill recommends that Ireland urgently pass comprehensive legislation banning all trade between Ireland and the illegal Israeli settlements, and acts to comply with our obligations under international law as clarified by the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion of July 2024.

The Campaign to Pass the Occupied Territories Bill

The Campaign to Pass the Occupied Territories Bill is a broad and growing coalition of international development agencies, trade unions, human rights organisations, academics and individuals campaigning for a ban on all trade between Ireland and the illegal Israeli settlements, in line with international law. All the details on the campaign are available at www.passtheotb.ie.

Campaign members include: Academics for Palestine, Action Aid Ireland, Afri – Action from Ireland, Amnesty International Ireland, ATU Friends of Palestine, Bloody Sunday Trust, Centre for Global Education, Christian Aid Ireland, Comhlámh, Cork Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Development Perspectives, 80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World, Financial Justice Ireland, Fórsa Trade Union, Friends of the Earth Ireland, Gaeil ar son Gaza, Gaza Action Ireland, Global Legal Action Network (GLAN), Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC), the Irish Coalition for Business & Human Rights (ICBHR), Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), Irish Council for Civil Liberties, Irish Development Education Association, Irish Health Care Workers for Palestine, Irish National Teachers' Organisation, Ireland Palestine Mental Health Network, Irish Psychologists for Palestine, Irish Sport for Palestine, Jews for Palestine – Ireland, Kairos Ireland, Mandate Trade Union, Mothers Against Genocide, National Women's Council of Ireland, North-West Mothers for Social Justice, Oxfam Ireland, Pals for Palestine, Queers for Palestine, Sadaka – the Ireland Palestine Alliance, the Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU), Stand, Trinity College Dublin Students' Union, Trade Union Friends of Palestine, Trócaire, Teachers' Union of Ireland, Unison Northern Ireland, Union of Students in Ireland, Uplift and Walk the Petition.

The Occupied Territories Bill

In January 2018, Independent Senator Frances Black and colleagues in the Upper House of the Irish Parliament, Seanad Éireann, with the support of several civil society organisations and human rights groups, first tabled the *Control of Economic Activity (Occupied Territories) Bill 2018*.¹ As set out in its long title, the Bill seeks to give effect to the State's obligations arising under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and under customary international humanitarian law, and for that purpose to make it an offence for a person to import or sell goods or services originating in an occupied territory or to extract resources from an occupied territory in certain circumstances, and to provide for related matters. This includes the illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt).

Tabling the legislation, Senator Black set out its purpose:

“At its core, this Bill is about respect for international law and standing up for the rights of vulnerable people. It is a chance for Ireland to state strongly that it does not support the illegal confiscation of land and the human suffering which inevitably results.

¹ Control of Economic Activity (Occupied Territories) Bill 2018: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bil/2018/6/>

In practical terms, we are dealing here with a breach of international law when one state has occupied another. It is about the construction of illegal settlements as a means of slowly confiscating land and natural resources. International law is clear on this. Such settlements violate the prohibition of the fourth Geneva Convention on the transfer of civilian populations into occupied territories and constitute a war crime. Importantly, they also break domestic Irish law. Despite this, Ireland continues to provide economic support through trade in settlement goods.

In the occupied Palestinian territory, people are forcibly kicked out of their homes, fertile farming land is seized and the fruit and vegetables produced are then exported to pay for it all. We strongly condemn the settlements but support them economically. As international law is clear that the settlements are illegal, the goods they produce are, in effect, the proceeds of crime. We must face up to this and cannot keep supporting breaches of international humanitarian law and violations of human rights. That is what the Bill seeks to do.

I stand in opposition to this war crime, not because of the abstract legal principles but because of the real human suffering caused on the ground. This is the daily reality in the occupied West Bank. The construction of illegal settlements has seen extreme water shortages, a lack of electricity, restrictions on movement, house demolitions and land confiscation. As land is gradually confiscated, it becomes increasingly difficult to provide basic services and the viability of a functioning Palestinian state is undermined.”²

After five rounds of vote and debate, the legislation was approved in full by Seanad Éireann in December 2018.³ In January 2019, it was then brought into the lower house of Parliament, Dáil Éireann, by Fianna Fáil, the largest party in the current Government of Ireland, where an overwhelming majority of members also voted in favour.⁴ However, despite clear votes of favour in both houses of Parliament and strong levels of public interest and support, the then-Government refused to progress it, primarily citing concerns over EU law. It was able to essentially freeze the Bill and block its formal passage into law using a little-known constitutional provision known as a ‘Money Message’.⁵ In the years since the Bill remained the subject of consistent public debate but did not pass fully into law.

