

Letter

To Ben & Jerry's CEO Matthew McCarthy and Global Social Mission Officer Dave Rapaport:

Since 1985, Ben & Jerry's has allocated portions of its profits to fund grassroots social justice organizations across the United States. We write this letter as organizations who have received some amount of financial support from the Ben & Jerry's Foundation (although the amounts vary) at least in 2020. Some of us have been receiving support from Ben & Jerry's Foundation for longer. For this we are very grateful.

The authors and signers of this letter represent a diverse group of leaders and organizers, including Black, Palestinian, Latinx, Jewish, Asian, immigrant and directly impacted community members. We are each incredibly proud of the work our organizations have done. We have fought for and won rights around housing, environmental justice, police and prisons, migrant justice, gender and sexuality justice, and much more. As our organizations have developed, we have grown to more deeply embody international solidarity, aiming to ally with people across the globe who are often resisting the same systems of oppression that we are. We are extremely dismayed to see that Ben & Jerry's has not always done the same, specifically when it comes to Palestine. Here are the facts:

On April 27 2021, [Human Rights Watch](#) released a 213-page report entitled "A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution." Some salient details from this damning report state that:

- "About 6.8 million Jewish Israelis and 6.8 million Palestinians live today between the Mediterranean Sea and Jordan River, an area encompassing Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), the latter made up of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Throughout most of this area, Israel is the sole governing power; in the remainder, it exercises primary authority alongside limited Palestinian self-rule. Across these areas and in most aspects of life, Israeli authorities methodically privilege Jewish Israelis and discriminate against Palestinians..."
- "Laws, policies, and statements by leading Israeli officials make plain that the objective of maintaining Jewish Israeli control over demographics, political power, and land has long guided government policy."
- "In pursuit of this goal, authorities have dispossessed, confined, forcibly separated, and subjugated Palestinians by virtue of their identity to varying degrees of intensity. In certain areas... these deprivations are so severe that they amount to the crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution."
- "These policies, which grant Jewish Israelis the same rights and privileges wherever they live and discriminate against Palestinians to varying degrees wherever they live, reflect a policy to privilege one people at the expense of another."

The website of [Vermonters for Justice in Palestine](#) (VTJP) states:

- “Since 2013, the year our [VTJP’s] campaign went public, thousands of individuals and 239 organizations in 20 countries, including Israel, and from the District of Columbia and the occupied Palestinian territory, have called on Ben & Jerry’s to put an end to its franchise’s business in Israeli settlements.”
- “Jeff Furman, chairperson of Ben & Jerry’s Board of Directors, traveled to Occupied Palestine in 2012 with a group of American civil rights’ leaders. He described what he saw there as “apartheid.”

Ben & Jerry's involvement in business with Israeli settlements, which constitute a war crime under international law, amounts to support of Israeli apartheid. Ben & Jerry’s reprehensibly ironic selling of "peace & love" ice cream in Shufersal supermarkets, which was recently cited by the United Nations for illicitly benefiting from business in occupied territory, underlines this unacceptable complicity. By selling and catering in Israeli settlements, which are on stolen land and are in violation of international law, Ben & Jerry’s is helping to legitimize massive land confiscations, home demolitions, ethnic cleansing, and other crimes against humanity.

From its brand and products, to its leaders’ political endorsements and foundational giving, Ben & Jerry’s plays a noteworthy role among corporate America in defining what “progressive values” mean. As Israel’s actions have continued to escalate, Ben & Jerry’s has remained abysmally silent on the horrific level of death and suffering Palestinians have incurred and the company’s complicity with Israel.

It is antithetical to social justice to support the liberation of one people while being involved in the oppression of another. As the authors and signers of this letter, many of whom are Black, Palestinian, Latinx, Jewish, Asian, immigrant, and generally continue to experience oppression or descend from oppressed lineages, we cannot accept this. And as organizations devoted to social justice, it is our duty to speak out. We call on Ben & Jerry’s to change course immediately: to end its complicity in Israel's apartheid and occupation of Palestine, and to rise in solidarity with the Palestinian quest for freedom, justice and equality.

As organizers for social justice, we echo the demands put forth by Vermonters for Justice in Palestine in solidarity with the Palestinian leaders and organizers of the BDS movement. Ben & Jerry's CEO Matthew McCarthy, and Global Social Mission Officer Rapaport:

- End the sale and catering of Ben & Jerry’s products in Israel’s illegal settlements in occupied Palestine.
- Cut ties with the Shufersal supermarket chain and every other commercial vendor in Israel’s illegal settlements in occupied Palestine.

- Terminate your licensing agreement with your Israeli franchise that manufactures your ice cream and markets it in Israel's illegal settlements in occupied Palestine.
- Publicly acknowledge and take accountability for your complicity with Israel's occupation of Palestine and include Palestinian solidarity as a key component of your social justice platform through your publicity and products, at a level consistent with Ben & Jerry's advocacy for other causes.
- Release a statement addressed to the other members of Businesses for Social Responsibility and shared publicly explaining your decision to no longer conduct business of any kind in Israel's illegal settlements and urging these businesses and others to do the same.

Our decision to send this letter does not come easily, as many of us are doing critical and life-saving work in our communities and rely on the Ben & Jerry's Foundation to do so. However, as organizations and individuals committed to fighting for social justice, it is our responsibility to speak out and take action when the foundational support we receive is sourced from a company that is complicit with oppression and that is continuing to ignore demands to address it. Our work has a role in bestowing credibility to the Ben & Jerry's name as a company that advocates for social justice. And, therefore we have a duty in naming when Ben & Jerry's is failing to abide by its reputation and values.

Given the extreme urgency of the violence and persecution against Palestinians right now, we request your response to these demands no later than _____.

Signed,

Ben & Jerry's Foundation Grant Recipients

Pilsen Alliance
Chicago Housing Initiative
About Face: Veterans Against the War
Gente Organizada
VietRISE
North Bay Jobs with Justice
Collective Action for Safe Spaces
Georgia Muslim Voter Project
Southern Maine Workers' Center
Tenayuca Labor Project
Integrate NYC
Restorative Community Practice of Vermont
Rural Vermont