Dear Maire Geoghegan-Quin,

European Union research programs have become a key mechanism for the funding of research and the exchange of knowledge. However, the participation in these programs of private Israeli companies actively engaged in violating international law seriously undermines both the reputation of these programs and the stated goals of the European Union and its member states.

Ahava DSL is a private Israeli cosmetics company based in and partially owned by the council of an illegal Israeli settlement in occupied Palestinian territory. Through its participation in the EU’s Seventh Framework Program (FP7), Ahava DSL has been awarded €1.08m of EU research funding since 2008. Despite the concerns raised by MEPs and civil society, and assurances to the media that it would address the issue of Ahava’s participation, the European Commission has just allowed Ahava DSL to engage in a new project consortium that it is funding to the tune of €3.49m.

Two other participants in FP7 projects, Elbit Systems and Israeli Aerospace Industries, play an active role in the construction and maintenance of Israel’s Wall, ruled illegal by the International Court of Justice in 2004.

Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union obliges the EU to uphold human rights and to strictly observe and support the development of international law in all of its external relations.

By allowing companies that actively participate in and aid and assist with serious breaches of international law and maintain that such actions are legal to participate in FP7 projects, the EU is entrusting resources to companies that cannot be relied upon to use them in a manner in accordance with the EU’s own legal obligations.

Academics and institutions that participate in EU research programs depend on the good judgement of the European Commission. In lacing companies such as Ahava DSL and Elbit Systems on its list of approved research partners, the EU is recommending companies engaged in violations of international law as suitable research, exposing academics and institutions to reputational and economic risks.

As advocates of a just peace between Israel and the Palestinians based on international law,

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we call upon the European Commission to exclude such companies and institutions from receiving EU funding and to introduce new legislation that would prevent them from doing so. Violations of international law and universal human rights will surely continue for at least as long as institutions such as the EU provide funding to those that perpetrate them.

Yours sincerely,

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