



H.E. Maxime Prévot

Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister of Foreign Affairs,
European Affairs and
Development Cooperation of
Belgium

May 21, 2026

Subject: Urgent action requested to halt E1 settlement project in Occupied West Bank

Dear Minister Prévot

We write to you on behalf of civil society organizations across Europe to express our deep concern that, with 1.5 months remaining before the scheduled conclusion of the E1 tender process on 6 July 2026, the European Union has still failed to take the concrete measures necessary to halt this catastrophic settlement expansion project in the occupied West Bank.

In March 2026, organizations from across the European Union urged High Representative Kaja Kallas and EU member states to assert a clear red line against the E1 settlement project and to employ meaningful economic and political measures to stop its advancement. Since then, no effective action has been taken to deter private actors from participating in or facilitating the project.

As you are aware, the Israel Land Authority initiated the E1 tender process in December 2025 and postponed the awarding of bids until 6 July 2026. **As leading experts have warned, this period represents the last realistic opportunity to prevent the E1 project from moving beyond the point of reversal.**

The consequences of E1 construction would be devastating. The project would deliberately fragment the occupied West Bank into disconnected enclaves, severing territorial continuity between the northern and southern West Bank and further isolating East Jerusalem from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory. Such measures constitute a grave breach of international law and directly undermine Palestinians' right to self-determination, while extinguishing any realistic prospect of a just and lasting peace.

The International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion of 19 July 2024, confirmed that Israel's presence in the occupied Palestinian territory is unlawful and that settlement activity must cease. In light of this, the E1 project would further entrench an unlawful situation on the ground. Third states are therefore under a duty not to recognise or assist measures that

sustain or deepen this violation of international law, and to avoid any actions that might facilitate or normalise it.

We welcome the EU's adoption on 11 May 2026 of additional targeted sanctions against violent settlers and settlement-linked actors. These measures acknowledge the seriousness of escalating settler violence and impunity. However, they remain largely insufficient to address the structural drivers of settlement expansion and dispossession. Sanctioning a limited number of violent individuals and entities, while failing to prevent one of the most consequential Israeli settlement expansion projects in decades from proceeding, risks sending the message that the EU is unwilling to seriously confront the policies enabling annexation on the ground.

Israel's settlement enterprise involves the transfer by an occupying power of parts of its civilian population into the occupied territory, which is prohibited under article 49(6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention and is a war crime according to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and the forced displacement of Palestinians, also a war crime.

At this critical moment, statements of concern are pointless. The EU and its member states have repeatedly affirmed that Israeli settlements are illegal under international law and constitute a major obstacle to peace. These positions must now be matched by meaningful action.

In this regard, we would also like to draw your attention to a [statement](#) that was published on 6 May 2026 by more than 440 former European Ministers, Ambassadors and Senior Officials on E1. *“As an initial response, the EU must - at a minimum - impose targeted sanctions, including visa bans and prohibitions on doing business in the EU on all those engaged in illegal settlement activity, in particular those promoting, tendering for and implementing the E1 Plan. These entities and individuals include politicians, settler leaders, the Israeli ‘Land Authority’, representatives of local authorities, planners, lawyers, architects, engineers, developers, contractors, banks and other financing institutions”*, the former officials (including Josep Borrell, Sven Kühn von Burgsdorff and Margot Wallström) stated.

We therefore urge your government to:

- Publicly call for the immediate suspension and cancellation of the E1 tender process before 6 July 2026.
- Issue clear public warnings to companies, financial institutions, and other actors whose participation in, or facilitation of, the E1 project may expose them to legal, financial, and reputational consequences and will prevent their access to European markets.
- Press the European Commission and the European External Action Service to urgently develop and announce targeted restrictive measures against entities and individuals directly involved in the planning, financing, construction, or commercial development of E1.
- Propose and/or support additional rounds of targeted sanctions capable of addressing not only individual acts of settler violence, but also the institutional and economic infrastructure sustaining the illegal settlements' maintenance and expansion, and the decades-long occupation that has been found to be unlawful by the International Court of Justice.

- Coordinate with like-minded international partners, including the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and others, to ensure a unified and credible deterrent response across different sanction jurisdictions.
- Where national laws allow, ensure justice and accountability by opening criminal investigations under the principle of universal jurisdiction against Israeli officials and others credibly implicated in the transfer of civilians into occupied territory.

The coming weeks may represent the final opportunity for European governments to prevent a development long recognised as a fatal blow to the viability of a negotiated solution and to the integrity of international law itself. Now is the time for concrete action to be taken. Silence at this stage will be interpreted as acquiescence while facts are irreversibly created on the ground.

We remain at your disposal for any further information and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter urgently with your office.

Sincerely,

1. 11.11.11 (Belgium)
2. Association France Palestine Solidarité (France)
3. Christian Aid Ireland
4. CNCD-11.11.11
5. Euromed Rights
6. Human Rights Watch
7. International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH)
8. NOVACT Institute for Nonviolence (Spain)
9. PAX (Netherlands)
10. Plateforme des ONG françaises pour la Palestine (France)
11. **Pro Peace (Germany)**
12. Sadaka- The Ireland Palestine Alliance
13. Sanctions Law Center (United States)
14. The Rights Forum (Netherlands)
15. **Weltfriedensdienst e.V. (Germany)**