May 4, 2018

Vermonters for Justice in Palestine
26 Liberty Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

Regarding: Ben & Jerry’s Business in Israel

Dear Mr. Hage,

Please receive this letter as a respectful response to your letter dated April 24, 2018 to executive leadership at Unilever. We believe that we have been open and honest with Vermonters for Justice in Palestine (VTJP) since your organization first presented its point of view to Ben & Jerry’s about our business activities in Israel. We have met with representatives from your organization in person and we have exchanged written correspondences as part of our engagement. Members of Ben & Jerry’s Board of Directors and senior management have visited the Middle East to gain personal insights. We understand and respect your passion and drive to address human rights issues for Palestinians, but we do not agree with your representation of our activities in the region nor do we agree with how Ben & Jerry’s can best move forward.

Ben & Jerry’s believes that economic cooperation is an important component of efforts to resolve conflicts, advance social equity, and material well-being for marginalized peoples around the world and in the Middle East. We want to encourage and support the economic cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians. Ben & Jerry’s believes that engagement – rather than disengagement – is a key ingredient to any long-term formula for peace and stability in the Middle East.

Ben & Jerry’s will continue to be a constructive player that builds an effective approach to multicultural understanding and thriving communities. Our global business, including our licensee in Israel, supports a variety of programs that include a values-driven sourcing program with Fairtrade farmers, science-based educational programs, and various efforts aimed at these objectives. Ben & Jerry’s continues to explore how to best widen these efforts to build sustainable, thriving communities in the region. We remain committed to our licensee in Israel and to the rights of citizens in both Israel and the Palestinian territories.

As you know, the economic relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority are governed by the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the P.L.O., signed in Paris on April 29, 1994 (“the Paris Agreement”). The goal was to establish and encourage economic cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians, which both parties see as a "cornerstone in their mutual relations with a view to enhance their interest in the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace."

The Paris Agreement guarantees, among other things, a free industrial zone between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and that the two sides of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are considered as a single territorial unit. Both parties knowingly operate in ways to avoid damage to the industry of the other side. Israeli Law forbids any kind of discrimination between customers. Ben & Jerry’s licensee must comply with the local law.
In summary, we believe that our engagement benefits both Palestinians and Israelis and that we are providing a contribution to creating positive solutions in the region.

Sincerely,

Jostein Solheim
CEO

Copies To:
Paul Polman, CEO, Unilever
Strive Masiyiwa, Chair, Unilever Corporate Responsibility Committee
Feike Sijbesma, Member, Unilever Corporate Responsibility Committee
Amanda Sourry, President, Unilever North America; Head of Global Customer Development
Keith Weed, Chief Marketing & Communications Officer, Unilever