Dear Mr. de Lapuente,

I am writing to ask you to no longer sell Dead Sea Products at your stores. I am urging this action on your part, because it is the appropriate legal and ethical position for your store.

I am urging this change of your policy for the following reasons:

- 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. By buying and selling Dead Sea products, your store is legitimizing Dead Sea product companies’ illegal colonial operations and profiting from the illegal extraction of Palestinian resources from the Dead Sea. Therefore, your store is likewise in violation of the UN Human Rights Norms for Business.

- 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). According to both the Fourth Geneva Convention (Art. 49, p.6) and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal court, the Israeli colonies in the occupied Palestinian territories are a violation of international law. By buying and selling Dead Sea products, your store is legitimizing Dead Sea product companies’ illegal colonial operations and profiting from the illegal extraction of Palestinian resources from the Dead Sea. Therefore, your store is likewise in violation of the UN Human Rights Norms for Business.

- Although Canada does not recognize Israel’s claim to the occupied Palestinian territories, Israeli Dead Sea companies are able to take advantage of the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement (CIFTA) by erroneously labeling their products as originating from the “Dead Sea, Israel”, and therefore circumventing Canadian import taxes and duty fees.
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:


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.
For the reasons provided above, my organization is preparing to launch a boycott campaign focusing on your company. I urge you to cease sourcing Dead Sea products, such 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.

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 your company as an ethical place of business once it has changed its policies vis-à-vis its Israeli suppliers.

Sincerely,

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