

**Erklärung von „Gush Shalom“ an die Adresse der
Staats- und Regierungschefs beim G 20-Gipfel im
russischen St. Petersburg**

To

The Foreign Ministers and representatives of the European Union

We, Israeli citizens deeply concerned for the future of our country and our region, write you this letter in advance of the meeting of the EU Foreign Affairs Council, scheduled for September 6. Specifically, we write you as members of Gush Shalom, the Israeli Peace Bloc, a grassroots peace movement which was founded in 1992. Ever since then, our movement has been struggling to engage the political system and promote the idea of peace between Israel and its Palestinian and other Arab neighbors.

It is our firm belief that Israel's long-term survival and prosperity depend upon our country's ability to achieve integration in the region. An indispensable first step would be an Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967 and the long overdue creation of an independent Palestinian state in these territories.

In recent years we have become increasingly concerned at the upsurge of expansionist nationalism in the Israeli society and political system. Such manifestations are often given a religious justification through a tendentious and selective interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures. Representatives of such tendencies occupy key positions in successive Israeli cabinets, including the current one. This expansionist nationalism manifests itself especially in a determination to hold on to the territories occupied by Israel's armed forces since 1967 and a relentless drive to maintain and extend Israeli settlement in these territories.

Not only do the settlements constitute a blatant violation of International Law and a major obstacle to any chance of Israel achieving peace with its neighbors, but a big part of our country's economic resources are annually poured into the bottomless hole of the settlement project, to the great detriment of Israeli society as a whole.

In this situation we are writing to you, highly cognizant of the crucial role which the International Community in general and the European Union in particular could and should play. Specifically, we refer to the Council of Foreign Affairs resolution of 10 December 2012¹, in which the EU stated its commitment to **“Ensure that, in line with International Law, all agreements between the State of Israel and the European Union must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, namely the Golan Heights, the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip”**. Further, we refer to the guidelines published by the European Commission on 19 July this year, aimed at an implementation in practice of the above resolution.

As you must be well aware, the publication of the July 19 guidelines had a far greater impact in Israel than any earlier EU statement on this issue – for the simple reason that this was the first time that the EU went beyond a verbal disapproval of the settlements. Specifically, Israeli participation in the European Horizon 2000 Project² was made conditional upon the Government of Israel stating explicitly its adherence to the above principles.

¹ Text der EU-Erklärung unter www.reiner-bernstein.de/genferinitiative/ge_erklaerungen/EU_10.12.12.pdf.

² Text der „EU-Guidelines of Israeli Entities and Their Activities in the Occupied Territories...“ unter www.reiner-bernstein.de/genferinitiative/ge_documente/EU-Direktive-Text_19.07.13.pdf.

The Netanyahu Government is faced with a grave dilemma, having in effect to choose between either promoting the settlement project or gaining the very considerable benefits which Israeli science, academic life and economy could derive from participation in Horizon 2020 – as these two goals were made mutually exclusive.

As published several times in the Israeli media, the Netanyahu Government hopes to avoid this dilemma by persuading the European Union to amend or “soften” your position. Moreover, there were references to such approaches by the Government of Israel featuring on the agenda of your September 6 meeting.

We would like you to know that many in Israel consider your recent position, as it stands, to be an expression of true friendship and concern towards Israel. It is vital for Israel, our country, to adopt the norms of behavior prevailing among Western Democracies, of which Israel aspires to be one. It is Israel's existential interest to come to terms with the fact that in today's world it is unacceptable to rule over another people by force, confiscate that people's land and settle on it. The European Union would best help Israel's true interests by insisting unflinchingly on this principle.

We are well aware that, as well as the above issue, you are urgently concerned with the situation in other countries in our region – notably, Syria and Egypt, and that these are very likely to figure prominently on the agenda of your forthcoming meeting. It would be wrong to assert that all the Middle East's problems derive solely from the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. But it would be quite right to say that an end to Israeli occupation and a solution to our very long-lasting conflict could exert a positive, calming influence throughout the region.

Yours

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