

# The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

## US State Department Vows to Oppose BDS After Ben & Jerry's Settlement Pullout

Times of Israel, July 21<sup>st</sup> 2021

### Recap:

Israel ramps up pressure on Unilever, Ben and Jerry's parent company, following its ban on West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza ice cream distribution.

### The Context:

- ☆ Over 600,000 Jews live in 140 settlements built since Israel captured the territory in 1967. Most of the international community considers the settlements illegal, though Israel disputes this [1]. Ben & Jerry's announced it would no longer distribute its ice cream in the "Occupied Palestinian Territory." The future of Ben & Jerry's sales in Israel proper remains unclear.
- ☆ Ben & Jerry's was founded in 1978 by two Jews and was bought in 2000 by Unilever, though the Ben and Jerry's independent board maintains an unusual amount of freedom under the terms of the deal. Ben & Jerry's, who has a presence in Israel since 1987 [2], made the announcement in response to the "concerns shared by fans and trusted partners" who deem Israel's presence in the territories "inconsistent with [their] values" [3].
- ☆ Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid called Ben & Jerry's move a "disgraceful capitulation" to anti-Semitism and the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which calls for a complete boycott of Israel over its treatment of the Palestinians [4] while Israel's US ambassador, Gilad Erdan, sent letters to governors of 35 states with anti-BDS laws, requesting that they sanction Ben & Jerry's over its decision to halt sales in the settlements. Airbnb recently took a similar stance only to walk it back shortly thereafter following intense international pressure.
- ☆ The Trump administration famously reversed the U.S.'s decades-long classification of the settlements being illegal, and President Joe Biden has yet to alter the policy [5].

### Conversation Points:

- ☆ Who is affected most by boycotts?
- ☆ Why hasn't the Biden administration reversed Trump's classification of Israel's West Bank settlements?
- ☆ Why did Ben and Jerry's target Israel and not any other country?

## IDF Concerned Crisis in Lebanon Could Have Repercussions Along the Border

Anna Ahronheim, Jerusalem Post, July 15<sup>th</sup> 2021

### Recap:

With the Lebanese economy in freefall, Israel braces for a wave of drug smuggling and infiltrations of migrant workers and refugees along its northern border.

### The Context:

- ✧ Lebanon is currently suffering from one of the world's worst financial crises since the 1850s, with violence and protests breaking out throughout the country as basic services collapse. 77% of Lebanese households don't have enough money to buy food and the Lebanese currency has lost over 90% of its value. The country has run out of hundreds of essential drugs, and electricity outages and gas shortages are commonplace.
- ✧ With the formal economy crumbling, migrant workers have begun infiltrating Israel and cross border smuggling attempts have increased. With very little happening along Lebanon's southern border without Hezbollah's knowledge, it is believed that the infiltrations are funding the terrorist group's activities. Last week, Israel intercepted weapons and ammunition worth over 2.7 million shekels [6].
- ✧ Israel fought a 2006 war against Hezbollah and although the border has remained relatively quiet since, the IDF shelled southern Lebanon this week after two rockets were fired from Lebanon into Israeli territory [7].

### Conversation Points:

- ✧ What are the potential ramifications of another failed state along Israel's border?
  - ✧ Why are so many Arab states unraveling?
  - ✧ Does Israel have a responsibility, or at least a vested interest, in preventing Lebanon from becoming a failed state?
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## Government Unveils Kashrut Service Reforms to Fury of Chief Rabbinate

Kobi Nachshon, Ynet, July 20<sup>th</sup> 2021

### Recap:

Israel announced the privatization of its kosher certification process to increase competition in a field currently monopolized by the Chief Rabbinate. The Chief Rabbinate was shielded for years, despite wide criticism, due to its partnership in former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's governing coalition [8].

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## The Context

- ☆ Since the establishment of the state, the power to grant businesses with a kosher certificate fell exclusively to the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, the highest religious authority in the country [9].
- ☆ Religious Services Minister Matan Kahana's reforms will allow private entities to receive operating licenses and work as independent organizations regulated by the rabbinate [10]. The reforms aim to address corruption and poor standards that have plagued the system for years due to the rabbinate's control over its inspectors. The changes will save consumers tens of millions of shekels annually. The Chief Rabbinate issued a statement rejecting Kahana's new plan, calling it "a dangerous initiative to destroy kashrut in Israel [11]."
- ☆ In 2018, Tzohar, a religious-Zionist organization, launched its own private kosher certification agency. Many eateries adopted the private agency's services, bearing certificates with the word "Tzohar," but not "kosher."

## Conversation Points

- ☆ Will privatizing the kashrut industry better serve the people?
- ☆ Should there be a single authority that oversees anything in Judaism?
- ☆ Will the reforms increase the number of kosher establishments, thus increasing the number of Jews observing the laws of kashrut?

## Notes:

1. [Israel PM warns Ben & Jerry's owner Unilever of consequences over sales ban](#), BBC, July 21<sup>st</sup> 2021
2. [Ben & Jerry's decision to pull out of West Bank prompts rancor in Israel](#), Adam Taylor, Washington Post, July 19<sup>th</sup> 2021
3. [Israel Warns of Severe Consequences 'Legal and Otherwise' After Ben & Jerry's Settlement Ban](#), Jemima McEvoy, Forbes, July 21<sup>st</sup> 2021
4. [Israel PM warns Ben & Jerry's owner Unilever of consequences over sales ban](#), BBC, July 21<sup>st</sup> 2021
5. [Israel Warns of Severe Consequences 'Legal and Otherwise' After Ben & Jerry's Settlement Ban](#), Jemima McEvoy, Forbes, July 21<sup>st</sup> 2021
6. [Israel Investigating Potential Hezbollah Involvement in Lebanon](#), Josh Breiner & Yaniv Kubovich, Haaretz, July 10<sup>th</sup> 2021
7. [Israel shells Lebanon after rockets fired over border](#), Al Jazeera, July 20<sup>th</sup> 2021
8. [Israel announces plan to reform kosher supervision on food products](#), Xinhua, July 21<sup>st</sup> 2021
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. [Religious affairs minister seeks to reform kosher certification, irking Haredim](#), AMY SPIRO, Times of Israel, July 20<sup>th</sup> 2021

**The Sabra Report** is a newsletter intended to stimulate conversation about Israel by recapping major events & providing context. Our conversation points are meant to encourage discussion amongst friends and family.

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