

point would be to ban Australians from claiming tax deductions for Australian charities which raise money for activity in the settlements under the guise of educational or charitable work overseas. Such a policy change on human rights grounds was [suggested](#) in detail to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Inquiry on Israel-Australia trade relations by the Australian Jewish Democratic Society in 2021 and we raise this policy change again.

We have now identified at least three cases of registered charities, according to publicly available information on the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission [website](#), and the organisations' own publicity, involved in funnelling donations into settlement activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem that break international law. As of the time of publication, only Danny Lamm of the Ariel University Trust and Daniel Luria of Ateret Cohanim have responded to our invitation to comment. Danny Lamm reports he is no longer associated with Ariel University. Daniel Luria's response letter is included in full at the end of this article.

The first charity is the Jewish National Fund (JNF) which has existed for over 100 years. The Israeli wing of the JNF (also known as the KKL), has long had an active role in planting forests over destroyed Palestinian villages and acquiring disputes within Israel. More recently it has been steeped in controversy since it was [revealed](#) the organisation has been purchasing Palestinian properties for Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories. The Australian sector of the organisation publicly [distanced](#) itself from its problematic grandfather in 2014 by saying that "JNF Australia is an independent entity from KKL". In recent years, it has raised tens of millions of dollars for projects.

However, the Australian JNF is itself also involved in the Occupied Territories by raising money for '[Ateret Cohanim](#)'. It is not clear how much money has been directed to Ateret Cohanim. Ateret Cohanim has been working in Jerusalem for 40 years, with the mission of "[restoring Jewish life to the ancient city](#)" by getting rid of Palestinian residents. Human rights organisations identify it as an extremist group. For decades, they have been purchasing houses in neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem – which Australia [recognises](#) as Occupied Territory – to resettle with Jewish inhabitants and its leadership is blatantly anti-Palestinian, working against not just Muslims, but local [Christians](#). The head of this organisation is an Australian, Daniel Luria. Over the years the organisation has also been publicly involved in disputes over property, including one involving [Vladimir Putin](#),

The specific project of Ateret Cohanim promoted on the JNF website for Australian charitable donations is called Midreshet Kidmat Yerushalayim (Seminary for the Advancement of Jerusalem), "to bring benevolent relief to the families" in areas they have taken over where there is a difficult relationship with Palestinian neighbours. In other words, an Australian charity is involved in childcare and security matters for settlers whose presence is deeply resented by the locals. They are also protected by the Israeli military who occupy East Jerusalem.

There seems to us no reason that an organisation like JNF Australia, which funnels money into a settler organisation such as Ateret Cohanim, should receive tax breaks from the Australian government, especially considering that the government considers those settlements [illegal](#). Such property transfer and settlement by Jews and displacement of Palestinians is in breach of [international law](#).

The second case involves the [Ariel University Australia Trust](#), formerly headed by Danny Lamm, former president of both the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and the Zionist Federation of Australia. This trust is dedicated to raising money for Ariel University, a university situated in the illegal, occupied territory of the West Bank. ACNC records show over \$100,000 of donations in recent years. Due to its location and settler ideology, the university has faced many controversies over the years. The EU received [backlash](#) for renewing relationships with it, US and German funds have [boycotted](#) it, and many Israeli academics signed [letters](#) denouncing it. The Australian government has no business in providing a tax break for a local charity which supports such university. Ariel often whitewashes its politics by claiming it has many Palestinian students. However, Palestinians do not have much choice as their universities are in crisis under

the Occupation (and destroyed in Gaza).

Finally, the local branch of the International [Christians For Israel Foundation](#), also openly funnels money into Jewish settlements. This comes as no surprise as Christian Zionists are amongst the biggest supporters of Greater Israel. Other than donating money to a Jewish summer camp in Bethlehem, a major city in the Occupied Territories, one of this foundation's main and most worrying projects is titled 'CFOIC Heartland'. CFOIC Heartland's guiding principles are replete with Christian Zionist theology, stating on the Christians For Israel [website](#) that "Judea and Samaria [the Occupied Territories] are not occupied territory. These communities are the birthplace of the Jewish people." While, according to ACNC records, it is relatively new, and funds raised modest, its politics are clear.

This project supplies new immigrants with accommodation, education and food in several small settlements in the West Bank. It targets Ethiopian immigrants, an already disenfranchised group in Israeli society, and financially incentivises settlements in the Occupied Territories.

None of the connections described in this article are hidden. These three registered foundations publicly and openly funnel money into projects associated with illegal Israeli settlements. However, there are probably more organisations doing the same thing, but their activity is not advertised online, and details may be obscured in Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission documents.

In fact, under the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission governance standards, we suggest that there may be a case for investigation of all Australian charities funnelling money into the Occupied Territories under two other significant governance criteria. The first a prohibition on the [financing](#) of terrorism or criminal behaviour under its [external conduct standards](#). These are matters that can only be determined by appropriate authorities. There is a precedent for this. Complaints have been laid against [World Vision](#) and [Oxfam](#) in the past for their activity in the Occupied Territories and investigated by the Australian government and they have been exonerated after investigation by ASIO and others. In the case of the conviction of a World Vision employee under Israel law, the conduct and outcome of the case [remain contentious](#).

We also know of [fundraising](#) by the [radical settler](#) organisation Nachala in this country, promoted by well-known entities, including the hard-right, pro-settler Australian Jewish Association, and one branch of the Chabad movement, though it is unclear as to whether any specific Australian charitable entity has been set up, or funds directed through another charity. As well as this, as stated by the Nachala representative, there are ongoing purchases of land in what it calls "Judea and Samaria" by Australians. For example, one Australian has been activity involved controversial property deals in East Jerusalem buying houses from Palestinians including [Armenians](#) for settlement purposes. Daniel Luria of Ateret Cohanim has also been involved in [property purchases](#) in Jerusalem. He is quoted as saying "I've been here for 3800 years – I am the indigenous people here...anyone who says otherwise is wrong".

In the overall scheme of things, the suggested bans are relatively modest but politically they would send a very strong signal to the State of Israel. Whether or not the amounts are large or small, there is a principle at stake here about not supporting Israel's illegal occupation through exploitation of charitable donations. Such bans would get the support, we believe, from many Australian Jews who while still strongly supportive of the state of Israel inside the 1967 borders, do not support the Occupation or the action in Gaza. Second, such a move would probably be endorsed by supporters of Palestine, though they may wish for much stronger measures to be implemented against the State of Israel.

In fact, if nothing happens, there may well be a need for stronger actions that limit relations with the State of Israel with an eye to imposing human rights criteria on existing joint-projects that might unduly exclude Palestinians from equal rights and opportunities. This was as suggested in the AJDS submission to DFAT.

Editors' note:

Daniel Luria's response to this article on behalf of Ateret Cohanim is available in full [here](#).

Itamar Livne and Dr Larry Stillman are members of the Australian Jewish Democratic Society.