



Around Europe

Quaker Council for European Affairs

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Israeli settlement products and the future of Palestine

As highlighted in the article 'The EU's trade with Palestine - Opportunities and Limitations' in *Around Europe* 335, one of the major barriers to the establishment of a functioning Palestinian state and economy is the presence and ongoing expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. These settlements take up the majority of the valuable land and water resources, leaving scarce quantities for nearby Palestinian towns and villages.

As part of our programme of work on Palestine and Israel, over the last few months we have been gathering information on the sale of products in EU Member States from Israeli settlements in the West Bank, which are illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention. We are seeking to put pressure on the European Commission to ensure that settlement products are clearly labelled as such and that they should be denied preferential access to European markets. Our ultimate aim would be that Member States should not allow entry of such products into their markets at all.

During the course of this work, we have looked primarily at the labelling of produce originating from Israel and Palestine in supermarkets, and the treatment of goods imported from Israel and dealt with by the customs authorities of EU Member States.

Some of our findings have been particularly interesting. In one supermarket in Germany, the label 'Jordan Valley' is being used on produce coming from the West Bank. This is ambiguous as it could refer to either Palestinian produce or produce of Israeli settlements. A number of supermarkets in Ireland have a policy of not sourcing from the West Bank, citing safety reasons primarily. This raises the question of whether they also do not source from Palestinian producers, missing an opportunity to trade with these producers and support their economy. We are continuing to question the supermarkets on their policies towards these issues.

Under the terms of the EU-Israel Association Agreement, preferential treatment in the form of tariff-free access to European markets does not extend to goods originating in Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Since 2005, a technical arrangement

has been operating whereby the European Commission keeps a list of postcodes of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. These are then provided to national customs authorities in EU Member States. When a consignment comes in from Israel that is accompanied by papers requesting preferential treatment, they should be checked against the list of postcodes to make sure that they do not come from a settlement in the West Bank. If they do, preferential treatment should be refused.

The customs authorities that we have contacted in Ireland and

Germany have assured us that they implement the various control and verification procedures set out in EU legislation on this matter. We have heard in Ireland that they carry out random checks when goods are cleared for customs and further checks after the goods have been cleared at the post-clearance stage. Furthermore, we were assured that all of the goods accompanied by preference certificates have been verified by the Israeli Authorities as originating in Israel. The potential problems with this are that only a small number of consignments are actually checked, and the verifications from the Israeli Authorities may be incomplete or erroneous. We have heard of a number of cases in the UK where the postcode of a company headquarters was provided but the goods themselves were sourced from the settlements. The result is that this issue continues to require monitoring.

Following on from an initial response, we have also asked the German customs authorities for further details about the percentage of Israeli consignments that have been refused preferential treatment and the proportion of consignments handled by the Israeli customs authorities that are in fact subject to audit

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procedures, and we await their reply.

Meanwhile, Quaker Peace & Social Witness in the UK is currently appealing against the refusal of the European Commission to grant access to their list of postcodes of Israeli settlements. The basis of the appeal is that it contradicts the EU's own position, which is that the settlements are illegal under international law. As Quakers in Britain have recently decided to boycott settlement goods, this list would allow Friends to be better informed about which locations to look for on certain product labels. We look forward to hearing more on this matter in due course.

The policies of the EU institutions and major companies within the EU towards settlement products arguably have a big effect on the situation on the ground in Israel and Palestine. The future prospects of a viable Palestinian state and economy are under great strain from the settlement enterprise, and the EU should take a more robust response to this. Tighter controls on the import of settlement products into the EU are a vital aspect of such a response, which is what QCEA continues to argue for. This work is ongoing, and if you have any comments or would like to assist with this work in your country or region please email info@qcea.org.

John Nicholls

Introducing our new Programme Assistants

This autumn QCEA is welcoming three new Programme Assistants into the office. They introduce themselves below.

I am the first Programme Assistant to join QCEA this October and I am excited to be here, having just completed a degree in International Relations and Modern History at the University of East Anglia.

Throughout my time at UEA I have been able to take up some of the good opportunities offered to those on my course. I spent four months studying at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, where my interest in Human Security initially began. Following this, I was lucky enough to be accepted on an internship at the East of England Office in Brussels, which focused on how to use European Union funding to benefit the area. This was really useful to me and also focused my attention on European politics and the EU.

While at QCEA I will be working on the Sustainable Energy Security programme. I am looking forward to getting stuck in, and find the advocacy work already

done on this subject fascinating. I look forward to the next steps.

While in Brussels, I hope to improve my French and get to know the city and culture too. I also look forward to a more complete understanding of the European institutions and their interactions. Please feel free to get in touch: iskrine@qcea.org.



Isabel Skrine



Having completed my degree in International Relations and Journalism at De Montfort University in Leicester this summer, I am delighted to be taking up one of the programme assistant positions with QCEA in Brussels this October.

My degree gave me an excellent overview of international affairs, an interest of mine

that was piqued in 2007 when I spent seven months teaching English and Art in a Quaker school on the Bolivian altiplano with the Bolivian Quaker Education Fund.

