

Seanad Éireann in Solidarity with Palestine: Irish Senate Votes in Favour of Occupied Territories Bill

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Global Research, July 12, 2018

Region: [Europe](#), [Middle East & North Africa](#)
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Yesterday the Irish Seanad voted in favour of the Occupied Territories Bill which will prohibit the importation of goods or services from illegal settlements in occupied territories, including Israel's settlements in Palestine which violate the Geneva Conventions. The Bill was introduced by the well-known Irish [singer](#) Frances Black whose albums feature both Irish ballads and traditional music. She was elected to Seanad Éireann as an independent Senator on her first attempt in 2016.

The Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign welcomed the Seanad vote (25 in favour, 20 against) in support of Senator Frances Black's 'Control of Economic Activities (Occupied Territories) Bill. According to the [IPSC](#) Chairperson, Ms. Fatin Al Tamimi (a Palestinian-Irish citizen):

"We in the IPSC, and Palestinians around the world, warmly welcome this historic vote, the first of its kind in any Western country. Once again, Ireland is making history and leading the way in its solidarity with the Palestinian people. We thank and salute all those Senators and parties who have pledged to support the Bill, and we will be asking the Irish people to ensure that these politicians support its passage at all stages of the lawmaking process."

Black has been campaigning for some time now for the rights of the Palestinian people. She [states](#):

"I have long been passionate about the struggle of the Palestinian people, which shows clearly how trade in settlement goods sustains injustice. In the occupied territories, people are forcibly kicked out of their homes, fertile farming land is seized, and the fruit and vegetables produced are then sold on Irish shelves to pay for it all. We condemn the settlements as illegal but support them economically. As international law is absolutely clear that the settlements are illegal, then the goods they produce are the proceeds of crime. We must face up to this – we cannot keep supporting breaches of international law and violations of human rights."

Video: Frances Black discusses the Bill that would support banning goods from Israel's settlements.

According to an explanatory [note](#) on the bill's main provisions:

“Under international criminal law, the transfer by a State of its civilian population into a territory it has militarily occupied is a ‘war crime’, as well as a ‘grave breach’ of international humanitarian law. Importantly, it is also a crime under Irish law, no matter where in the world it is committed. Ireland has a duty to ensure these laws are respected and to uphold the humanitarian principles outlined in them. To this end, the Control of Economic Activity (Occupied Territories) Bill 2018 seeks to prohibit trade with and economic support for illegal settlements in territories deemed occupied under international law. It would restrict the import and sale of goods produced in such settlements, Irish involvement in the provision of services in such settlements, and the extraction of resources from occupied territories without the consent of the legitimate authority of that territory. This economic support underpins the long-term continuation of illegal settlements, established in clear violation of international law. In tabling this bill we are stating that Ireland should not provide economic or political support for them, wherever they arise.”

The [Bill](#), *inter alia*, specifically covers the importation and sale of settlement goods:

“6. Importation of settlement goods

(1) It shall be an offence for a person to import or attempt to import settlement goods.

(2) It shall be an offence for a person to assist another person to import or attempt to import settlement goods.

(3) For the purpose of the Customs Act 2015, the import of settlement goods is hereby prohibited.

7. Sale of settlement goods

(1) It shall be an offence for a person to sell or attempt to sell settlement goods.

(2) It shall be an offence for a person to assist another person to sell or attempt to sell settlement goods.”

Many Irish politicians believe that the passing of the Occupied Territories Bill will send a strong message that the issue of illegal settlements is being taken seriously and needs to be addressed.

The Israeli Embassy in Ireland has been highly critical of the Bill and [commented](#) that:

“The absurdity in the Seanad Éireann initiative is that it will harm the livelihoods of many Palestinians who work in the Israeli industrial zones affected by the boycott.”

However, the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) is a Palestinian-led movement for freedom, justice and equality. BDS upholds the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity. It was Palestinian Civil Society that [called](#) for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel as a form of non-violent pressure on Israel until it complies with international law and universal principles of human rights in 2005.



Source: Trocaire

Earlier this month former Pink Floyd star Roger Waters urged people to support the Occupied Territories Bill 2018 at a concert in Dublin.

Ms. Fatin Al Tamimi also [commented](#) that:

“These have been great months for Palestine in Ireland, a country which punches well above its weight when it comes to solidarity. At least seven local councils have voted to support the Palestinian-led global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, including Dublin, the first EU capital to take this stand, and most recently Mid-Ulster Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council.”

She said that last month saw the launch of a campaign for an Irish boycott of Eurovision 2019 and noted that barely a week goes by without solidarity vigils or protests outside shops selling Israeli products in Ireland.”

As the activist for Palestinian human rights, Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh [says](#):

“I find that ingenuity in resistance, the ability to persevere — what we call sumud — to be tremendously inspiring. Our people are able to continue their lives despite the incredible odds arrayed against them and not only to persist but also to find some measure of success. As the graffiti on the wall says, to live is to resist.”

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