

EU says Israeli settlement products should be labeled



Brussels, June 14 (RHC)-- A senior official of the European Union says it is his legal opinion that labels of the products from the Israeli-occupied territories must clearly show the precise origin of the products to avoid misleading consumers.

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) outlined its Advocate General Gerard Hogan's legal opinion in a statement released on Thursday. Hogan's opinion made invalid an earlier French court's decision that had ruled otherwise. The ECJ is not obliged to follow the advice of its advocate general, but the former Irish judge's legal opinions usually set the tone for the ruling.

In his advisory opinion, Hogan said the EU law requires that a product made on a territory occupied by the Israeli regime since 1967 be marked as produced in the settlements.

The West Bank, including the annexed East Jerusalem al-Quds as well as the Golan Heights which Israel took from Syria, are considered as Israeli-occupied by the international community.

"EU law requires, for a product originating in a territory occupied by Israel since 1967, the indication of the geographical name of this territory and, where it is the case, the indication that the product comes from an Israeli settlement," an ECJ statement said.

Back in 2016, France published guidelines saying products from Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank and the Israeli-held Golan Heights must carry labels making their origin quite clear. However, this was challenged by the Organization Juive Europeene (European Jewish Organization) and Psagot, a company that runs vineyards in occupied territories.

“It is hardly surprising that some consumers may regard this manifest breach of international law as an ethical consideration that influences their consumer preferences and in respect of which they may require further information,” Hogan said, referring to legal judgments that Israel's settlement policy is illegal.

“The absence of the indication of the country of origin or place of provenance of a product originating in a territory occupied by Israel and, in any event, a settlement colony, might mislead the consumer as to the true country of origin or place of provenance of the food,” he added.

More than 300 groups in Europe have urged the EU to hold Israel accountable for its human rights violations and join a global campaign for boycott of Israeli products.

There is also a growing campaign trying to boycott Israeli products, known as the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, formed in 2005 by over 170 Palestinian organizations that were pushing for “various forms of boycott against Israel until it meets its obligations under international law.”

Thousands of volunteers worldwide have joined the BDS movement, which calls for people and groups across the world to cut economic, cultural and academic ties to Tel Aviv, to help promote the Palestinian cause and end the decades-long occupation.

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