

# Tell TripAdvisor to pull out of illegal Israeli settlements in Occupied Palestinian Territories

Learn to shoot like a soldier, ride a camel or take a tour of historic sites – all on stolen land! Thanks to help from TripAdvisor, these are all activities you can do when visiting one of the many illegal Israeli settlements.

TripAdvisor lists more than 70 different properties, activities and attractions in illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). By doing so, TripAdvisor is boosting the settlement economy and contributing to settlement expansion. The company's promotion of settlements as a tourist destination helps to "normalise" and legitimise them to the public. Settlements are illegal under international law - their creation amounts to a war crime. Settlements are on stolen Palestinian land. They should not be tourist destinations.

Since 1967, when Israel captured and occupied the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Israeli government has promoted the creation and expansion of settlements.

Settlements have a devastating impact on a wide range of human rights of the Palestinian people, including their rights to an adequate standard of living, to housing, to health, to freedom of movement and to education. The existence of settlements also cripples the Palestinian economy. In driving tourism to the settlements, TripAdvisor is contributing to these human rights violations.

***Ask Stephen Kaufer, CEO of TripAdvisor Inc. to stop listing or promoting properties, activities and attractions located in illegal Israeli settlements or run by settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.***

## Destination: Occupation

The [#Check-out](#) campaign launched on the same day as a new Amnesty report [Destination: Occupation – Digital Tourism and Israel's Illegal Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories](#). The report exposes how major tourism companies are contributing to and benefiting from Israel's violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

Digital companies are revolutionizing how the world does tourism. Rather than buying holidays through traditional high street travel agents, consumers can now book everything online. In turn, the likes of Airbnb, Booking.com, Expedia, and TripAdvisor offer them an unprecedented choice of places to stay and things to do in almost every corner of the globe. As a result, each of these companies – which dominate the multibillion-dollar global online tourism industry – has become hugely successful.

These companies all list numerous hotels, B&Bs, attractions or tours in Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). They are doing so despite knowing that Israeli settlements in the OPT are deemed illegal under international law. Israel's policy of developing, expanding and guarding its settlements is inherently discriminatory and behind a wide range of human rights violations. Any business activity in or with settlements

unavoidably contributes to sustaining an illegal situation, as well as a regime that is inherently discriminatory and abusive of the human rights of Palestinians.

In doing business with settlements, all four companies are contributing to, and profiting from, the maintenance, development and expansion of illegal settlements, which amount to war crimes under international law. They are also contributing to violations of human rights law and acting in direct contradiction with their own corporate standards. Their promotion of Israeli settlements in the OPT as a tourist destination also has the effect of “normalizing”, and legitimizing to the public what is recognized under international law as an illegal situation.

To examine how digital tourism companies directly or indirectly contribute to human rights violations of specific groups of people, Amnesty International researchers visited five settlements and neighbouring Palestinian communities in the OPT on at least two occasions each between February and October 2018. The locations were chosen because of the importance of tourism to the settlements. By listing accommodation and attractions within these illegal Israeli settlements Airbnb, Booking.com, Expedia and TripAdvisor have contributed to their maintenance, consolidation, and further expansion and so these companies have indirectly contributed to the many human rights violations affecting Palestinian residents of Khan al-Ahmar, Qaryut, Jalud, Khirbet Susiya, Silwan and Hebron that are a direct result of these settlements or settler-run tourist attractions. You can read about these communities in the full [Destination: Occupation report](#)

## **Check Out campaign**

The *Destination: Occupation* report shows how tourism companies operating in Israel’s illegal settlements in the OPT are contributing to human rights violations against Palestinians, and so we are launching the [Check Out](#) campaign to call on TripAdvisor, AirBnB, Expedia, and Booking.com to pull out of stolen land by removing all listings located in Israel’s illegal settlements. We are launching the campaign with a global petition to TripAdvisor CEO Stephen Kaufer, but will be targeting the other companies as part of the campaign throughout 2019.

