



Vermonters for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel

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RE-DIRECTING MIS-DIRECTION

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Four days before this year's 3rd annual [Free Cone Day protests](#)^[1] at Ben & Jerry's scoop shops, the company posted on its website this [message](#)^[2].

The company released it, we speculate, as a formal response to upcoming FCD protests and VTJP's [recent letter to scoop shop owners](#)^[3] informing them that our organization was calling for a boycott of Ben & Jerry's.

The statement, like those that came before, deliberately sidesteps Ben & Jerry's contractual responsibility for its Israeli franchise's [business of selling ice cream](#)^[4] and catering in illegal, Jewish-only settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

It also neglects to mention the [franchise's purchase](#)^[5] of equipment from an Israeli business that operates a factory illegally in the occupied (Syrian) Golan Heights. The complicity of Ben & Jerry's franchise with Israel's occupation regime comes in Palestinian and Syrian flavors.

The April 10th statement calculatedly omits references to illegal, Jewish-only settlements, occupation, the Palestinian territories, or the use of Jewish-only roads to transport the company's product. Ben & Jerry's speaks instead of doing "business in Israel" and of a visit by its CEO, select Board members and Global Leadership Team members to "the region" last year.

The company assures us that "we are keenly aware of how complex the situation can be."

The "situation" is not complex. It is not even a situation. It is a military occupation and a flagrantly criminal enterprise of Jewish settler-colonialism, apartheid and ethnic cleansing, now in its 49th year.

Some members of Ben & Jerry's delegation to Palestine last summer, to their credit, insisted on seeing up close the suffering of Palestinians and the ongoing theft by Israeli settlers of their land and water.

These are not unobservant or unethical people. They know what international law has to say on this matter.

CEO Solheim can pat Israeli licensee Avi Zinger on the back as much as he likes. But he knows, as do his Board members and fellow executives, Israel's crimes of occupation will never be terminated, or substantially mitigated, by company-funded efforts at "cross-cultural understanding" or "sourcing from local Fair Trade farmers."

These financial commitments, however laudable, along with channeling licensing fees to social and educational projects, will never lead to building "sustainable, thriving communities" in occupied Palestine.

Israel, as the Ben & Jerry's delegation witnessed, is systematically crippling and destroying Arab communities to build fortified colonies where only Jews are allowed to live. Giving corporate money to a science project in the "region," in the name of "moderation," will not stop this.

After reading the latest missive from Ben & Jerry's about why it can't live up to its "values-based" [social mission](#)^[6] in Palestine, VTJP is convinced it has no recourse but to follow through with its decision to organize a boycott of the company.

¹ <http://www.vtjp.org/icecream/FCD-2015-Report.php>

² www.benjerry.com/whats-new/ben-and-jerrys-business-in-israel

³ www.vtjp.org/icecream/Letter_to_Franchise_Owners_3-3-15.pdf

⁴ www.vtjp.org/icecream/VTJP_Report_Peace_Love_and_Occupation.pdf

⁵ www.vtjp.org/icecream/campaign_news.php#A6

⁶ <http://www.benjerry.com/values>