



Israeli property event referred to authorities over illegal settlement ads

## Description

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The UK government has referred the Great Israeli Real Estate Show to the Advertising Standards Authorities (ASA) as it has emerged that properties for sale in illegal Israeli settlements were promoted at the show.

Organisers had said last week that all exhibitors at the event would provide information only about properties for sale within the Green Line – the internationally recognised border between Israel and Palestine.

But on Monday, *Declassified* [revealed](#) that brochures circulated at the event advertised developments in at least seven illegal settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

*Declassified* now understands that on Sunday, the day the event was held at the Edgware United Synagogue in London, Middle East minister Hamish Falconer and culture minister Ian Murray contacted the ASA about the exhibition.

It was not immediately clear what triggered their concern, including whether they were made aware of the advertising circulating at the event as it happened.

A government spokesperson said: “We completely oppose the advertisement of properties for sale in settlements, which are illegal under international law.

“We have written to the Advertising Standards Authority to ensure any evidence of such advertising is scrutinised under UK law, and we have updated advice to UK businesses of the legal and reputational risks of activity in illegal settlements.”

“Entirely inadequate”

On Tuesday, Foreign minister Yvette Cooper offered further information, telling MPs that the ministers had asked the ASA for reassurances that if there was "any evidence of the advertising or promotion of property in illegal settlements at this or any other events, they will uphold the law, regulations and guidance that applies".

Options available to the ASA if rules were broken include placing restrictions on future advertising and referring non-compliant advertisers to statutory bodies if they had breached laws regulated by those authorities.

Last week, over 100 MPs and campaigners called for the ban of the event which had advertised Gush Etzion, an illegal Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank, on its website. The mention of the settlement was [later removed](#)

Green MP Ellie Chowns, one of the MPs who wanted the event stopped, noted on Tuesday that Cooper told MPs that she would be pursuing the event, but said that her actions had been "piecemeal and entirely inadequate".

"How is it that this government fails even to prevent the marketing of illegal property in this country and still fails to take action?" Chowns said, calling for a ban on trade with illegal settlements.

Ryvka Barnard, deputy director of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, welcomed the referral, but said it was "quite frankly too little too late".

"There was substantial evidence ahead of the event that organisers were advertising properties in illegal settlements, and clear calls from MPs and peers, human rights groups, lawyers and ordinary citizens, for the event to be investigated.

"Instead it was allowed to go forward and now the government is scrambling to respond afterwards," she told *Declassified*.

*Declassified* learned about the event's advertising of properties in illegal Israeli settlements through brochures [collected by Jewish Anti-Zionist Action](#) (JAZA) who gained access to the event and later disrupted it in protest.

A JAZA spokesperson said they were "pleased to know" that steps were beginning to be taken, but that their protest should not have been necessary.

"The British government has a responsibility under its own professed political position to shut events like this down," they said.

"If the government is serious about considering settlements illegal, there are a series of very clear actionable steps it can take to end British ties to the settlement enterprise, including cutting off trade with settlements and sanctioning UK organisations that try and profit off, or market them here."

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## Potential violations

Human rights lawyer Daniel Machover said the regulators would need to ensure that their guidance and practice incorporated the legal obligations set down in the International Court of Justice's July 2024 advisory opinion.

"That includes ensuring nothing that occurs in our jurisdiction renders aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by Israel's illegal presence in the occupied Palestinian territory," Machover told *Declassified* on Tuesday.

"Stepping back, there are potential crimes being committed here by those involved in the attempted sale of settlement properties that police should be investigating."

Those involved may have been aiding and abetting war crimes, including assisting in the transfer of non-protected people in the occupied Palestinian territories and the forcible transfer of protected people, he said.

They may also have violated the UK's Crime Act which makes it illegal for promoters and estate agents operating in the UK to facilitate the sale of land acquired through illegal conduct.

The Metropolitan Police declined to comment specifically on the referrals, but *Declassified* understands that it has also been referred to the force.

It is among around 240 referrals related to the Israel-Hamas conflict made to the Met Police since 7 October 2023.

A Counter Terrorism Policing spokesperson told *Declassified* on Monday: "Each and every referral made to the War Crimes Team is reviewed in line with War Crimes/Crimes Against Humanity Referral Guidelines, jointly agreed by police and the Crown Prosecution Service.

"At this time, there is no UK-based investigation into any matters relating to this particular conflict."

## Questions about ads

Arlaith Roe, public affairs and communications officer for the International Centre of Justice for Palestinians, said the FCDO's referral made it clear that "concerns raised are not merely political, but are serious regulatory and consumer protection issues".

"The UK's advertising standards (ASA) are very clear - ads must be legal, decent, honest, and truthful," she said.

"The promoting of properties in illegal settlements in occupied Palestinian territory is none of these things, but an abhorrent violation of the UK's own advertising and legal standards."

Roe said questions must be asked, from a consumer standpoint, to identify if the properties marketed were clearly identified as being located in settlements in occupied territory, if material legal, financial, or

reputational risks were omitted, and if consumers were informed of the legal and political status of the territory.

She added: "The public deserves the answers to these questions."

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