

U.S. Restates Labeling Rules on Occupied West Bank Products



Washington, January 29 (RHC)-- The United States has warned Israel that products imported from the occupied West Bank should not be erroneously labeled as "Made in Israel." The guidelines were reissued last week by U.S. Customs authorities in response to repeated Israeli mislabeling of West Bank products.

U.S. State Department spokesman Mark Toner said on Thursday the decision to reissue the policy had been taken after mislabeling complaints. The State Department spokesman said that the guidelines do not impose additional requirements with respect to merchandise imported from the West Bank, Gaza Strip or Israel.

The European Union recently acted to prevent such violations by Israel. The European Commission in November last year adopted new guidelines on labeling of products from the settlements illegally constructed by Israel on the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) welcomed the EU rules. PLO Secretary General Saeb Erekat referred to the decision as a "significant move toward a total boycott of Israeli settlements, which are built illegally on occupied Palestinian lands."

The Israeli Foreign Ministry called the labeling "a politically motivated and unusual and discriminatory step, that [the European Union] learned from the world of boycotts," referring to the international

movement of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel, known as BDS.

The BDS campaign against Israel over its apartheid policies toward the Palestinians has gained momentum globally in recent years. The movement seeks to end the Israeli occupation and colonization of Palestinian lands and respect the right of return of Palestinian refugees.

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