

Legal risk overview

The international law on business with Israel's military, occupation and settlements, and what applies in the UK, Europe, North America, Australia and South Africa.

The position in one paragraph

The International Court of Justice has found a real and imminent risk to the right of Palestinians in Gaza to be protected from acts of genocide, and ordered Israel to prevent them. A UN Commission of Inquiry has found that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, and the International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for its prime minister and former defence minister. Settlements are unlawful under the Fourth Geneva Convention, Security Council resolution 2334 and the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion of July 2024, which requires every state to prevent trade and investment that help maintain the occupation of Palestinian territory. Companies are exposed through sanctions, trade bans, export controls and due diligence law, and their executives, in principle, through national war crimes law, though no such prosecution has yet been brought over Israel or the occupied territory.

International law

Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 49(6) · In force since 1949; Israel is a party

An occupying power "shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population" into the territory it occupies. This is the rule that makes every settlement unlawful.

Fourth Geneva Convention, Articles 53 and 147 · In force since 1949

Destroying property is prohibited unless absolutely necessary for military operations. Extensive destruction or appropriation, unlawfully and wantonly carried out, is a grave breach that states must prosecute.

Hague Regulations 1907, Articles 47 and 55 · Customary international law, binding on Israel

Pillage is prohibited. The occupier is only "administrator and usufructuary" of public property and must safeguard its capital. The ICJ applied Article 55 to Israel in July 2024.

Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court · In force; Palestine a party since 2015, Israel not a party

Transferring, "directly or indirectly", an occupier's population into occupied territory is a war crime, as is pillage (art. 8). Anyone who aids or abets a crime "for the purpose of facilitating" it is liable (art. 25(3)(c)). The Court tries individuals only, not companies.

Genocide Convention, Articles I and III(e) · In force since 1951; Israel and the UK are parties

States must prevent and punish genocide, and complicity in genocide is punishable. The ICJ held in 2007 that the duty to prevent arises as soon as a state learns, or should have learned, of a serious risk.

UN Security Council Resolution 2334 · Adopted 23 December 2016, 14–0 (US abstained)

Settlements have "no legal validity" and are "a flagrant violation under international law". All states should "distinguish, in their relevant dealings", between Israel and the territories occupied since 1967.

ICJ provisional measures, South Africa v. Israel · Orders of 26 January, 28 March and 24

May 2024; binding on Israel. Merits pending, with written pleadings running to 2029

The Court found a real and imminent risk to the right of Palestinians in Gaza to be protected from acts of genocide, and ordered Israel to prevent them, to enable humanitarian aid and, in May 2024, to halt its Rafah offensive.

ICJ advisory opinion on the Occupied Palestinian Territory · Delivered 19 July 2024

Israel's continued presence in the occupied territory is unlawful and must end; it must stop new settlement and evacuate settlers. All states must "abstain from entering into economic or trade dealings with Israel concerning the Occupied Palestinian Territory ... which may entrench its unlawful presence" and "take steps to prevent trade or investment relations that assist in the maintenance of the illegal situation".

UN General Assembly Resolution ES-10/24 · Adopted 18 September 2024, 124–14; the 12-month deadline passed in September 2025 without compliance

Calls on states to ensure that "companies and entities under their jurisdiction" give no aid or assistance to the occupation, to stop importing settlement products, to stop arms transfers where they may be used in the occupied territory, and to impose sanctions.

ICJ advisory opinion on Israel's obligations to the UN and UNRWA · Delivered 22 October 2025

As occupying power, Israel must ensure the population has essential supplies and must agree to and facilitate UN relief schemes, including UNRWA. Its allegations against UNRWA staff were not substantiated.

ICC arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant · Issued 21 November 2024; in force

Reasonable grounds to believe both bear criminal responsibility for the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution and other inhumane acts.

UN Commission of Inquiry: genocide finding · 16 September 2025

The independent Commission found that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, finding four of the five prohibited acts and inferring intent from leaders' statements and the pattern of conduct.

UN database of businesses in settlements · Updated 26 September 2025: 158 businesses from 11 countries, with 381 more under review

Lists businesses with reasonable grounds to conclude they are involved in one or more of ten settlement-related activities. OHCHR says it is not a judicial process.

