

# *European Think Tank Calls on EU Not to Help Illegal Israeli Settlements*

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Brussels, July 24 (RHC)-- The European Union has been urged to act faster and further to make sure its ties with Israel do not benefit the illegal settlements constructed by the regime in the occupied Palestinian territories.

In a report issued earlier this week, the European Council on Foreign Relations, a pan-European think tank, advised the 28-nation bloc to take such measures in line with its non-recognition of Israel's settlement activities.

By refusing to recognize the settlement construction, the EU would be able to challenge Israel's incentive to continue its illegal settlement expansion. The authors also advised the EU to extend its non-recognition of the settlement activities to new areas, including the integration of the European and Israeli financial sectors, the charitable status within the EU of organizations that support Israel's settlement enterprise, and the validity within the EU of legal documents issued by Israeli authorities in the occupied land.

"For years now, Europeans have been, de facto, pursuing a process of differentiation but have been reluctant to acknowledge it. It is now time to own and defend this policy. Until Israel either makes the

same differentiation or ends its settlement and occupation policy, the EU has a legal requirement to do so itself,” said Mattia Toaldo, a co-author of the report.

The report comes as Tel Aviv has turned a cold shoulder to international calls for a halt in the regime’s land grab in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Earlier this month, Israeli human rights group Peace Now said Israel’s Civil Administration had secretly allocated land for 800 housing units inside the Givat Eitam settlement south of the occupied West Bank city of Bethlehem.

More than half a million Israelis live in over 120 illegal settlements built since Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East al-Quds in 1967.

Much of the international community regards the Israeli settlements as illegal because the territories were occupied by Israel in 1967, and they are hence subject to the Geneva Conventions, which forbid construction on occupied lands.

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