

Mark Hage
26 Liberty Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

Jostein Solheim
Chief Executive Officer
Ben & Jerry's
30 Community Lane
South Burlington, VT 05403

April 6, 2016

Dear Mr. Solheim:

This correspondence on behalf of Vermonters for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel is necessitated by recent threats by Israeli officials against **Omar Barghouti**, our Palestinian comrade, and a prominent leader of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. We believe you and some of your Board directors met with Omar during a trip to Israel-Palestine in 2014. You have knowledge of the man and his work, his integrity and courage, and his deep commitment to nonviolent advocacy.

It was reported recently that Aryeh Deri, Israel's Minister of Interior, is contemplating stripping Omar of his permanent residency status, in retaliation for his political activities, and that the country's Minister of Intelligence, Yisrael Katz, has called for the "**targeted civil thwarting**" of Omar and other BDS activists (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukXAFxI8lx4>). Richard Silverstein, an American Zionist critic of Israeli policies, deciphered in a recent blog the implications of the latter expression (<http://www.richardsilverstein.com/2016/03/30/israeli-minister-calls-for-civil-targeted-killings-of-bds-leaders/>):

*The phrase he [Katz] used (**sikul ezrahi memukad**) derives from the euphemistic Hebrew phrase for the **targeted killing of a terrorist** (the literal meaning is "targeted thwarting"). But the added word "civil" makes it something different. Katz is saying that we won't physically murder BDS opponents, but we will do everything short of that.*

We are entering dangerous territory when an Israeli cabinet minister engages in wordplay that implicitly places a bull's-eye on the backs of non-violent activists. ...In this torrid political environment, in which Israeli leftists have become criminals and wounded Palestinian youth may be summarily executed in the street, it is only too easy to foresee Palestinian activists like Barghouti having a bounty on their heads.

These threats against Omar and his compatriots are not isolated or aberrant events. They are part of a coordinated, well-funded strategy against BDS. In 2015, the Israeli government awarded its Ministry of Strategic Affairs nearly \$26 million to fight the movement, which

recorded a string of groundbreaking victories that year against companies doing business with Israel's military and with or in its illegal settlements (<https://bdsmovement.net/2015/7-ways-our-movement-broke-new-ground-13634> & <https://bdsmovement.net/2015/bds-full-2015-round-up-13628>).

VTJP calls on Ben & Jerry's, consistent with its social mission, to issue a strong **public statement** condemning the recent attacks against Omar Barghouti and other BDS activists, and demanding that the government of Israel put a stop to them immediately and take all necessary measures to protect the lives of these activists and to defend their human and civil rights.

Sincerely, and on behalf of VTJP,

Mark Hage

Vermonters for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel (www.vtjp.org)

cc: Jeff Furman
Pierre Ferrari
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