

*Canadians for Justice and Peace
in the Middle East*
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Montreal, QC H3L 2R3
438-380-5410

October 14th, 2011

Jim Sinegal, CEO
COSTCO Headquarters
999 Lake Drive
Issaquah, WA 98027

Dear Mr. Sinegal,

I am writing to ask you to stop selling products from Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. This includes food produced by Israeli companies (e.g. Jaffa oranges, Osem Pearl couscous, Carmel dates and Sabra Hummus) and manufactured goods produced in Israel or its illegal colonies in the occupied Palestinian territories (such as Keter Plastics sheds, fences, gates, and playhouses; EduShape toys and playsets, and Tiny Love toys).

I am urging this action, because it is the appropriate legal and ethical action for your company to take.

- Palestinian civil society has called for the international community to boycott Israeli products until Israel complies with international law and universal principles of human rights vis-a-vis the Palestinians and their territory. The Palestinian call also asks for a boycott of any business or institution participating directly or indirectly in the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territories.
- The UN Human Rights Norms for Business, unanimously adopted in 2003, prohibits transnational corporations and other business entities from profiting from violations of international humanitarian law (Art. 3), and requires business to be conducted according to international law in the countries in which they operate (Art. 10). Corporations are also prohibited from engaging in actions that obstruct or impede economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights (Art. 12). Keter Plastics and other companies producing items sold in COSTCO violate these Norms by operating factories in illegal Israeli colonies. Selling these products to North American consumers makes COSTCO a beneficiary of Israel's illegal establishment of colonies in the occupied Palestinian territories.
- By selling products from Israel and its illegal colonies, COSTCO is sending a signal to the Israeli government that the extreme discrimination it practices against Palestinians—truly a new version of apartheid—and the violations of international law that it perpetrates are acceptable. The Norms stipulate that corporations must refrain from any activity which supports, solicits, or encourages states or any other entities to abuse human rights (Art. 11). Accordingly, COSTCO should not profit from economic activity that bolsters a state that systematically violates the rights of Arab citizens of Israel, and Palestinian residents of the occupied territories.

The organization I represent, Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME), is an organization whose mission is to empower Canadians to promote justice, development and peace

in the Middle East. In the coming months and years, we will be promoting a large and growing campaign to get Canadian citizens and organs of civil society to boycott and divest from Israel. As a grassroots, secular, non-partisan volunteer organization, our policies are founded in 1) respect for international law, 2) a belief in a single standard for all, and 3) the position that violence is not a solution. We have 27,000 adherents across Canada, and active groups in numerous major Canadian cities. Our Website is www.cjpme.org.

The fundamentals of the situation in Israel-Palestine are simple. The UN Partition Plan of 1947 dictated that two states be created in Palestine: an Israeli one, and a Palestinian one. In 1948, the Israeli state was created, but the Palestinian one was not. In 1967, Israel took control of all the land that was to become a Palestinian state (including East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip), and continues to effectively control these territories, denying Palestinians their right to self-determination, as well as dozens of civil, human and humanitarian rights. This occupation is recognized as a hostile military occupation – as reflected by the unanimous vote of the Signatories to the Fourth Geneva Convention of Dec. 5, 2001.

The call for a boycott of Israel on the part of the Palestinians because of rights abuses is not a frivolous one. The UN General Assembly votes yearly and decisively on the rights violations of the Palestinians by the Israelis. For illustration, I provide three examples below:

- Resolution 63/98 (adopted Dec. 18, 2008), Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, **passed by a vote of 165-to-8**. A parallel resolution in 2007 passed by a vote of 156-to-7. A parallel resolution in 2006 passed by a vote of 157-to-9.
- Resolution 63/97 (adopted Dec. 18, 2008), Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan, **passed by a vote of 171-to-6**. A parallel resolution in 2007 passed by a vote of 165-to-7. A parallel resolution in 2006 passed by a vote of 162-to-8.
- Resolution 63/97 (adopted Dec. 18, 2008), Applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Territory, including Jerusalem, and other occupied Arab territories, **passed by a vote of 173-to-6**. A parallel resolution in 2007 passed by a vote of 169-to-6. A parallel resolution in 2006 passed by a vote of 165-to-7.

While the UN General Assembly votes decisively on these issues each year, action from the UN is stymied each year because the UN Security Council – the enforcement arm of the UN – refuses to intervene. This inaction is due to the political relationship between the United States and Israel: the United States typically vetoes Security Council resolutions which would put pressure on Israel to respect the norms of international law.

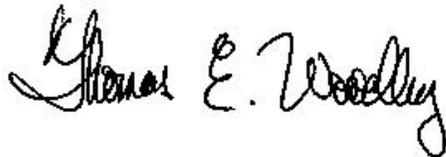
COSTCO's Supplier Code of Conduct prohibits child labour and says that it expects suppliers "to comply, at a minimum, with the applicable labor and environmental laws and regulations of the country where the merchandise is produced." Israeli authorities do not enforce Israeli labour and environmental laws and regulations in their illegal colonies ("settlements"). As a result, improper handling and disposal of toxic substances, child labour, infringement of minimum wage laws, and wage discrimination against Palestinians are common. Israeli employers based in the colonies often evade legal responsibility for violating Israeli and Palestinian laws by using sub-contractors to provide employees for their factories. Palestinian authorities are unable to enforce Palestinian labour and environmental norms in the colonies, due to lack of access to the colonies, which are all too frequently armed and hostile to Palestinians.

For the reasons provided above, my organization is preparing to launch a boycott campaign focusing on COSTCO. I urge you to cease selling merchandise from Israel and its colonies, so that my organization and its adherents are not forced to follow this course of action. The action against Apartheid South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s did not begin with states, but with an outcry and action from civil society, and with the most ethical businesses being the first to participate in the boycott. May COSTCO affirm its ethical commitment respecting all law, including international law, by being one of the leaders in the current boycott campaign.

Should you have questions about the justification for my organization's campaign, or about specifics of the Israel-Palestine conflict, I would be happy to provide you any information you may desire.

I look forward to your favourable response and to encouraging our adherents to do business with COSTCO as an ethical place of business once it has ceased operations in Israel.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Woodley
President, Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East