

Israel-Hamas war

US plans to label goods from Jewish settlements in occupied West Bank

Move comes amid White House frustration with Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government



An Israeli human rights group says 620,000 Jewish settlers are living in East Jerusalem and the West Bank © AFP via Getty Images

Felicia Schwartz in Washington 3 HOURS AGO

The Biden administration is drawing up plans to require goods produced in Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank to be clearly labelled as coming from there, according to US officials, another sign of White House unhappiness with the government of Benjamin Netanyahu.

The final go-ahead for the move, and its timing, have not been decided but it is intended to increase pressure on Israel over rising settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank, and comes amid US frustration with the Jewish state's conduct of the [war in Gaza](#).

The move would reverse a policy introduced by the Donald Trump administration in 2020 that required goods produced in the West Bank to be labelled as “Made in Israel”.

The Biden administration was close to announcing the step last month, after Israel's far-right finance minister Bezalel Smotrich, himself a settler, announced the largest West Bank land seizure in decades. Smotrich's announcement came during a visit to Israel by US secretary of state Antony Blinken, infuriating the administration.

Two days later the US abstained from a ceasefire resolution at the UN, allowing it to pass, and officials did not want to unveil the labelling requirement at the same time.

The US Department of State declined to comment.

Other countries also label goods coming from settlements. The EU's top court ruled in 2019 that goods from Jewish settlements in the West Bank must be labelled as produced in occupied territory and must not imply that they came from Israel itself.

The possible decision to label settlement goods underscores years of US frustration with Israel's settlement construction in the West Bank, which much of the world considers illegal and an obstacle to creating an independent Palestinian state.

Israel's war in Gaza, which has killed more than 33,000 people, according to Palestinian authorities, has also increased tensions between the two allies. Biden warned Netanyahu in a telephone conversation on Thursday that US support for Israel in the conflict would hinge on it taking immediate steps to [alleviate humanitarian suffering](#) in the enclave.

Israeli human rights group B'Tselem says 620,000 Jewish settlers are living in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, which have been occupied by Israel since the six-day war in 1967.

Labelling the goods as produced in Jewish West Bank settlements would make it easier for US consumers to avoid the products. It would also spark a fierce reaction from Israel, which has described such policies as anti-Israel and discriminatory.

Until Trump changed it in 2020, US policy had for years required products made in the West Bank to be labelled as such, and the Barack Obama administration in 2016 warned labelling them as "made in Israel" could lead to fines.

The US has stepped up criticism of the Netanyahu government recently for the [civilian cost of its war](#) against Hamas, with the UN warning hundreds of thousands of Gazans face imminent famine.

The US also opposes Netanyahu's plan to launch an offensive in Rafah, where more than 1mn displaced Gazans have sought sanctuary.

But Biden has refused to apply any conditions to US military aid to Israel. The administration is also moving ahead with the sale to Israel of \$18bn worth of weapons, including F-15 fighter jets, over the next five years — one of the largest US arms deals with its ally.

Discussion of the labelling move comes after the Biden administration said in

February that Israel's settlement expansion was "inconsistent with international law". It also announced sanctions on settlers accused of violence against Palestinians. Last year, the US stopped funding Jewish academic institutions in the West Bank.

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