Why TripAdvisor? TripAdvisor lists more than 70 different attractions, tours, restaurants, cafés, hotels and rental apartments in settlements in the OPT, including in East Jerusalem. These are located in at least 27 different settlements in the West Bank. Five hotels have more than 50 rooms. They are scattered across the area and are in both large and small settlements. They include government-run nature parks, museums and archaeological sites, as well as privately owned Israeli tourism-related businesses. Through these listings TripAdvisor helps bring a huge number of tourists to Israel’s illegal settlements, making significant contributions to the settlement economy and therefore helping consolidate and expand those settlements.

But what about AirBnB? Back in November AirBnB announced that it would remove some 200 listings from its platform that are located in illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Whilst Amnesty very much welcome this move, at the time of writing AirBnB have yet to action this decision and those listings remain on its platform. AirBnB has also made no

commitment to remove some 100 listings located in Israel's illegal settlements in East Jerusalem – so there is more to push for in our campaign. Therefore, we have decided to focus our public campaigning on TripAdvisor at this time, but we are calling on our members to also write letters to AirBnB using the template advocacy letter included below.

### **Our aims for this campaign are:**

1. For online companies named in the report to stop listing or in any other way promoting properties, activities and attractions located in illegal Israeli settlements or run by settlers in the OPT.
2. For governments to take regulatory action to ensure digital tourism companies do not extend their services to Israeli settlers, and do not promote settlers' tourism services in the OPT. This requires states in whose territory digital tourism companies are domiciled or headquartered to take regulatory action to prevent these companies (and their branches, subsidiaries and affiliates across the globe) from providing or facilitating the provision of tourism services in settlements or by settlers in the OPT. It also requires all states to ban the provision or facilitation, including through digital platforms, of tourism services in settlements or by settler in the OPT.
3. For the online accommodation/tourism industry as a whole to be alerted to their role in helping maintain and/or expand illegal Israeli settlements and to take steps to ensure member companies operate in line with their responsibility to respect the standards of international humanitarian law and human rights.
4. For the OHCHR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) to publish the UN Database of businesses operating in or with illegal Israeli settlements as soon as possible and include in the Database online tourism companies providing or facilitating tourism services, holiday accommodation, activities and attractions in settlements or run by settlers in the OPT.

In our communications, our aims are:

- Educate people about:
  - **The settlements** – what they are
  - **The human rights violations** – what they are; who they're affecting; how and why businesses operating in the OPT are contributing to violations
  - **The businesses** – which businesses are operating there
- Raise awareness of AIUK's position and the changes we are calling for
- Show our audiences that they can make a difference, and inspire them to take action

## What we want you to do

We are launching the *Check Out* campaign with a global online and offline petition to TripAdvisor CEO Stephen Kaufer, and we are also asking supporters to write letters to TripAdvisor and AirBnB using the supplied templates below. **Please make sure to keep the wording the same as the wording in the materials we have circulated for legal reasons.**

But this campaign will run on throughout 2019, with more actions to come targeting Expedia, Booking.com, and AirBnB. For this campaign it is important to engage with the public and raise awareness of how these companies are contributing to human rights violations by operating in Israel's illegal settlements in the OPT. Local actions will be important in raising awareness and driving people to take action. As we have seen with AirBnB these companies are susceptible of consumer pressure, and by raising awareness and encouraging people to take action we can achieve our objectives and ensure that these companies do not profit from the existence and expansion of Israel's illegal settlements.

