

Press statement for release on [26] March 2026

Call on WTO Members to suspend Israel's MFN treatment

Trade justice activists and several members of the European Parliament today made a global call to World Trade Organization (WTO) Members to suspend Israel from enjoying Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) treatment until Israel ends its illegal occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) and fulfils its obligations under international law.

The call from 27 national, regional and international civil society coalitions as well as European parliamentarians comes ahead of the 14th Ministerial Conference of the WTO's 166 country members scheduled for 26 to 29 March in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

MFN treatment is a core principle of the WTO whereby a WTO Member must give any advantage, favour or privilege granted to one trading partner to all other WTO Members, with some allowed exceptions.

The OWINFS statement stressed that by allowing Israel to continue benefitting from a normal status at the WTO, the organization and its Member States will in effect be facilitating Israel's defiance of international law and its perpetuation of international crimes and egregious violations against the Palestinian People, through its prolonged illegal occupation of the Palestinian Territory and its genocidal assault in Gaza, that has led to a famine, as declared by the UN.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has confirmed in July 2025 that Israel's conduct in the OPT violates international law, including the Palestinian People's right to self-determination and prohibitions on territorial acquisition by force, apartheid and racial segregation.

The UN General Assembly demanded an end to Israel's unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory by September 2025, yet that deadline has passed without consequence. Israel continues to defy international law and UN decisions with impunity," said Ziad Abdel Samad, Executive Director of the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) based in Beirut.

The ICJ and the UN General Assembly have made clear that third States must not render aid or assistance that helps maintain the illegal situation created by Israel in the OPT and must prevent trade or investment relations that assist in that maintenance. Trade and investment ties cannot be effectively divorced from Israel's role as an occupying power: Israel's economy and state apparatus are deeply intertwined with policies and practices that sustain the occupation and facilitate the exploitation of Palestinian resources.

There are 'security exceptions' under WTO rules that allow Members to prioritize obligations under the UN Charter and other fundamental norms of international law. WTO Members have previously acted to suspend MFN treatment — for example, denying this to Russian products and services after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

“WTO Members must now act consistently to suspend MFN treatment for Israel in view of the findings of the ICJ and the UN General Assembly, and in line with their own obligations under international law,” said Priscilla Torres, Trade Policy Advisor of REBRIP- Brasília Network for People Integration, Brazil

OWINFS calls on WTO Members to take immediate, concrete steps to suspend Israel’s MFN treatment and any other preferential trade arrangements that have the practical effect of sustaining the occupation, and to ensure their trade and investment policies do not contribute to ongoing international crimes and gross violations of human rights.

Meanwhile four members of the European Parliament have submitted a [question](#) an inquiry? to the European Commission on 9 March on excluding Israel from WTO MFN treatment.

"At the time when countries convene at the WTO summit, the rules-based order is challenged on all fronts. Israel, which has unmistakably committed genocide in Palestine, and which actively wages war in the Middle-East, breaches this international law and UN principles. Still, it continues to benefit from the trade benefits of the WTO’s Most Favoured Nations’ duties. We call for a united response to stop Israel’s trade benefits as a way to restore compliance with international law,” said Catarina Vieira, Member of the European Parliament.

Lynn Boylan, another Member of the European Parliament pointed out, “the EU rightfully stopped treating Russia as a most-favoured nation under WTO rules when they illegally invaded Ukraine in breach of the UN Charter and international law. Yet when Israel breaches the UN Charter and international law, in Gaza, in the West Bank, in Lebanon and in Iran, we do not see a consistent response. We are united in our call for Israel's most-favoured nation status to be suspended and the EU should be leading on this. Israel continues to enjoy immense trade benefits as they commit genocide against the Palestinian people and breach international law on a daily basis. Citizens across Europe and the world will not tolerate more double standards and hypocrisy.”

About OWINFS

Our World Is Not For Sale (OWINFS) is a global network of organisations and activists working for reform of the multilateral trading system to serve people and the planet. The network includes over 200 organisations worldwide. www.owinfs.org

Contact [Name] [Organization — OWINFS] [Email] [Phone]

Notes:

1. In September 2024 the ICJ found that Israel’s sustained abuse of its position as an occupying power renders its presence in the OPT unlawful and that obligations breached are legal responsibilities owed by a State to the international community as a whole (*ergo omnes obligations*), requiring all States to act, stressing:

- “all States can be held to have a legal interest in [the] protection [of the rights involved]”,
- “every State has the duty to promote, through joint and separate action, realization of the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples ...”,
- every State have the obligation not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the illegal situation created by Israel, and
- “...[i]t is for all States, while respecting the Charter of the United Nations and international law, to ensure that any impediment resulting from the illegal presence of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the exercise of the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination is brought to an end”.

2. States have an obligation not to render aid or assistance that helps maintain the illegal situation and to take joint and separate action to promote realization of the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination.

3. Trade relations with Israel cannot be effectively delinked from Israel’s illegalities in the OPT; there is an entrenched intertwined relation between the Israeli economy and Israel’s role as an occupying power in the Palestinian Territory. UNCTAD estimated that the Israeli economy benefits an average of \$30 billion (constant 2015 dollars) per year from Israel’s role as an occupying power and the resources it extracts from the Palestinian people.

4. In September 2025 the UN Committee on Economic Social Cultural Rights recommended that all third States must have a proactive and earnest interest in the effective protection of the rules and rights of the Palestinian people violated by Israel. In its review of the Netherlands as a state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee recommended that it ceases all trade and investment relations that can contribute to gross and systematic violations against the Palestinian people.