I also spent a semester studying political sciences in Dresden, Germany in 2010, and visited Palestine in March of this year for an intense and inspiring week at An-Najah University in the West Bank. I love living in different cultures and learning about new people and places, and I look forward to exploring Brussels and Belgium over the coming months.

My work with QCEA will centre around the role of the EU in the Middle East and in particular Israel/Palestine, which is a subject close to my heart



after my experiences in the region. I will also serve as EMEYF Secretary and, as a young Friend myself, it will be great to meet with Friends from Europe and beyond.

As a long-time activist and campaigner for human rights and peace in the world, I am excited to take on

this promising role and look forward to working with QCEA in the heart of Europe. Please feel free to email me at hslater@qcea.org if you have any queries or suggestions regarding EMEYF, the peace programme, or anything else.

Hannah Slater

I am joining QCEA as a Programme Assistant in November after a very varied and exciting post-University year. I graduated from the University of Exeter with a degree in history in the summer of 2010. Since then I have been fortunate enough to take part in some great community projects underway in South Africa; joined a charity at an exciting stage of rebranding; and travelled to Macedonia to complete a course in Leadership which united young people from all over Europe.

My time at QCEA will focus partly on criminal justice and partly on the EU Multiannual Financial Framework. I am eager to contribute to the great work already being done during a very fragile and crucial time for European economies.

I have always had an interest in Quakerism, having been brought up in a Quaker household. This interest

in Quakers and their incredible history grew throughout my degree and then became the focus of my dissertation. I am looking forward to moving to Brussels; living and working in the heart of the EU will be a big and challenging adventure and one that I cannot wait to begin. Please feel free to contact me at chellewell@qcea.org.



Cat Hellewell

The Busan Forum - A new global development partnership

Ministers from across the globe, from both developing and donor countries, government representatives, parliamentarians, civil society organisations and private sector representatives will come together for the Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness at the Bexco convention centre in Busan, Korea, from 29 November to 1 December 2011.

Approximately 2000 delegates will review global progress in improving the impact and value for money of development aid and make new commitments to further ensure that aid helps reduce poverty and supports progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

Specifically, participants will:

- assess global progress in improving the quality of aid against the agreed commitments;
- share global experiences in delivering the best results; and,
- agree on a Busan Outcome Document to further enhance efforts globally and within countries to make aid more effective in reducing poverty and

achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Well, that all sounds pretty lofty doesn't it? But what does that actually mean in terms of changing real lives?

To answer that we need to mention the 'Aid effectiveness process.' This is basically about ensuring maximum impact of development aid to improve lives.

At the beginning of the 21st century it became clear that aid was not delivering the results that were expected and inadequate approaches and differences in donor approaches were making aid less effective. Action was needed to ensure aid was maximised and results were better.

In March 2005, over one hundred ministers, heads of agencies and other senior officials met in Paris at the second High-Level Forum and committed their countries and organisations to the Paris Declaration commitments by signing the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.¹



The themes covered in the Paris declaration include:

- **Ownership.** Developing countries set their own priorities for development, strengthen their institutions and lead in coordinating aid.
- **Alignment.** Donors line up their aid behind developing country priorities and make better use of a country's plans, policies and systems.
- **Harmonisation.** Donors coordinate to avoid duplication, simplify procedures and agree a better division of labour with partner countries.
- **Managing for results.** Developing countries and donors keep their focus on producing - and measuring - results.
- **Mutual accountability.** Donors and developing countries are held accountable for the results they achieve to each other, and to their parliaments and public.

The Paris Declaration commitments were measurable - and now that the results are in - frankly, they are sobering. For more information, it is worth looking at the global scorecard on aid effectiveness.² You can also get a flavour of what developing countries think about the Principles and the process.³

At Busan, ministers will build on the results and

"At its core, aid should be about helping countries lead their own process of sustainable development"

suggest new global aid architecture structures to make sure development is done well in future. With the rise of 'new donors', including the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and others like the Republic of Korea and Turkey, a global architecture is needed in which all can take a full role. In addition, aid effectiveness concepts will be framed within the wider concept of development effectiveness. At its core, aid should be about helping countries lead their own process of sustainable development.

For more information visit www.busanhl4.org

Matthew Taylor is a former QCEA Programme Assistant

He is currently representing the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) on the core communication group for Busan Forum on aid effectiveness. You can reach him at matthew.taylor@undpaffiliates.org

¹ For more information on the Paris Declaration, see: http://www.oecd.org/document/18/0,3343,en_2649_3236398_35401554_1_1_1_1,00.html

² See:

<http://www.aideffectiveness.org/busanhl4/en/newsroom/513-aid-effectiveness-2005-10-progress-report-on-implementing-the-paris-declaration.html>

³ See:

<http://www.aideffectiveness.org/busanhl4/en/newsroom/519-aid-effectiveness-global-views-on-a-global-scorecard.html>

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