

OECD: Approving Israeli illegality? Ireland must oppose Israel's membership of the OECD



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Section I

OECD: Approving Israeli illegality?

Introduction

Israel is expected to be granted membership of the Organisation for European Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the near future, perhaps as early as next month (May 2010).

30 of the richest nations in the world are OECD members. Most of them are European, and include Ireland, but the US, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia and Turkey are also members. Membership has no significant economic advantage, but it would confer on Israel additional international legitimacy as a member of an exclusive club of nations – which is why Israel has been seeking membership for nearly 20 years.

Israel's accession to the OECD is set to go ahead even though Israel is in breach of the rules that the OECD applies for the presentation of national statistics - its statistics cover, not just the territory west of the Green Line that is internationally recognised as belonging to Israel, but also the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and the Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The OECD Committee on Statistics has acknowledged the breach, but is nevertheless recommending that Israel be admitted to membership.

This is revealed in a leaked OECD report, titled *Accession of Israel to the Organisation: Draft formal opinion of the Committee on Statistics* [1]. The OECD normally insists that members adhere to the UN-approved standard for the presentation of national accounts, 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA), but the leaked report states plainly that “to the extent that economic activity is measured according to a criterion of nationality, Israel's data is at variance with one of the basic concepts of the SNA” (paragraph 19). The data is at variance because it includes the economic activity of Israeli settlers in the West Bank, but not that of Palestinians.



Approving illegality

It is scandalous that the OECD is proposing to admit Israel on this basis. Israel is unwilling to conform to the OECD rules for the presentation of national accounts, but nevertheless is being recommended for admission.

That is bad enough. What is worse is that the accounts that the OECD bureaucracy deem acceptable include territory which Israel seized by force in 1967 and which is not recognised internationally as part of Israel. If Israel is allowed into the OECD on that basis, then the existing OECD members (all of whom must approve its admission) will be party to Israel 's continuing illegal occupation and colonisation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Syrian Golan Heights.

Israel 's annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967 amounts to the acquisition of territory by force, which is contrary to the UN Charter. Israel has maintained this annexation in defiance of countless demands from the international community to reverse it, for example, in Security Council resolutions 252, 267, 271, 298, 476 and 478.

Likewise, Israel annexed the Golan Heights in 1981 and holds on to it in breach of Security Council resolution 497.

The OECD is happy for Israel to provide accounts that include these illegally acquired territories and also the Jewish settlements on other parts of the West Bank. These are in breach of the 4th Geneva Convention, which forbids an Occupying Power from transferring its citizens into the territory it occupies. Nevertheless, Israel continues to expand these settlements in defiance of Security Council resolutions 446, 452 and 465 demanding that it cease.

All this illegality will receive the seal of approval of OECD members, if Israel is admitted on this basis – in which case they will have no further grounds to complain about Israel building Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem, because they will have accepted Israel 's claim that all of Jerusalem is as much a part of Israel as Tel Aviv.

OECD fundamental values

In December 2007, the OECD agreed a “roadmap” towards membership [\[2\]](#) with Israel. According to this, the OECD has “fundamental values” to which members must adhere. These include “a commitment to pluralist democracy based on the rule of law and the respect of human rights”.

The idea that Israel is a democracy, pluralist or otherwise, is a sick joke. It has ruled over millions of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories since 1967, without according them any democratic rights – only Jewish settlers in the Occupied Territories can vote in Knesset elections. That demonstrates a 40-year record of contempt for democracy rather than a commitment to it and is akin to the voting system that operated in apartheid South Africa.

As for respecting human rights, Israel discriminates systematically against its Arab minority in a variety of ways, and has done so since the foundation of the state. In education, for example, a recent OECD report *Israeli Child Policy and Outcomes* [\[3\]](#) states:

“ ... government spending per child is much lower in the Arab sector than in the Jewish sector. This financial gap is reflected in different ways: First and most directly, average spending per child in the Arab localities is estimated to be 36.8% lower than in Jewish localities. ”

In employment, former Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, described the discrimination against Arabs as “ deliberate and insufferable ” in evidence to a parliamentary commission of inquiry on 11 November 2008 [\[4\]](#). Clearly, Israel ’ s internal policy towards its Arab minority is not guided by respect for the human rights that is a requirement for becoming an OECD member.



Section II

Ireland must oppose Israel's membership of the OECD

Introduction

In a written answer to Sinn Fein Deputy, Aengus Ó Snodaigh, Foreign Minister, Micheál Martin, told the Dáil on 21 April 2010 that “it is expected that Ireland will join with the other 29 members of the OECD to formally invite Israel to become a member” [\[5\]](#)

The Roadmap for the Accession of Israel to the OECD Convention, adopted by the OECD Council in November 2007, states:

“ The Council reaffirms that OECD Membership is committed to fundamental values, which candidate countries are expected to share. These fundamental values serve as the foundation of the likemindedness of OECD Members and have been expressed in various OECD Ministerial Communiqués.

“ Accepting these values, along with the established body of OECD instruments, standards and benchmarks, is a requirement for membership.

“ These fundamental values include a commitment to pluralist democracy based on the rule of law and the respect of human rights, adherence to open and transparent market economy principles and a shared goal of sustainable development. ” [\[6\]](#)

Since the Government intends to support Israel 's accession, we assume that the Government is of the opinion that Israel accepts the fundamental values that are a requirement for OECD membership, in particular, that it has “ a commitment to pluralist democracy based on the rule of law and the respect of human rights ” .



Does Israel respect human rights?

