

Musings From My Hermitage

By Larry Ginsberg

The Disingenuousness of Ben & Jerry's

“We believe it is inconsistent with our values for Ben & Jerry's ice cream to be sold in Occupied Palestinian Territory”

What hypocrisy!

“Although Ben & Jerry's will no longer be sold in the OPT, we will stay in Israel through a different arrangement. We will share an update on this as soon as we are ready.”

(It should be noted that this requires the cancellation or non-renewal of a licensing agreement that terminates in December 2002 where the franchisee has a manufacturing facility and two scoop shops south of Tel Aviv.)

David Rapaport, Ben & Jerry's Global Social Mission Officer, stated: “We believe that it's just not consistent with our values to be selling ice cream in an area that is recognized internationally as an illegal military occupation where there is a great disparity of rights and human rights concerns. So, we're staying with that and, as we've stated we plan to stay in Israel as well.”

“This action is not anti-Semitic. I am not anti-Semitic.” said Ben & Jerry's Board Chair Anuradha Mittal, who also claims to have been subjected to “vile hate.” and stated further that she is “proud of Ben & Jerry's for taking a stance to end sale of its ice cream in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. But on Twitter, Mittal has previously endorsed the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israel known as BDS. “The catastrophe continues #Nakba70 years later #palestine bleeds Boycott Divest Sanctions #israel,” she wrote in 2018.

To be fair, Ben & Jerry's parent Corporation, Unilever, has and may still be attempting to override the decision by the Board of Ben & Jerry's. In all probability this is quite possibly a business decision to avoid the repercussions of running afoul of various sanctions in the US and elsewhere for companies complying with the BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) Movement to delegitimize Israel. Should this state-of-affairs persist many government entities will or could be forced to divest themselves of Unilever, Ben & Jerry's and other subsidiary stocks and bonds issues to Unilever's detriment. In fact New Jersey, Florida and other jurisdictions are already taking Unilever to task concerning Ben & Jerry's decision.

Ben & Jerry's claim that its decision to exit the West Bank Market is consistent with its values. Yet its reasoning is replete with hypocrisy and its actions are anti-Semitic based upon the IMRA working definition when Israel is held to a “higher standard” of behavior, not expected or demanded of other Democratic Nations.

Does Ben & Jerry's decry the egregious conduct of the Palestinian Authority toward its own people, the denial of a right to vote; the violence and discrimination perpetuated against women

and the LGBTQ community, the stifling and opposition to a free press, the cruel and inhumane methods of torture and the death penalty for certain interactions with the Jews or Israel, such as the sale of land or other “treasonous” conduct.

Other than Israel and the United States has Ben & Jerry’s been involved with any other political controversy on the planet? Ben & Jerry’s sell their products in the Philippines where a Muslim insurgency has been in process for many years. They sell in the Occupied Turkish Zone of Cyprus. They sell in Ireland whose parliament is seeking to support the BDS policy to delegitimize Israel by the stoppage of all trade. They sell in Poland, Hungary and Lithuania who are attempting to reinvent their relations and certain collaborations with the Nazis during World War II and the Holocaust. They sell their products in Brazil without comment to the repressiveness of the current regime. Israel is certainly being held to a double standard not demanded of other Democratic Nations. Whatever Board Chair, Anuradha Mittal states, the Boycott undertaken by Ben & Jerry’s has an anti-Semitic component.

Now let us examine the statements made in support of the Boycott by Ben & Jerry’s Global Social Mission Officer, David Rapaport. First the West Bank is not an area that is internationally recognized as under an illegal military occupation. The West Bank was occupied during the Six Days War of 1967 and is “legally” occupied until a peace arrangement can be implemented much like the Israeli-Egyptian peace accord. The “settlements” may or may not be recognized as illegal. The issue is President Obama’s failure to exercise a Security Council Veto. Certain “settlements” such as the Gush Etzion Bloc and areas of Hebron are recognized, even by the Palestinians in the Oslo Accords as being upon Jewish, JNF or Israeli owned land. Kfar Darom in the Gaza Strip is Jewish owned land currently being occupied by Hamas. By Rapaport’s failure to even recognize the terms already negotiated by the Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank, he is certainly holding Israel to a “higher standard” than other Democracies.

Rapaport's other claim that Ben & Jerry’s plans to stay in Israel as well is a very subtle defense mechanism to try to ameliorate the looming crises. You must realize that Israeli laws forbid entering into contracts with Companies that discriminate against settlements in the “disputed” Palestinian Territories. Therefore, by subterfuge, Ben & Jerry’s could well make the disingenuous claim that its Boycott of Israel and the Palestinian Territories is in fact a Boycott of Ben & Jerry’s by Israel.