

Name: Alert ID: TMML2024033644637 Companies controlled by Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich donated tens of millions of pounds to a highly controversial Israeli settler group accused of displacing Palestinian families from Jerusalem, according to leaked documents seen by BBC News Arabic. The billionaire Russian oligarch, who was granted Israeli citizenship in 2018, has been an avid philanthropist in Israel, donating huge sums to research and development projects and investing in local firms. However, four companies he either owns or controls in the British Virgin Islands have contributed more than \$100m (£74m) to Elad, a group that supports settlements in the Palestinian neighbourhood of occupied East Jerusalem called Silwan, BBC News Arabic reported. Those figures would mean the British football club owner was the biggest single donor over the past 15 years to Elad, a Hebrew word which means "God's eternal faith", it added. The group, which also receives backing from the Israeli government, has sought to strengthen the Jewish presence in the neighbourhood of Silwan at the expense of its Arab residents. Elad runs an archaeological site in Silwan called the City of David that has become a huge tourist attraction. The dig has been criticised by European Union diplomats as seeking to ignore the ancient city's diverse history in favour of "an exclusively Jewish narrative, while detaching the place from its Palestinian surroundings". The City of David website said it is "committed to continuing King David's legacy as well as revealing and connecting people to ancient Jerusalem's glorious past through four key initiatives: archaeological excavation, tourism development, educational programming and residential revitalization". Elad, similar to other settler organisations, has expanded by buying Palestinian houses and using controversial Israeli laws that allow the state to take over Palestinian property. Approximately 450 settlers now live alongside almost 10,000 Palestinians in Silwan. BBC News Arabic discovered the Abramovich donations while trawling through thousands of leaked documents detailing \$2tn (£1.55tn) of potentially corrupt transactions that were washed through the US financial system. More than 2,000 suspicious activity reports (SARs) filed with the US government's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) were leaked to BuzzFeed News, which shared them with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, of which the BBC is a member. Banks and other financial institutions file SARs when they believe a client is using their services for potential criminal activity. While a SAR in itself does not oblige a bank to cease doing business with the client in question, they point to contentious actions hidden in the financial world. The leaks, dubbed the FinCEN Files, have already rocked the financial sector, with allegations of dirty money flowing freely around the world. Shares in the banking sector fell on Monday. Other high-profile figures, such as Trump's former political strategist, Paul Manafort, has also been identified in a SAR. The BBC report did not say whether the Abramovich companies or the donations were included in an SAR, or accuse Abramovich or the firms of breaking the law in any country. Abramovich had been the subject of a 2016 SAR regarding offshore shell companies related to his football business. In its report, aired on its flagship Panorama programme, BBC Arabic cited Elad as saying they abide by all Israeli non-profit organisation regulations but that they would not confirm if Abramovich was a donor. The news channel quoted a spokesman for Abramovich as saying: "[he] is a committed and generous supporter of Israeli and Jewish civil society, and over the past 20 years he has donated over five hundred million dollars to support healthcare, science, education and Jewish communities in Israel and around the world." Settlement activity on occupied land is considered illegal under international law. Israel argues all of Jerusalem as its sovereign territory, although that claim is largely unrecognised. Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital has emboldened the Israeli government and powerful settler movement. The US ambassador to Israel and vocal supporter of settlements, David Friedman, took part in an opening ceremony at the City of David.