

# *PLO Official Calls on French Firm to Cut Ties with Israel*

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Ramallah, May 19 (RHC)-- A senior official of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has called on Paris to terminate the cooperation of a French telecommunications corporation with the Israeli regime.

Saeb Erekat, from the PLO executive committee, urged France's Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius in a letter last week to demand that Orange S.A.'s ties with its Israeli partner, Orange Israel, be cut, the Ma'an News Agency reported.

Erekat wrote in the letter that the company has been contributing to the Israeli policy of creating illegal settlements, calling on the French government to compel Orange to "immediately cancel its contractual agreement and cease its involvement with 'Orange Israel.'"

Erekat, who serves as a chief Palestinian negotiator, also complained about the French company's involvement in Israel's illegal acts in the occupied Palestinian territories. "The French company has become a partner in Israel's occupation of the State of Palestine and a complicit member in Israel's illegal settlement activities through this agreement and the profits reaped as a result," the letter said.

According to the letter, the French telecommunication company, which in 2011 renewed a trademark license with its Israeli partner operator, has placed antennae and communications equipment in the private Palestinian lands usurped by the Israeli regime in the occupied West Bank.

The company has also constructed phone stores in the illegal settlements of Ariel, Beitar Illit, Modi'in Illit, and Mishor Adumim, and backed Israeli regime forces in the onslaught on the besieged Gaza Strip last summer, the letter added.

The French Foreign Ministry said in June 2014 that any economic activities in the settlements built on occupied Palestinian land are considered illegal under international law and will carry legal and economic risks.

"Due to the fact that the settlements are illegal in international law, the performance of financial activity in the settlements such as money transfers, investments, acquisition of property, provision of supplies or the performance of any other economic activities that benefit the settlements involves risks," a statement by the ministry said. It also urged companies and citizens considering doing business in the Israeli settlements to obtain appropriate legal advice in advance.

"This involves risk to the image of those who carry out such economic activity... We call upon citizens or businesspeople who are considering becoming involved in economic activity in the settlements to seek appropriate legal advice before going ahead."

The international community regards Israeli settlements built on the occupied Palestinian lands as illegal. More than half a million Israelis live in over 120 illegal settlements built since Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1967.

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