The ICJ Advisory Opinion, July 2024

UN General Assembly Resolution, December 2022

On Friday 30th December 2022, the UN General Assembly approved a resolution seeking an Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the ‘Legal Consequences

² Seanad Éireann debate, 30 January 2018: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/seanad/2018-01-30/7/>

³ Seanad Éireann debate, 5 Dec 2018. Votes in favour 29, votes against 16: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/seanad/2018-12-05/27/>

⁴ Dáil Éireann debate, 24 Jan 2019. Votes in favour 78, votes against 45, abstentions 3: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2019-01-24/26/>

⁵ See ‘The Occupied Territories Bill & the Money Message’, Sadaka: <https://www.sadaka.ie/otb-the-money-message/>

arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem'.⁶

Intervention by Ireland in ICJ Hearings, February 2024

On 22nd February 2024, Ireland intervened in the ICJ Advisory Opinion hearings, noting the obligations on States under international law, stating that (emphasis added):

34. As regards the obligation not to recognise as lawful the situation created by these serious breaches, the Court has provided an example of how this may be achieved in its advisory opinion on the Legal Consequences for States of the Continued Presence of South Africa in Namibia. There, the Court found that the duty of non-recognition obliged States, inter alia, 'to abstain from entering into economic and other forms of relationship or dealings with South Africa ... which may entrench its authority over the [territory of Namibia]'.

35. This was also the approach taken by the EU in the case of the annexation by the Russian Federation of Crimea in 2014, when it implemented a broad range of diplomatic, economic and other measures, intended to preclude any implied recognition of the annexation. They included a ban on imports of goods originating in the annexed territory and a prohibition on investing in it.

36. In the present case, States are obliged not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by Israel's breach of its obligation to respect the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. The General Assembly and Security Council have, in the past, called upon all States to refrain from rendering any assistance to the maintenance of situations of denial of self-determination.

37. In Ireland's view, these obligations require all States, as well as international organisations with external trade competence (in Ireland's case, the EU), to review their trading relationships with the settlements in the OPT. It requires them to take steps to prevent trade that assists in the maintenance of the situation created by the settlement activity, or that implicitly recognises or serves to entrench or legitimise Israel's settlement or annexation of that territory."⁷

ICJ Advisory Opinion, July 2024

On 19th July 2024, in its landmark Advisory Opinion, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) held that (emphasis added):

"278. Taking note of the resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly, the Court is of the view that Member States are under an obligation not to recognize any changes in the physical character or demographic composition, institutional structure or status of the territory occupied by Israel on 5 June 1967, including East Jerusalem, except

⁶ 'UN asks World Court to give opinion on Israel's occupation', Reuters, 30 December 2022:

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/un-asks-world-court-give-opinion-israels-occupation-2022-12-30/>

⁷ Statement of Ireland in the ICJ Advisory Opinion Hearings on Israeli Practices and Policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2024 [emphasis added]: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-foreign-affairs/press-releases/statement-of-ireland-in-the-icj-advisory-opinion-hearings-on-israeli-practices-and-policies-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territory/>

as agreed by the parties through negotiations and to distinguish in their dealings with Israel between the territory of the State of Israel and the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967. The Court considers that the duty of distinguishing dealings with Israel between its own territory and the Occupied Palestinian Territory encompasses, inter alia, the obligation to abstain from treaty relations with Israel in all cases in which it purports to act on behalf of the Occupied Palestinian Territory or a part thereof on matters concerning the Occupied Palestinian Territory or a part of its territory; to abstain from entering into economic or trade dealings with Israel concerning the Occupied Palestinian Territory or parts thereof which may entrench its unlawful presence in the territory; to abstain, in the establishment and maintenance of diplomatic missions in Israel, from any recognition of its illegal presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; and to take steps to prevent trade or investment relations that assist in the maintenance of the illegal situation created by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory."⁸

UN General Assembly Resolution, September 2024

In September 2024, Ireland co-sponsored a Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly, which called on all States “*comply with their obligations under international law, inter alia, as reflected in the advisory opinion, including their obligation to*”:

“(ii) Abstain from entering into economic or trade dealings with Israel concerning the Occupied Palestinian Territory or parts thereof which may entrench its unlawful presence in the Territory, including with regard to the settlements and their associated regime;

(iv) Take steps to prevent trade or investment relations that assist in the maintenance of the illegal situation created by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including with regard to the settlements and their associated regime;”

Recognition of its obligations and commitments to act

In light of the ICJ Advisory Opinion, the Irish Government has consistently recognised that Ireland has an “obligation to act” under international law, and specifically to end trade with the illegal Israeli settlements.⁹ Despite this, it has failed to do so and this trade continues.