We want Amnesty activists to use the materials listed below to develop their own campaign actions that help drive members of your community to take action and sign our petition;

- Take action in your group meetings
- Write letters to TripAdvisor and AirBnB calling on them to Check Out of stolen land
- Organise campaign actions to raise awareness of how these companies are contributing to human rights abuses by operating in Israel's illegal settlements in the OPT
- Encourage members of your local community to use their power as consumers to take action and put pressure on these companies to Check Out from stolen land

## Materials

(all available to order from MDA on 01788 545 553)

Check Out Campaign action card – IOPT09

Check Out Campaign briefing – IOPT 10

Check Out Campaign badges – IOPT11

Check Out Campaign stickers – IOPT12

Check Out Campaign posters – IOPT13

Links:

[Online petition](#)

[Offline petition](#)

[Destination: Occupation report](#)

Check Out campaign letter to editor – Please see below.

Stephen Kaufer CEO  
TripAdvisor Inc.  
7 Soho Square  
London  
W1D 3QB

[INSERT DATE]

Dear Mr Kaufer,

On 30 January 2019, Amnesty International launched the report, "Destination: Occupation: Digital tourism and Israel's illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories." The report focuses on digital tourism companies which list places to stay, or things to do, in illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). TripAdvisor is one of these companies.

Most states, as well as international bodies such as the UN Security Council and UN General Assembly, have long recognized that Israeli settlements in the OPT are illegal under international law. In addition, key acts required for the establishment of settlements such as the transfer of parts of the civilian population of the occupying state into occupied territory and the displacement of the local population amount to war crimes. Research by Amnesty International over many years has shown how Israel's settlement policy is also one of the main driving forces behind the mass human rights violations of Palestinians resulting from its occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

In doing business with illegal Israeli settlements in the OPT, digital tourism companies such as TripAdvisor are contributing to, and profiting from, the maintenance, development and expansion of illegal settlements. These companies are also contributing to violations of human rights law and acting in direct contradiction with their own corporate standards. Their promotion of Israeli settlements in the OPT as a tourist destination also has the effect of "normalizing", and legitimizing to the public, what is recognized under international law as an illegal situation.

Amnesty International is calling on these companies, including TripAdvisor, to stop providing these listings, and to commit publicly to no longer list properties and attractions in Israel's illegal settlements. TripAdvisor is the main focus of Amnesty International campaign on digital tourism in Israel's illegal settlements in the OPT because of the company's relative importance to the tourism industry in Israeli settlements: TripAdvisor is the most visited online tourism website by foreign visitors to Israel; and it promotes more listings (at least 70) in more settlements (27) than any other digital tourism company - with the exception of Airbnb, which pledged in November 2018 to remove most of its listings in settlements.

As a concerned individual, it is important to me that TripAdvisor stops operating in or with Israeli settlements in the OPT, because the company's activities contribute to sustaining an illegal situation and to the wide range of human rights violations suffered by Palestinian communities. Accordingly, I request that TripAdvisor:

- Adopt a robust policy, which should be publicly available, committing not to list or in any other way promote properties, activities or attractions in illegal Israeli settlements or run by settlers in the OPT.
- Adopt adequate procedures, such as robust screening and vetting processes, to ensure the effective and consistent implementation of this policy in practice and disclose details of these measures, their implementation and outcomes.
- Cease any current listing of properties, activities and attractions located in illegal Israeli settlements or run by settlers in the OPT and provide a clear public explanation as to the reasons for this action. This should be based on the illegality of settlements under international law and the human rights violations that result from them.
- Compensate for the harm suffered by Palestinian residents of communities affected by settlements where TripAdvisor has listed properties or attractions.
- Consult with these affected Palestinian communities on other appropriate measures of reparation.
- Report publicly on its human rights due diligence policies and processes and provide details as to how these are implemented in practice, including specifically in connection with operations in Israel and the OPT.

This is too big an issue to ignore. Your immediate action is urgently required.

Yours Sincerely

(INSERT NAME)

Brian Chesky  
CEO Airbnb  
AirBnB UK  
Compton Courtyard  
40 Compton St  
London  
EC1V 0BD

[INSERT DATE]

Dear Mr Chesky,

On 30 January 2019, Amnesty International launched the report, "Destination: Occupation: Digital tourism and Israel's illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories." The report focuses on digital tourism companies which list places to stay, or things to do, in illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). Airbnb is one of these companies.

