

## **Press Release: Vermonters for Justice in Palestine Ends Boycott against Ben & Jerry's**

Vermonters for Justice in Palestine (VTJP) <https://icecream.vtjp.org/>

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### **VTJP ends its call to Boycott Ben & Jerry's**

On July 19<sup>th</sup> 2021, Ben & Jerry's announced that they would end sales for their ice cream in illegal settlements and terminate the contract with their license holder when it expires at the end of 2022. However, rather than allowing Ben & Jerry's to continue with this plan, Unilever (Ben & Jerry's parent company since 2011) decided to sell an Israel-only version of the Ben and Jerry's franchise to the contractor, Avi Zinger. This led Ben & Jerry's and its independent Board to file [two lawsuits](#) in order to try and stop the sale. They lost the first one and the second is still pending.

But whatever the outcome of the courts, and whether some version of Ben and Jerry's ice cream continues to be sold in the illegal Israeli settlements, the fact that Ben and Jerry's forced Unilever to sell off the franchise should be seen as a victory. While [Zinger and his legal team](#) have framed this as a victory over Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel, there's not much to their argument. Zinger writes:

“There is no place for discrimination in the commercial sale of ice cream. It has always been important to me to ensure that all customers – no matter their identity – are free to enjoy Ben & Jerry's ice cream. BDS lost.”

Avi Zinger makes it sound like the goal of our campaign was to prevent Jewish people from consuming ice cream—a bold mischaracterization. Instead, we were looking to our neighbor, Ben & Jerry's, to stand by their social justice mission and correct a grave wrong. The settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank are illegal under the Geneva Convention; rather than reward Israel with U.S.-based contracts, our call was a targeted pressure campaign to make a statement about global tolerance for these crimes. BDS is one of the only viable tools in the arsenal for justice: it is nonviolent, it is proven to be effective, and it wields economic and social power rather than military force. Through BDS, we can exert pressure on Israel to cease the ongoing human rights abuses against Palestinians and to make the Occupation politically and economically nonviable. Ben & Jerry's heard our call: BDS won.

We applaud Ben and Jerry's for sticking to their principles and for honoring their 2021 announcement. As Ben and Jerry's no longer has any operations in Israel, VTJP is officially calling for an end of our boycott directed at the Vermont ice cream maker.

VTJP has not yet determined what, if any, actions will be taken in response to Unilever, as our group's intent is to focus on organizations related specifically to the state of Vermont.