

The “Product of Israel” Made in the Occupied West Bank Controversy

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) Encourages Judicial Review of CFIA on West Bank Settlement Wines

By [Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East](#)

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Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) applauds Dr. David Kattenburg for his application for judicial review of the decision of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) in a matter of wines mislabelled as “Product of Israel.” Kattenburg had originally filed a complaint in March to the CFIA demonstrating that the wines in question were actually being produced in the West Bank – a territory never attributed or recognized as being part of Israel proper. The CFIA ultimately decided that it would allow the wines to continue to be imported and labelled as “Product of Israel” concluding that the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement (CIFTA) overrode Canadian consumer protection laws.

Although a wide variety of products produced in illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank are available to Canadian consumers, the legality of their importation and sale — bearing the misleading label “Product of Israel” – has never been challenged in court. Israel invaded and has militarily occupied the West Bank since 1967, and has never withdrawn despite numerous UN resolutions calling them to do so. Following its 1967 invasion, Israel unlawfully established over 100 Jewish-only colonies, referring to them as “settlements.” Kattenburg appealed CFIA’s July decision, but his appeal was dismissed by CFIA’s Complaints & Appeals Office, so Kattenburg and his lawyer, Dimitri Lascaris have applied for a judicial review of CFIA’s decision.

Among other things, Kattenburg’s judicial review asks the Federal Court of Canada to declare the CFIA ruling on the wines to be unlawful. It also calls on the Court to declare that, insofar as “settlement” Wines are labelled as “Product of Israel,” such Wines violate section 5 (1) of Canada’s Food and Drugs Act, and section 7 of Canada’s Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act.

Given the press statements of B’Nai Brith and media reports in July, many Canadians concluded that the CFIA decision had been heavily influenced by Canada’s pro-Israel domestic lobby. The dismissal of Kattenburg’s complaint may also have been carried out under pressure from the lobby. CJPME President Thomas Woodley states,

“It is extremely disturbing that Canadian consumer protection laws are so flippantly dismissed in the face of domestic lobby forces. We support Dr. Kattenburg in his attempt to hold the Canadian government accountable on this matter.”

CJPME, for its part, recommends that Canada suspend the import of products produced by Israeli companies operating illegally out of the West Bank.

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