



Mr. Antonio Tajani
President of the European Parliament

European Parliament
60, Rue Wiertz
B-1047 Brussels

Brussels, February 1st 2017

Letter regarding the invitation of Mr. Sydney Knafou, CEO of Casimex to a session with the Delegation for Relations with Israel

Dear President Tajani,
Dear Antonio,

We wish to convey our serious concern with regards the agenda of the forthcoming session of the Delegation for Relations with Israel, on 2 February 2017 and we would kindly request you to intervene urgently.

The agenda of the next session of the Delegation for Relations with Israel includes a single substantial item on "The UNSC Resolution 2334 and its implications for EU businesses", in the presence of Mr. Sydney Knafou, CEO, Casimex.

The company Casimex, based in France, imports wines from Israeli settlements, including from Gvaot winery, which is based in the settlement of Shilol, in the occupied West Bank, as well as from the Golan Heights winery, which is based in the settlement of Katzrin in the occupied Golan Heights¹. Neither the Golan Heights nor the West Bank are part of the Israeli territory, according to international law and as repeatedly stated by the EU Council and Commission².

The NGO Association France Palestine Solidarité (AFPS) has brought to our attention the fact that Casimex mislabels wine from these settlements as "Made in Israel" instead of the required "Made in Israeli settlements", as witnessed for example at the recent Vinisud wine fair in Montpellier on 29 January (see picture attached). Such mislabelling is in direct contravention with EU and French legislation (notably the EU labelling notice). AFPS asked the organisers and Casimex to respect French law on labelling of settlement products, but Casimex refused to comply.

As you will be aware, the European Parliament has consistently and clearly condemned Israeli settlements and their continued expansion³.

¹ <http://www.casimex.fr/vins.php>

² https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/20151111_interpretative_notice_indication_of_origin_en.pdf

³ e.g. the latest EP resolution *The EU's role in the Middle East peace process* of 10 September 2015.



We believe that the decision of the Delegation for relations with Israel to invite this speaker is problematic; indeed, the Delegation chooses to invite an operator that is reported to knowingly ignore EU and French legislation by mislabelling its goods and hence misleads European consumers.

In the absence of any alternative panellist and in light of the above facts regarding the business conduct of the invited party, this meeting would, in our view, undermine the credibility of the European Parliament and the EU institutions at large on the Israel/Palestine file, as well as provide a public platform for encouraging and legitimizing the non-compliance by economic operators with EU and Member State legislation. We do not believe that this is the role of a delegation of the European Parliament.

Regrettably, this is not the first time that the agenda of the Delegation for relations with Israel has shown a clear degree of political bias in the definition of its agenda. In light of this latest development, we consider it our duty to raise this at the highest level of this Parliament.

Based on the above, we call on your urgent action to avoid an unfortunate event, which would directly undermine the credibility of the Parliament on a most sensitive issue and would contravene to the internal rules pertaining to the work and purpose of delegations.

Yours sincerely,

Laura Agea, MEP Rosa d'Amato, MEP Margrete Auken, MEP, Malin Björk, MEP, Lynn Boylan, MEP, Ignazio Corrao, MEP, Pascal Durand, MEP, Iosu Juaristi Abaunz, MEP, Eleonora Forenza, MEP, Patrick Le Hyaric, MEP, Paloma Lopez Bermejo, MEP, Florent Marcellesi, MEP, Martina Michels, MEP, Bart Staes, MEP, Ernerst Urtasun, MEP and Bodil Valero, MEP

in copy:

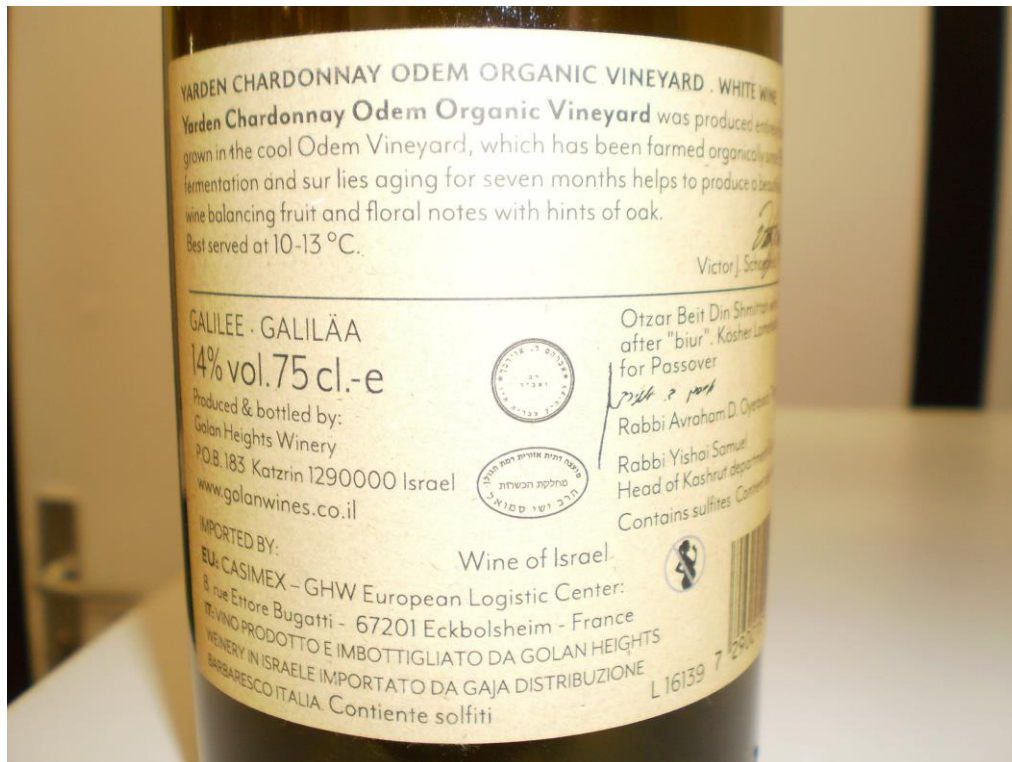
Mr. Fulvio Martusciello
Chair of the Delegation for Relations with Israel