UN Special Rapporteur: "From economy of occupation to economy of genocide" · June 2025

Maps the arms, technology, finance and other companies sustaining the occupation and the assault on Gaza, and argues that due diligence requires them to withdraw.

UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights · Endorsed 2011; cited in most large companies' human rights policies

Companies must avoid causing or contributing to harm and seek to prevent harm they are linked to (principle 13), carry out human rights due diligence (17–19), and treat the risk of contributing to gross abuses as a legal compliance issue (23).

OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and National Contact Points · Updated June 2023

Expect risk-based due diligence across the value chain, including how products are used. Anyone can complain to the National Contact Point in a company's home country, which can mediate and publish findings but not penalise.

United Kingdom

Settlement-linked companies now face UK sanctions risk, a settlement goods ban is coming, and there is no UK anti-boycott law. UK nationals and residents can be prosecuted at home for aiding war crimes abroad.

- **Global Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Sanctions Regulations 2026** (In force 15 October 2026; awaiting Parliament's approval).
- **UK ban on settlement goods** (Announced 8 September 2026; legislation expected within 6 to 9 months; not yet in force).
- **Sanctions on settlers, settler groups, Ben-Gvir and Smotrich** (Tranches from 2024; Ben-Gvir and Smotrich designated 10 June 2025; 38 settlers designated by September 2026).
- **International Criminal Court Act 2001 and Geneva Conventions Act 1957** (In force).
- **Strategic Export Licensing Criteria and the 2024 suspension** (Criterion 2(c) in force since 2021; about 30 licences suspended 2 September 2024, more than 80 suspended or refused by September 2026).
- **R (Al-Haq) v Secretary of State for Business and Trade** (Claim dismissed 30 June 2025; permission to appeal refused 13 November 2025).
- **Companies Act 2006, section 172** (In force).
- **Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, Part 7** (In force; its application to settlement goods is untested).
- **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998** (In force).
- **R (Palestine Solidarity Campaign) v Secretary of State** (Supreme Court, 29 April 2020).
- **Limits on public bodies' boycotts** (In force. The Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill lapsed in May 2024 and has not returned). Limits campaigners.
- **Overseas Business Risk guidance and settlement labelling** (Guidance updated 9 June 2026).
- **Proscription of Palestine Action** (Proscribed July 2025; upheld by the Court of Appeal 15 June 2026). Limits campaigners.

European Union

EU-wide rules on labelling, funding, export licensing and sanctions, plus a due diligence directive that will not apply until 2029. Member states have gone further on their own.

- **Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (as amended 2026)** (Narrowed by the Omnibus directive in force 18 March 2026; companies must comply from 26 July 2029).
- **Common Position on arms exports, Criterion 2** (In force (2008, amended 2019)).
- **Psagot judgment (Court of Justice of the EU)** (12 November 2019).
- **EU funding guidelines on Israeli entities in occupied territory** (Applied since 2014, including Horizon Europe).
- **EU sanctions on violent settlers and settler organisations** (April and July 2024; further listings 28 May 2026 including Nachala, Daniella Weiss and Amana).
- **EU-Israel Association Agreement: suspension of trade concessions** (Proposed 17 September 2025; not adopted (blocked in April 2026)).
- **Dual-Use Regulation, Article 5** (In force since September 2021).

Ireland

Ireland has banned imports of settlement goods and its sovereign fund has divested from Israeli banks.

- **Israeli Settlements (Prohibition of Importation of Goods) Act 2026** (Signed 23 July 2026; in force 15 September 2026).
- **Ireland Strategic Investment Fund divestments** (April 2024 and 2025).

France

France has the oldest corporate duty of vigilance law in Europe, and its courts have accepted that companies can face charges of complicity in international crimes.

- **Duty of Vigilance Law (2017)** (In force).
- **Lafarge prosecutions** (Convicted of financing terrorism and breaching sanctions, 13 April 2026 (under appeal); a separate investigation for complicity in crimes against humanity remains open).
- **Complaint against Eurolinks and IMI Systems** (Filed 11 June 2025 at the Paris judicial court; no charges known).

Germany

Germany has a supply chain law enforced by a regulator, no arms embargo, and no law against boycott advocacy.

- **Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (LkSG)** (In force since 2023; an amending bill cutting reporting and fines was still in committee in October 2026).
- **Partial halt on arms exports to Israel** (Announced 8 August 2025; lifted from 24 November 2025).
- **Bundestag resolution on BDS (2019)** (Non-binding). Limits campaigners.