Most states, as well as international bodies such as the UN Security Council and UN General Assembly, have long recognized that Israeli settlements in the OPT are illegal under international law. In addition, key acts required for the establishment of settlements such as the transfer of parts of the civilian population of the occupying state into occupied territory and the displacement of the local population amount to war crimes. Research by Amnesty International over many years has shown how Israel's settlement policy is also one of the main driving forces behind the mass human rights violations of Palestinians resulting from its occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

In doing business with illegal Israeli settlements in the OPT, digital tourism companies such as Airbnb are contributing to, and profiting from, the maintenance, development and expansion of illegal settlements. These companies are also contributing to violations of human rights law and acting in direct contradiction with their own corporate standards. Their promotion of Israeli settlements in the OPT as a tourist destination also has the effect of "normalizing", and legitimizing to the public, what is recognized under international law as an illegal situation.

On 19 November 2018, Airbnb announced that it would remove approximately 200 listings in Israeli settlements in the "occupied West Bank". However, this commitment did not extend to approximately 100 listings in settlements in East Jerusalem, even though it too is occupied territory.

As a concerned individual, it is important to me that Airbnb stops operating in or with Israeli settlements in the OPT, because the company's activities contribute to sustaining an illegal situation and to the wide range of human rights violations suffered by Palestinian communities. Accordingly, I request that Airbnb:

- Provide a timeframe for the implementation of its 19 November 2018 announcement that it will remove listings in illegal Israeli settlements in occupied West Bank.
- Extend its commitment to remove listings in settlements to Israeli settlements in occupied East Jerusalem.
- Publicly clarify that its decision to remove listings in illegal Israeli settlements is based on the illegality of settlements under international law and the human rights violations that result from them.
- Adopt a robust policy, which should be publicly available, committing to not list or in any other way promote properties, activities or attractions in illegal Israeli settlements or run by settlers in the OPT, including East Jerusalem.
- Adopt adequate procedures, such as robust screening and vetting processes, to ensure the effective and consistent implementation of this policy in practice, and disclose details of these measures, their implementation and outcomes.
- Compensate for the harm suffered by Palestinian residents of communities living near settlements where the companies have listed properties or attractions.
- Consult with affected Palestinian communities on other measures of reparation.
- Report publicly on the company's human rights due diligence policies and processes and provide details as to how these are implemented in practice, including specifically in connection with operation in Israel and the OPT.

This is too big an issue to ignore. Your immediate action is urgently required.

Yours sincerely

(INSERT NAE)

## Template letter to the editor for Check Out campaign

*Sir/Madam,*

It's cold, it's still winter and you can't walk down the street without seeing adverts promising to "get you on the beach".

But where are the holiday companies actually offering to take you? Away for that dream holiday, or for a summer break in other people's misery?

Last November, the increasingly-fashionable online booking company Airbnb said it would stop offering accommodation and other attractions in the Israeli settlements built on Palestinian land in the West Bank.

Why? Because the settlements are at the centre of the conflict-plagued Israeli-Palestinian issue.

Airbnb hasn't followed through on this yet, but they're essentially right.

Along with other online booking giants like TripAdvisor, Expedia and Booking.com, they've been offering holiday accommodation located in illegal Israeli settlements.

These settlements are an abomination. They're built on 1,000 square kilometres of Palestinian land after the Palestinians (and their 50,000 homes and other buildings) were brutally bulldozed out of the way.

Like any business, holiday companies have a responsibility to avoid complicity in human rights violations.

Our new "Check out" campaign ([www.amnesty.org.uk/checkout](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/checkout)) is calling on the travel sector to stop profiting from the settlements and to remove their settlement holiday listings.

Holidays are supposed to be fun, not part of a wider system of human rights abuse.

*Yours sincerely,*

*[name]*