

Obama Will Not Honor anti-Divestment Law for Settlements in West Bank, Gaza

() After President Barack Obama signed a trade bill that takes a stand against the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, his administration said the U.S. would not use the legislation to protect Israeli communities in Judea and Samaria. The Trans-Pacific Partnership bill, which was passed by Congress last week and signed into law by Obama this week, includes an amendment requiring American negotiators to stipulate the rejection of boycotting products made in "Israeli-controlled territories" as a core principle in trade talks with other countries, particularly in the European Union. But State Department spokesman John Kirby said Tuesday that the bill's language on BDS "runs counter to longstanding U.S. policy" on the disputed territories because it conflates "Israel and 'Israeli-controlled territories.'" The U.S. has "strongly opposed boycotts, divestment campaigns, and sanctions targeting the State of Israel, and will continue to do so," but will not "pursue policies or activities that would legitimize" Israeli settlements in Judea and Samaria, said Kirby. A spokeswoman for U.S. Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Md.), a key sponsor of the trade bill's anti-BDS amendment, said the measure never intended to take a stance on Israeli settlements, the *Associated Press* reported. *Reprinted from* .