Before national elections in November 2024, both current governing parties pledged to support the Occupied Territories Bill, which seeks to ban trade with illegal Israeli settlements. On Tuesday 5th November 2024, the then Foreign Minister and current Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, told parliament that the Government had changed its position and would support the Bill, stating:

“[Ireland] took a proactive role in the genesis of the Advisory Opinion. [...] The ICJ’s conclusions on this point were entirely consistent with the arguments made by the Attorney General on behalf of the Irish Government throughout the case.” [The ICJ AO]

⁸ ‘Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem’, ICJ, July 2024, para 278: <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/186>

⁹ Dáil Éireann Debate, 29th May 2025: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2025-05-29/speech/404/>

“is an authoritative statement of applicable international law, which is binding on all states and international organisations. This is the changed legal context for the Bill. It enables us to go forward. The essential argument we are making is that the ICJ has placed obligations on us as a nation not to do anything that would aid the illegality of the occupation.”

After years of delays, a ‘Money Message’ was formally granted by Government to allow the Occupied Territories Bill to progress. When asked when the Bill could progress, Taoiseach Micheál Martin said it could happen *“straight away”* at the beginning of the new Parliament, after elections.¹⁰

Then-Taoiseach, and current Tánaiste, Simon Harris clarified that all political parties entered national elections in November 2024 pledging to support the legislation, and clarified that in light of the ICJ Advisory Opinion, the Government’s legal position regarding EU law had changed and that it would finally act:

"I take the point Deputy Connolly makes around the date of the original Bill being 2018. That is, of course, a statement of fact. Respectfully, I make the point back that, for better or worse, trade is an EU competency, and I am happy to be in the European Union. It has been the position of successive Governments for quite a period of time that, therefore, any issues in that Bill were a matter to be dealt with at EU level rather than at member state level. The change, from the Government's legal understanding, was the ICJ advisory opinion. In my previous role as Taoiseach I asked the Attorney General to look again at the ability of a member state to do something in the context of the ICJ advisory opinion, which, as Deputy Murphy reminds us, reminded nations of their obligation to act in this space. The Attorney General helpfully and importantly came back and identified what I would describe as a narrow way forward. [...] When I and many others entered the general election campaign, it was on that basis that every political party or grouping in Dáil Éireann was committing to enacting legislation in this space."

Lack of action, amended legislation and exemptions for trade in services

After elections, instead of passing the original Occupied Territories Bill, in June 2025 the Government of Ireland instead published its own draft legislation, the *Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Prohibition of Importation of Goods) Bill*. It explicitly states that its purpose is to *"provide for compliance by the State with its international legal obligation, as identified by the ICJ, to take steps to prevent trade"* with the illegal Israeli settlements.¹¹ However, the draft legislation is currently limited to banning only the

¹⁰ Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence debate, 5 Nov 2024:

https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/select_committee_on_foreign_affairs_and_defence/2024-11-05/speech/117/

¹¹ Tánaiste publishes General Scheme of Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Prohibition of Importation of Goods) Bill, June 2025: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-foreign-affairs/press-releases/t%C3%A1naiste-publishes-general-scheme-of-israeli-settlements-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territory-prohibition-of-importation-of-goods-bill/>

importation of physical goods from the illegal Israeli settlements and omits trade in services entirely.

The ICJ Advisory Opinion makes no distinction between trade in goods on the one hand, and trade in services on the other. Analysis by Christian Aid Ireland, Oxfam Ireland, and a coalition of over 80 NGOs has detailed the extent of trade between EU Member States and the illegal Israeli settlements, and the importance of services trade within this. A majority of Ireland's trade with the wider world, and with Israel, is in services.¹²

In June 2025, the Irish Government formally wrote to the European Commission emphasising the need to comply with the ICJ AO and the need to *“effectively discontinue trade of goods and services with the illegal settlements.”*¹³ Government officials speaking in the relevant parliamentary committee clarified that, regarding the obligations to prevent trade as set out by the ICJ, *“trade is trade in goods and services.”* When asked whether the draft Government legislation would therefore only make Ireland *“partially compliant”* with its binding legal obligations, officials accepted that it would only bring Ireland *“towards compliance”* with its obligations international law.¹⁴

The Government of Ireland has recognised that a national-level ban on trade with illegal Israeli settlements is required under international law and can be justified under EU law. Leading experts in international law and EU law have made clear, in detailed legal opinions and formal testimony in the Irish parliament, that the provisions in EU law that would enable an individual Member State to ban trade in goods with the illegal Israeli settlements can also be relied upon to justify a ban on trade in services.¹⁵

In May 2025, over 400 of Ireland's most prominent lawyers and legal academics wrote to the Irish Government urging it to implement a full and comprehensive ban, stating (emphasis added) that *“successive Irish governments have delayed and prevaricated on what is known as the Occupied Territories Bill. We do not consider there to be any insurmountable legal obstacles, in either Irish, European or international law, preventing the adoption of legislation prohibiting the import of goods and services produced in the unlawful Israeli settlements in the West Bank. We consider this is the absolute minimum required from the State to comply with its international legal obligations and the holdings of the International Court of Justice. Anything less would be an abrogation of Ireland's long-standing commitment to international law and human rights.”*¹⁶