In the light of Government statements over recent years, we find it difficult to understand how this could be. For example, following Minister Martin 's recent visit to Gaza, he wrote in the New York Times on 5 March 2010:

“ I view the current conditions prevailing for the ordinary population as inhumane and utterly unacceptable, in terms of accepted international standards of human rights. ... I genuinely believe that the medieval siege conditions being imposed on the people of Gaza are unacceptable. ” [\[7\]](#)

In December last year, Minister Martin described Gaza as “ a n open prison ” [\[8\]](#). A year earlier, on 5 November 2008, he told the Dáil:

“ The Government agrees with those who state that the effective isolation of Gaza constitutes collective punishment and is illegal under international humanitarian law. ” [\[9\]](#)

In stating that view, he was reiterating the view expressed by his predecessor, Dermot Ahern, earlier in the year on 11 March 2008 [\[10\]](#). Presumably, they had in mind Article 33 of the 4th Geneva Convention that forbids an Occupying Power from applying “ collective penalties ” to people under occupation [\[11\]](#).

Given that Israel has tightened its blockade of Gaza in the interim, the Government can hardly have modified its view that Israel is guilty of collective punishment in breach of international humanitarian law.

In the light of this, we are at a loss to understand how the Government can be of the opinion that Israel is committed to “ the respect of human rights ” , which is a requirement for membership of the OECD.

Other human rights violations

It is not as if this is the only Israeli action that casts doubt on Israel 's commitment to “ the respect of human rights ” .

Its plantation of nearly half a million Jewish settlers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is in breach of international humanitarian law, in this case, Article 49 (6) of the 4th Geneva Convention – and there is no sign whatsoever that Israel intends to desist, despite continual demands from the international community, including Ireland, that it do so.

Its destruction of Arab property to make way for these settlements and the roads that service them (and the Wall) is in breach of Article 53 of the 4th Geneva Convention.

And on top of all this, which has been going on for more than 40 years, there is the myriad of human rights violations that took place in Gaza from 27 December 2008 to 18 January 2009, as attested to by the UN Fact Finding Mission headed by Justice Goldstone [\[12\]](#).



Discrimination against Israeli Arabs

In addition, Arab citizens of Israel are systematically discriminated against in a variety of ways. A European Commission report on Israel dated May 2004 says so:

“ The Arab minority, Muslim, Christian and Druze, makes up almost 20% of the Israeli population. Although the Declaration of Independence proclaims equality for citizens, Israeli legislation contains laws and regulations that favour the Jewish majority. ... As highlighted by an Israeli Commission report presented in 2003 (“ Or Commission ”), the Arab minority also suffers from discrimination in many areas including budget allocations, official planning, employment, education and health. ” [\[13\]](#)

Four years later, in April 2008, a Commission report on Israel 's implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy noted little progress in this area, saying that “ the promotion and protection of the Israeli Arab minority did not advance significantly during the reporting period ” [\[14\]](#).

In education, for example, a recent OECD report *Israeli Child Policy and Outcomes* states:

“ ... government spending per child is much lower in the Arab sector than in the Jewish sector. This financial gap is reflected in different ways: First and most directly, average spending per child in the Arab localities is estimated to be 36.8% lower than in Jewish localities. ” [\[15\]](#)

In employment, former Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert told a parliamentary commission of inquiry on 11 November 2008:

“ We have not yet overcome the barrier of discrimination, which is a deliberate discrimination and the gap is insufferable ”. [\[16\]](#)

He continued:

“ ... there are government agencies who employ a miniscule number of Israeli Arabs, among them the Bank of Israel and Israel Electric Company. There is no argument that there were ministries and offices that did not accept Arabs. It's terrible that there is not even one Arab employee at the Bank of Israel and at the Electric Company Arab workers represent less than one percent of all employees.”

The overwhelming evidence is that Israel has little respect for the human rights of Palestinians either in the Occupied Territories or in Israel itself, yet the Government is apparently satisfied that Israel has fulfilled the requirement for OECD membership that it is committed to respect human rights.

Israel a pluralist democracy?

The other requirement for OECD membership is that Israel be committed to a pluralist democracy. While it is often said that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East, we do not believe that this proposition is sustainable. How can a state that has ruled over millions of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories since 1967, without according them any say in the institutions that govern them, be described as a democracy? Only Jewish settlers in the Occupied Territories can

vote in Knesset elections. Surely, that demonstrates a 40-year record of contempt for democracy rather than a commitment to it and is akin to the voting system that operated in apartheid South Africa.

No other OECD state rules over millions of people who are excluded from the franchise. Israel should not be admitted under these circumstances.

Israel's accounts cover more than Israel

Another point: Israel's accession is set to go ahead even though Israel is in breach of the rules that the OECD applies for the presentation of national statistics – since its statistics cover, not just the territory west of the Green Line that is internationally recognised as belonging to Israel, but also the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and the Jewish

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Israel should not be admitted while it is unwilling to present statistics in respect of economic activity within the territory that is internationally recognised as belonging to Israel. To admit Israel while its national statistics include the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and the Jewish settlements in the West Bank would give an international seal of approval to Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem and its colonisation of the West Bank. That should not be done.

(*)

For all of these reasons, and others, we believe the Government should reconsider its decision to support Israel's admission to the OECD.



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Sadaka - an Arabic term meaning “friendship” - is an Association established in Ireland in 2009 to promote the cause of Palestine throughout Ireland,, raising public awareness and engaging in political dialogue. It aims is to persuade those in Government to champion the cause of justice for the Palestinian people.

The Steering Group of Sadaka consists of: Marie Crawley (Chair), Noreen Byrne (Secretary), Adnan Shabab (Treasurer), Dr. David Morrison, Philip O'Connor, Des McGuinness, Alan Lonergan and Elaine Murtagh.

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