

11 February 2014

Mr Matthew Wright  
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It has come to our attention that Southern Water plans to install water meters in the Hastings area; and that these meters will be supplied by the Israeli company Arad Technologies.

We understand that you have received numerous complaints of your use of these meters. The fact that you are continuing to collaborate with Arad, despite these heartfelt objections, is something that we strongly condemn.

As you know, the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian West Bank is illegal under international law. The UK government (through its Trade and Investment Department) stated on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2013:

“The UK has a clear position on Israeli settlements: The West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Golan Heights are territories which have been occupied by Israel since 1967. Settlements are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict impossible. We will not recognise any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties.” This statement, directed at British businesses, goes on to discourage all British businesses from trading with the illegal settlements and recommends that they should seek legal advice.

This is not merely some sort of academic issue. The occupation affects every aspect of Palestinian life. The most brutal is clearly the military aspect. Since 2000, 1518 children have been killed by the Israel Defence Force, that is one child killed every 3 days, shot, bombed, burned alive. We hope you will recognize the seriousness of this matter.

Arad, by its own admission, has been heavily involved with the installation and maintenance of the water management system at the illegal settlement of Ariel and the Barkan settlement industrial zone. This involves its “...long term engagement including continued development and continuous service and support over the years.”

Arad also develops water meters for the Israeli state owned company Mekorot. Mekorot has a near monopoly on water supply in Israel and also operates and develops water infrastructure in Area C of the West Bank, where Palestinians are forbidden to develop even basic water infrastructure. Palestinians living in Area C, unable to access piped water due to the restrictions on building imposed by the Israeli Civil Administration, are often forced to fill up water tanks, transported by tractor, at Mekorot's water facilities.

Water is also used as a tool in the ethnic cleansing of Palestinian communities. Water is denied to these communities as a way to push them off the land so that their land can be expropriated by the settlements. This is alongside the Israeli policy of the demolition of Palestinian houses and other structures, estimated at more than 27,000 to date.

So while settlers have intensive irrigation farms producing lush crops, the situation for many Palestinians is grim: some 180,000 – 200,000 Palestinians living in rural communities have no access to running water. Therefore, companies such as Mekorot and Arad have become an integral part in Israel's theft of Palestinian water, diverting it to the illegal settlements.

We recommend that you study the Oxfam report “Israel rations Palestinians to trickle of water” (2009) which details the extent to which Israel's discriminatory water policies and practices are denying Palestinians their right to access to water. This is just one of the many facts that Amnesty International quotes: “Israel uses more than 80 per cent of the water from the Mountain Aquifer, the main source of underground water in Israel and the OPT, while restricting Palestinian access to a mere 20 per cent. ”

While Southern Water appears content to carry on working with a company complicit in the illegal practices carried out by Israel, there are large international businesses that have made a clear, ethical, decision to sever links with companies involved in the occupied territories. In September 2013, Holland's largest engineering

company Royal HaskoningDHV terminated its contract with the Jerusalem municipality to build the Kidron wastewater treatment plant intended to service illegal Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem. The company stated: "The company came to understand that future involvement in the project could be in violation of international law. This has led to the decision of Royal HaskoningDHV to terminate its involvement in the project." "Royal HaskoningDHV carries out its work with the highest regard for integrity and in compliance with international laws and regulations," it stated.

In December 2013, Vitens, the Netherland's largest drinking water supplier announced that it would discontinue all joint ventures with Israel's national water supplier Mekorot in protest against the Israeli company's operations in the West Bank, citing Israel's violations of international law. "Vitens attaches great importance to integrity and adhering to (inter)national laws and regulations," an official statement from the company said.

So where is Southern Water's integrity? Where is Southern Water's ethical policies? "Southern Water's Sustainable and Ethical Trading Policy" states that "it ensures that we and our supply chain partners continually raise the bar in meeting the social, economic and environmental challenges we face together." "We expect our suppliers to adhere to these standards and are publishing a Sustainable and Ethical Supply Chain Charter to which we encourage our suppliers to become signatories. This charter will represent a shared approach to doing business in an ethical and sustainable way. All our Commercial and Procurement staff are trained in sustainable and ethical procurement to ensure the consistent application of these principles throughout our activities. This policy is endorsed by our Executive Management Team. It is the responsibility of all our employees to ensure its implementation."

We would respectfully suggest that you have failed here dismally. Organising a £7.1 million contract with a firm that is systematically involved in breaching international law can never be described as ethical.

The MP for Lewes, Norman Baker, in a letter to the Brighton & Hove Palestine Solidarity Campaign, has written of Southern Water: "I can only think that they were unaware of the nature of Arad's involvement in West Bank activities when they engaged them. Nevertheless, that information has now emerged and under the circumstances I think Southern Water should re-evaluate their decision and at the very least be prepared to offer a water meter from an alternative supplier for those who ask. I have written to their Managing Director to ask that this be done."

We note that in his letter to you, MEP Keith Taylor, wrote "I find the award of contracts by Southern Water to a company which operates in, and profits from, the illegal settlements, unacceptable and so do many of my constituents, who have contacted me on this issue." "I would be very grateful to meet with you to discuss Southern Water's contract with Arad, and I also urge you to terminate your contract with them if they, or their parent company, continue to operate in the illegal settlements."

In Mr Taylor's follow-up letter (1<sup>st</sup> October 2013) to you, he made the points: "Arad is in clear breach of several key commitments in Southern Water's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy and it therefore seems to me that this part of the procurement process was flawed." "Arad's complicity in the illegal colonisation of the Palestinian West Bank clearly demonstrates that its business policies are in breach of international law, and therefore inherently irresponsible." "I am of the view that the procurement process followed by your company, which resulted in the award of the contract to Arad Technologies, negates Southern Water's own policy of CSR and was therefore clearly flawed. I therefore reiterate my call for you to terminate your contract with Arad." "Your involvement with an Israeli company that is complicit in international human rights abuses is a matter that my constituents and I take very seriously, and I hope you will agree with me that this must be addressed with the utmost urgency."

Clearly, the correct, ethical course of action would be for Southern Water to stop installing Arad meters. If you are not prepared to do this, we hope you will accept Mr. Baker's suggestion: "...at the very least be prepared to offer a water meter from an alternative supplier for those who ask." Please accept our offer of a meeting to discuss these issues.

Yours Sincerely,

L Holden  
Secretary (acting), Hastings Palestine Solidarity Campaign