¹² ‘Trading with Illegal Settlements’, Oxfam, Christian Aid et al, 2025: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/trading-illegal-settlements>

¹³ Nine countries press EU to end trade with Israeli settlements, Euractiv, June 2025: <https://www.euractiv.com/news/nine-countries-press-eu-to-end-trade-with-israeli-settlements/>

¹⁴ Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade debate - Tuesday, 1 Jul 2025: https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/joint_committee_on_foreign_affairs_and_trade/2025-07-01/speech/24/

¹⁵ Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade debate, 9 Jul 2025: https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/joint_committee_on_foreign_affairs_and_trade/2025-07-09/3/

¹⁶ ‘Hundreds of Ireland's lawyers sign letter saying government should enact Occupied Territories Bill’, Journal.ie, 23 May 2025: <https://www.thejournal.ie/open-letter-lawyers-law-academics-occupied-territories-bill-6712847-May2025/>

In July 2025, Ireland’s A-rated National Human Rights Institution under the Paris Principles, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC), wrote to the Government of Ireland, welcoming the legislation and stating:

“The Government needs to ensure that Ireland meets its obligations under international law. The International Court of Justice’s (the ‘ICJ’) advisory opinion makes clear the extent of Israel’s breach of international law and it also makes clear the imperative on Ireland, like all states, not to be complicit in entrenching the unlawful actions of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

You and your government colleagues have indicated your belief that, notwithstanding that international trade is an EU competence, there remains a ‘narrow pathway’ to take action at a national level. The Commission exhorts the Government to show courage and leadership in maximising the space provided by this pathway, and to enact a statute that reflects the grievous nature of the human rights infringements by Israel against the Palestinian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It is essential that the Act, when passed, gives real meaning to the international law imperative on Ireland to take strong action in response to the unlawful actions of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. This is an opportunity for Ireland to show to the world what reasonable and well considered legislation can deliver in this context.

The ICJ makes no distinction between trade in goods and services, and we believe that both – and not only goods - should be covered by the Bill. Indeed, Ireland’s submission to the ICJ in the context of its preparation of the Advisory Opinion made no such distinction.”¹⁷

In July 2025, after extensive hearings with civil society groups, academics and legal experts, the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Irish Parliament, with members from both the opposition and governing parties, concluded detailed scrutiny of Government proposals. It unanimously voted that Government should implement a full ban in line with its obligations, stating that it *“strongly recommends progressing the Bill and that the prohibition of imports should be extended to include trade in services, in line with the Advisory Opinion of the ICJ and the Resolution which Ireland co-sponsored at the UN General Assembly.”¹⁸*

In Autumn 2025, several other EU Member States, including Slovenia, Belgium, Spain and the Netherlands announced or progressed bans on trade with illegal Israeli settlements. The Spanish law has already been passed in full and crucially covers both goods and services.¹⁹

¹⁷ ‘Letter to Tánaiste on the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Prohibition of Importation of Goods) Bill 2025’, IHREC, July 2025: <https://www.ihrec.ie/publications/letter-to-t%C3%A1naiste-on-the-occupied-palestinian-territory-prohibition-of-importation-of-goods-bill-2025>

¹⁸ ‘Report on Pre-Legislative Scrutiny of the General Scheme of the Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Prohibition of Importation of Goods) Bill’, Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, July 2025: https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/34/joint_committee_on_foreign_affairs_and_trade/reports/2025/2025-07-31_report-on-pre-legislative-scrutiny-of-the-general-scheme-of-the-israeli-settlements-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territory-prohibition-of-importation-of-goods-bill_en.pdf

¹⁹ ‘Three EU countries have passed Bills sanctioning Israel, Dáil told’, Irish Times, November 2025: <https://www.irishtimes.com/politics/oireachtas/2025/11/19/occupied-territories-bill-three-eu-countries-have-passed-bills-sanctioning-israel-dail-told/>

Ireland has argued before the ICJ that states are obliged under international law to end trade with the illegal Israeli settlements. Recognising the holdings of the ICJ, it has made clear that this obligation to end trade covers trade in both goods and services. Yet it has nonetheless published legislation that is knowingly inconsistent with this obligation. It has also failed to progress the legislation or to amend it. The Bill has not appeared in Parliament since the unanimous vote of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade in July 2025.

Nearly two years after the ICJ Advisory Opinion, and almost eight years after its initial introduction, the Occupied Territories Bill has still not been passed and Ireland continues to trade with illegal Israeli settlements.

The Campaign to Pass the Occupied Territories Bill recommends that Ireland urgently pass comprehensive legislation banning all trade between Ireland and the illegal Israeli settlements, and acts to comply with our obligations under international law as clarified by the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion of July 2024.



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