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Support Ben and Jerry's for its principled position on Palestine

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK ([AOHR UK](#)) condemns the abuse and threats directed towards ice cream manufacturer Ben and Jerry's for its [decision](#) to stop sales of its products from the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OCT).

"Ben and Jerry's" has condemned the "hateful and violent threats" it has faced after it announced in July that it would no longer operate in the OCT.

In a [post](#) on Twitter on 19 August, the company wrote: "Ben & Jerry's condemns the hateful and violent threats that have been directed at our company, our business partners, our Board, and particularly our Board Chair. We stand together - Ben & Jerry's and our Board - in denouncing hate, intimidation, and threats of violence in any form."

In a second tweet, they wrote: "We will continue to be guided by our values and commitment to human rights and justice."

The American company's decision to stop sales within the OCT was met with fury from Israel and its supporters, including those in the US government.

Even Israeli president Isaac Herzog voiced his anger that the ice creams would no longer be sold in Israeli [settlements](#) on Palestinian land. On 21 July he said: "The boycott against Israel is a new type of terrorism - economic terrorism.

"[This is] terrorism that seeks to harm Israeli citizens and the Israeli economy. We must oppose this boycott and terrorism of any kind."

Israel has been so shaken by the move, which highlights its ongoing [occupation](#) of Palestinian land - which is illegal under international law - that its foreign ministry



ordered all Israeli diplomatic missions across North America and Europe to lobby the company, which is owned by multinational Unilever, to retract its new policy.

In the United States, numerous [politicians](#) have jumped to the aid of Israel. Florida senator Rick Scott went as far as calling for a federal investigation into the policy. He [wrote](#): “Such boycotts of foreign countries are in violation of a statute and horribly anti-Semitic. They have no place in the United States, and in conjunction with the Office of Antiboycott Compliance and the Department of Justice, I ask that you determine if these entities are violating statute, and if so, to hold them fully accountable.”

The boycott was welcomed by campaigners for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement worldwide - and was, indeed, a result of pressure from such human rights groups internationally.

However, the decision only applied to illegally occupying Israeli communities in the OCT. The rest of Israel is unaffected. Indeed, the company’s founders wrote the new policy was “not a rejection of Israel...”

“It is a rejection of Israeli policy, which perpetuates an illegal occupation that is a barrier to peace and violates the basic human rights of the Palestinian people who live under the occupation. As Jewish supporters of the State of Israel, we fundamentally reject the notion that it is [antisemitic](#) to question the policies of the State of Israel.”

The response to this mild rebuke to Israeli crimes and human rights abuses has been intense - and predictable. Those supporting Israel and its oppression of Palestinians have taken the lead from the Israeli government and its international apologists, and subjected Ben and Jerry’s outlets, workers, and executives to a barrage of abuse.

Israel has a well-oiled social media machine, with paid professionals pumping out pro-Israel and anti-Arab content alongside many more supporters worldwide.

Detractors who brand the company “anti-semitic” have, for the most part, no interest in the welfare of Jewish people. Instead, they see the importance of Israel to the US in terms of geopolitics - with Israel acting as a de-facto US outpost in the Middle East. Many Jewish people across the globe support the Palestinian struggle against Israeli aggression.



Despite the limitations of this boycott, AOHR UK stands in support of Ben and Jerry's in taking this stand for human rights. Indeed, we would encourage them to go further.

AOHR UK also calls on other companies to follow the lead of Ben and Jerry's. While such global brands will mainly be focusing on profits, they should note that most of the world sees the racism entrenched in the Israeli occupation - and many would be supportive of such moves. Furthermore, while largely unenforced, the global legal consensus is that Israel's occupation of the OCT is illegal.

Finally, [AOHR UK](#) welcomes the growing international awareness and opposition to Israel's brutal behaviour. This latest action is just one example of worldwide revulsion at their policies - which include the continuing theft of Palestinian land, the daily abuses of Palestinians and the regular military interventions against Palestinian civilians in the [West Bank and Gaza](#)..

Boycotts can be a powerful tool against aggression, and AOHR UK strongly supports calls for boycotts, divestments and sanctions against Israel. [Apartheid](#) in South Africa fell, in part, due to boycotts demanded by human rights campaigners around the world. Apartheid and occupation in Israel can be ended in the same way.

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