Mr. Neoklis Sylikiotis
Chair of the Delegation for Relations with Palestine



Background

Picture taken by the Association France Palestine Solidarité (AFPS) at the Vinisud wine fair in Montpellier on 29 January 2017 (more photos available upon request)



EP resolution on The EU's role in the Middle East peace process, 10 September 2015

8. Condemns the continued expansion of Israeli settlements, which violates international humanitarian law, fuels Palestinian resentment and undermines the viability and prospects of the two-state solution, and calls on the Israeli authorities to immediately halt and reverse their settlement policy;

9. Welcomes the EU's commitment – in the spirit of differentiation between Israel and its activities in the occupied Palestinian Territory – to ensuring that all agreements between the EU and Israel must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, as reiterated in the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of 20 July 2015; takes note of the Commission Guidelines of 19 July 2013 on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards, and of the letter sent to the VP/HR by 16 EU Foreign Ministers on 13 April 2015, encouraging her to take the lead within



the Commission with a view to completing the work on EU-wide guidelines on the labelling of Israeli settlement produce;

EU Interpretative Notice on labelling ([Hyperlink](#))

*“Since the Golan Heights and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) are not part of the Israeli territory according to international law, the indication ‘**product from Israel**’ is considered to be **incorrect and misleading** in the sense of the referenced legislation.*

(...)

*For products from the West Bank or the Golan Heights that originate from settlements, an indication limited to ‘**product from the Golan Heights**’ or ‘**product from the West Bank**’ **would not be acceptable**. Even if they would designate the wider area or territory from which the product originates, the omission of the additional geographical information that the product comes from Israeli settlements would mislead the consumer as to the true origin of the product. In such cases the expression ‘Israeli settlement’ or equivalent needs to be added, in brackets, for example. Therefore, expressions such as ‘**product from the Golan Heights (Israeli settlement)**’ or ‘**product from the West Bank (Israeli settlement)**’ could be used.”*

On 24 November, the **French government** issued an advice requiring economic operators to label products from the occupied territories in line with the EU labelling notice.

UNSC Resolution 2334 (2016) Adopted by the Security Council at its 7853rd meeting, on 23 December 2016 ([Hyperlink](#))

- Recital: " Expressing grave concern that continuing Israeli settlement activities are dangerously imperilling the viability of the two-State solution based on the **1967 lines**"
- Para. 1: " Reaffirms that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has **no legal validity** and constitutes a **flagrant violation under international law** and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace"
- Para. 2: " Reiterates its demand that **Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities** in the occupied Palestinian territory"
- Para. 5: " Calls upon all States, bearing in mind paragraph 1 of this resolution, **to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967**"

Council Conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process, 18 January 2016 ([Hyperlink](#))

- Para. 7: " Recalling that **settlements are illegal** under international law, constitute an



obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two state solution impossible, the EU reiterates its **strong opposition to Israel's settlement** policy and actions taken in this context"

- Para. 8: " The EU and its Member States are committed to ensure continued, full and effective implementation of existing **EU legislation and bilateral arrangements** applicable to settlements products. The EU expresses its commitment to ensure that - in line with international law - all agreements between the State of Israel and the EU must **unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied** by Israel in 1967"

UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, 2011 ([Hyperlink](#))

Who Profits Forbidden Fruit: The Israeli Wine Industry and the Occupation, 2011 ([Hyperlink](#))

Human Rights Watch: "Occupation, Inc. How Settlement Businesses Contribute to Israel's Violations of Palestinian Rights", 19 January 2016 ([Hyperlink](#))

- "it is Human Rights Watch's view that by virtue of doing **business in or with settlements** or settlement businesses, **companies contribute** to one or more of these violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses"
- "Following international standards articulated in the **United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights**, businesses are expected to undertake **human rights due diligence** to identify and mitigate contributions to human rights violations of not only their own activities but also activities to which they are directly linked by their business relationships"
- " it is Human Rights Watch's view that any **adequate due diligence** would show that business activities taking place in or in contract with Israeli settlements or settlement businesses contribute to rights abuses, and that businesses cannot mitigate or avoid contributing to these abuses so long as they engage in such activities"