

Israel's War Crimes: Is the Tide Finally Turning?

A desperate Israel seeks to silence critics

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Targeting and killing Palestinian children could not accomplish what a decision by an ice cream company has achieved. To be sure, the visual impact of Israel's recent onslaught on Gaza turned many against that country's war crimes and its ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians, but what the Israeli government really has feared most is an economic and cultural boycott such as the one that brought down the apartheid regime in South Africa. That blow came last week when Ben & Jerry's ice cream, which is sold in the food shops in the illegal-under-international-law Israeli settlements on the West Bank, would no longer market its product in those areas after the current contract with suppliers expires at the end of 2022.

Social media and mainstream media normally censor any posts or stories that are too critical of the Jewish state, but in this case the decision reverberated throughout the media as ice cream wars are both newsworthy and exceedingly rare. But the dramatic response by both Israeli politicians and their spear carriers in the US Congress indicated just how serious the move, little more than a gesture in practical terms, was considered to be.

There was also a touch of irony to the tale as Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield were and still are both politically liberal Jewish New Yorkers who moved to Vermont to open their business. The fact is that they were not party to the decision as they had sold their company to British food and consumer home products conglomerate Unilever back in 2000, which is precisely the problem for the Israeli government. Even though Ben & Jerry's has an independent board, its parent company Unilever is a major corporation. The fact that it accepted a decision that it knew would be extremely controversial is significant as there would have to have been a consensus over the issue by the company's top executives and board as well by major shareholders. There are indeed reports that the independent board of Ben & Jerry's wanted to [boycott all of Israel](#) but was restrained by Unilever management. Either way, for Israel it was perhaps the shape of things to come with other companies possibly following the Ben & Jerry example by limiting their involvement in the country's economy or pulling out altogether.

The Unilever decision greatly boosted the morale of the perpetually under siege non-violent

Boycott Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS), which has been calling on companies and investors to support Palestinian human rights by isolating Israel economically. Israel's government responded sharply even as [it unleashed](#) its Ministry of Strategic Affairs' army of [largely diaspora trolls](#) on the internet, overwhelming the ice cream maker's website and Facebook pages with a defense of Israel that included vile accusations of anti-Semitism.

The Israeli head of the Ben & Jerry subsidiary is also apparently refusing to go along with what is only a partial boycott, affecting the clearly illegal settlements. In a tweet, local [CEO Avi Zinger](#) wrote:

"We are continuing to sell in all of Israel, and we will not surrender to the pressure of Unilever and the global Ben & Jerry's."

Israeli **President Isaac Herzog** [immediately condemned](#) the Ben & Jerry move, insisting that any boycotts of Israel over human rights concerns constitute "a new kind of terrorism." Newly elected **Prime Minister Naftali Bennett** has also inevitably [joined the chorus](#), labeling Ben & Jerry "anti-Israel ice cream." Ironically, **former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** also publicly called on his co-religionists [to boycott Ben & Jerry](#), saying "Now we Israelis know which ice cream NOT to buy." It was a complete reversal on Netanyahu's part as he has argued vehemently against any boycott campaigns, particularly as they apply to Israel.

Also in Israel itself, **Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked** [visited](#) the Ben & Jerry's ice cream factory. She confirmed that Israeli authorities were already working with American Jewish and Christian Zionists, as well as other pro-Israel groups and Congress to pressure Unilever "until they change their despicable decision. Ben & Jerry's International chose to suck up to terrorist and antisemitic organizations" and the government will engage in the "legal, consumer and diplomatic arenas" to reverse the decision.

It is no surprise that Israel is particularly pressing hard on what it perceives as a friendly audience in the United States. In a move coordinated with Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, who has himself tweeted "Ben & Jerry's decision represents shameful surrender to antisemitism, to BDS and to all that is wrong with the anti-Israel and anti-Jewish discourse. We will not be silent," **Gilad Erdan**, Israel's ambassador to the United States and the United Nations, called the move "the dehumanization of the Jewish people." He reportedly [has contacted the governors of the 35 states](#) in America that have legislated against the BDS movement, demanding that they [sanction or otherwise punish](#) Ben & Jerry's and Unilever over the decision. He wrote "I ask that you consider speaking out against the company's decision, and taking any other relevant steps, including in relations to your state laws and the commercial dealings between Ben and Jerry's and your state." As two-thirds of US states have such legislation, including major large population states Florida, Illinois, New York, New Jersey, California, Maryland and Texas the threat is a serious one, though the legislation and what it actually authorizes varies from state to state.

The anti-BDS legislation is widely regarded as unconstitutional as it would essentially eliminate free speech if the subject is Israel. It was recently [successfully challenged](#) in Georgia by journalist Abby Martin, who was denied the right to speak before a college group if she would not first sign a statement saying that she would not support any boycott of Israel.

Indeed, Jewish groups and spokesmen in the US are beginning to line up against the ice cream maker. Faux conservative talking head Ben Shapiro has announced to his audience that he will no longer eat Ben & Jerry's ice cream. Perhaps more significant, the ubiquitous Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has issued a statement on the decision "We are disappointed by this decision from @benandjerrys. You can disagree with policies without feeding into dangerous campaigns that seek to undermine Israel." Meanwhile, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations [has written to](#) the governors of the 35 states that have anti-BDS legislation and has demanded that they force their state pension funds to divest from Unilever.

And as ADL and the Conference of Presidents go, so too goes the US government. Predictably call-me-Zionist Joe Biden and the US State Department, which has Zionist Jews at its three top positions, added their two cents, confirming that the White House "firmly reject[s] the BDS movement, which unfairly singles out Israel." And there are the usual sounds coming out of the Israeli firsters in Congress and elsewhere. Senator James Lankford of Oklahoma, for example, [quickly called for](#) "block[ing] the sale of all [#Benandjerrys](#) in the state and in any state-operated facility to align with our law." Florida's Ron DeSantis, self-described as America's most pro-Israel governor, was also quick off the mark, instructing his state government to stop any purchases of Unilever products while Texas governor Greg Abbott called the move "disgraceful and an insult to America's closest ally in the Middle East." New York Mayor Bill de Blasio has meanwhile committed himself to stop eating Ben & Jerry's ice cream.

If anyone does not have a problem with the behavior of Israel and its proxies in the United States I will attempt to explain. Wealthy Israel, which has been taking the United States taxpayer for a ride for over seventy years, is a major strategic liability for the US and a moral cesspit due to its genocidal policies towards the Palestinians and its incessant promotion of war within its region and beyond. Its president is now grossly hyperbolically referring to an ice cream company's partial boycott as a "new form of terrorism." In the current context, its Foreign Minister and Ambassador are also *inter alia* interfering in US politics and our judiciary, openly calling on individual American states to take steps to sanction and punish a Vermont based ice cream company which made a business decision based on both moral and legal considerations.

Worse still, many Americans who claim to be ethical but who perversely function as corrupted politicians and media whores are fully on board with punishing Ben & Jerry, which is a direct assault on the Bill of Rights and serves no national interest whatsoever. If there is anything that better illustrates the toxicity of the lopsided relationship with Israel than what is taking place right now it is difficult to imagine just what that might be. Hopefully the decision by Unilever will backfire on the critics, encouraging rather than discouraging other companies to divest in Israel or boycott what it produces. They will be joined by the labor unions, university student representative bodies and mainstream churches that have already denounced apartheid Israel and signed on to BDS. That Israel and its friends are terrified of the possible consequences of the Ben & Jerry boycott is in fact good news. Hopefully the charade of one set of rules for Israel and one set of rules for everyone else will end and Americans will at last be freed from a relationship that has brought nothing but grief since 1948.

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