Netherlands

The Netherlands banned trade in settlement goods from September 2026, and its Supreme Court confirmed the arms-export risk test binds the government.

- **Ban on settlement goods** (In force 22 September 2026).
- **F-35 parts case** (Court of Appeal ordered a halt in February 2024; Supreme Court set it aside on 3 October 2025 and sent the decision back to the government, which kept exports halted in November 2025).

Belgium

Belgium has approved a ban on settlement imports, implemented through licence refusals.

- **Royal decree on settlement imports** (Approved by the cabinet in July 2026; publication and start date to be confirmed).

Spain

Spain has an arms embargo with limited exceptions and a ban on importing and advertising settlement products.

- **Royal Decree-law 10/2025** (In force 25 September 2025; validated by Congress 8 October 2025).

Slovenia

Slovenia was the first EU state to ban arms trade with Israel and imports from the settlements.

- **Arms embargo and settlement import ban** (August 2025).

Norway

Norway's sovereign wealth fund has excluded companies over Israel, but new exclusions are frozen and its ethical rules are under review.

- **Government Pension Fund Global ethical guidelines** (Exclusions of Caterpillar and five Israeli banks, August 2025; new exclusions frozen since November 2025; review committee reported 15 October 2026).

United States

US courts are now largely closed to human rights suits against companies, and US sanctions target the ICC and Palestinian human rights groups. Boycott advocacy is protected speech, but state contractors face anti-boycott laws.

- **Alien Tort Statute after Cisco v. Doe** (Supreme Court, 23 June 2026).
- **Delaware oversight duty (Caremark and Marchand)** (Good law).
- **Leahy Law and the 2024 review of Israeli units** (In force).
- **Arms Export Control Act and Foreign Assistance Act s.620I** (In force; never applied to Israel).
- **Federal anti-boycott rules** (In force). Limits campaigners.
- **State anti-BDS laws** (In roughly 35 to 38 states). Limits campaigners.
- **First Amendment protection for boycotts** (NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware (1982), good law). Limits campaigners.
- **Sanctions on the ICC and Palestinian human rights groups (EO 14203)** (From February 2025; Al-Haq, Al Mezan and PCHR designated September 2025; the ICC itself designated 9 October 2026). Limits campaigners.
- **Designation of UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese** (Designated July 2025; enjoined, removed and re-designated in May 2026). Limits campaigners.
- **Shareholder proposals (SEC Rule 14a-8)** (SEC staff stopped responding to exclusion requests on 14 August 2026).
- **Sarbanes-Oxley and Dodd-Frank whistleblower protection** (In force).

Canada

Canada has frozen new arms permits for Israel and sanctioned settlers and two ministers. Canadian companies can in principle face war crimes charges.

- **Freeze on new arms export permits** (No new permits for goods usable in Gaza since January 2024; about 30 suspended).
- **Sanctions on settlers, Ben-Gvir and Smotrich** (Settler rounds 2024–25; ministers listed 10 June 2025).
- **Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act 2000** (In force; untested against companies).

Australia

Australia has sanctioned settlers and two ministers, still licenses military and dual-use exports, and its criminal code can hold companies liable for war crimes.

- **Defence export permits for Israel** (Under review since 2024; 54 permits active in October 2025).
- **Sanctions on settlers, Ben-Gvir and Smotrich** (Settlers July 2024; ministers 10 June 2025).
- **Criminal Code, Division 268** (In force; untested against companies).

South Africa

South Africa brought the genocide case at the ICJ, and its law reaches citizens who serve in foreign armies.

- **Implementation of the Rome Statute Act 2002** (In force; untested against companies).
- **Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act 1998** (In force).

Other trade measures

Several other states have cut trade with Israel directly.

- **Türkiye: halt to trade with Israel** (From 2 May 2024; port restrictions from August 2025).
- **Colombia: ban on coal exports to Israel** (From August 2024; exemptions removed August 2025).
- **Malaysia: port ban** (From 20 December 2023).

Full detail and sources

Every instrument, with what it says, how to use it and links to the primary source:

palestiniangenocide.org/boycott/resources/legal-framework

Updated October 2026. Every figure and finding is sourced on palestiniangenocide.org/boycott/resources/. This is campaign material, not legal or financial advice.