



What is H&M?

Established in Sweden in 1947, H&M is a clothing company that counts more than 2000 stores across 37 countries. H&M is a highly competitive enterprise, which associates its products with many celebrities, and is highly sensitive about its public image. In 2010, H&M landed an exclusive franchise contract with Match Retail Ltd, which resulted in the opening of four new stores in Israel.¹ Match Retail Ltd. is a privately owned company founded by the Horesh family, which operates various business activities in Israel such as Union Motors and Lex Motors, who are the exclusive distributors of Toyota and Lexus in the country.

Why boycott H&M?

By establishing stores in Israel, H&M is encouraging and legitimizing Israel's military occupation of Palestinian land. Also, by integrating itself in the Israeli market in early 2010, H&M chose to turn a blind eye on Israeli war crimes, such as the ones committed during its aggressive attack on Gaza in 2009, and its continued illegal colonial expansion. Under international law, the establishment of Israeli colonies and colonial infrastructures in an occupied territory is illegal. This is indicated in the Fourth Geneva Convention (art.49, p.6) and in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which considers the transfer of a population to occupied territories a war crime. Furthermore, H&M is in violation of Article 3(Section C) of the UN Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises (2003) which states that "business enterprises shall not engage in nor benefit from war crimes, crimes against humanity...other violations of humanitarian law and other international crimes against the human person as defined by international law, in particular human rights and humanitarian law"². That being said, H&M cannot take advantage of the current situation in Israel to establish its business there.

The status of East Jerusalem is also ignored by H&M, despite it being recognized by the international community as a sector under Israeli military occupation and a core issue in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. H&M's banner which is visible in the Malcha shopping centre in Jerusalem appears in a city gradually emptied of its Palestinian population for the construction of new Jewish colonies. Therefore, through its support of Israel's economy, H&M has disregarded diplomatic processes and become a supporter of the occupation.

It is also important to note that in July 2005, more than 170 Palestinian civil society organizations issued a call asking the international community to boycott Israeli products in order to promote recognition of the Palestinians' right to self-determination. The Palestinian call asked for a boycott of any business or institution participating "directly or indirectly" in the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territories. Socially-justice minded Canadians would want to boycott H&M in an effort to economically pressure Israel to cease its occupation.

Is there any other problem related to the opening of H&M stores in Israel?

Yes. The timing of H&M's decision to open stores in Israel is also problematic. The company decided to open its stores in Israel at the same time as the release of the Goldstone report. The Goldstone report, commissioned by the United Nations to investigate Operation Cast Lead (OCL) in 2009, documents Israel's repeated violations of international law throughout its assault on Gaza, and declares OCL to have been illegal.³ As stated by the president of European Jews for Just Peace (*Juifs européens pour une paix juste*) Dror Feiler, the timing chose by H&M for its establishment in the Israeli market is particularly distasteful because in doing so, H&M is "diverting the focus from Israel's war crimes to that of fashion, investments and commerce".⁴ Moreover, the Palestinian Solidarity Association of Sweden and the Palestinian Association of Stockholm have called for a boycott of H&M over its decision to open four

more stores in Israel, and urged the company to postpone the opening of these shops until Israel starts respecting international law.⁵

By investing in Israel, how is H&M violating its own code of conduct?

H&M's goal of becoming a major player in the Israeli fashion market is inconsistent with the company's Social Responsibility Policy. Social responsibility is of strategic importance for H&M and is regarded as one of its most fundamental principles. Through projects like "All for the Children" in partnership with UNICEF and Fashion Against AIDS, and helping Pakistani flood victims, H&M is implicated on a social level in addition to the considerable influence it has on the fashion industry. Thus, H&M should act upon its social responsibility commitments, as indicated in the company's code of conduct, which states: "Our standards are based on international norms such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN convention on the Rights of the Child applicable under the International Labor Organization (ILO) and also national legislations".⁶ Given the current situation where Israel is unquestionably violating international standards, H&M is going against its own Social Responsibility Policy by establishing stores in Israel and aspiring to expand its current presence in the country.

When should the boycott of H&M end?

The boycott will end when Israel ends its occupation of Palestinian territory, or when H&M closes its stores in Israel and refrains from opening any more stores.

How else can I pressure H&M to join the boycott?

CJPME's boycott campaign is calling upon all individuals and members willing to put pressure on the Israeli government to withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territories. All concerned citizens can visit the CJPME Website at www.cjpme.org/bds.htm for additional tools to pressure H&M to cease its operations in Israel.

- CJPME encourages all individuals to go to its H&M boycott action alert at www.cjpmo.org/consumerboycott.htm to send their questions and complaints to the executive board of H&M.
- A selection of templates and ready to send letters addressed to H&M executive members and different H&M branches is available on the CJPME boycott site at: <http://www.cjpmo.org/consumerboycott.htm>
- Also, a mechanism to bring together the shareholders of H&M is set up on the CJPME Boycott site <http://www.cjpme.org/bds.htm> to prepare for possible shareholders-based initiatives to pressure H&M.

¹ Official H&M website: <http://www.hm.com/il/>

² United Nations, UN Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with Regard to Human Rights. Section E, paragraph 11.

³ "HUMAN RIGHTS IN PALESTINE AND OTHER OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES: Report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict" (i.e. Goldstone report), The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), September 25, 2009, p.404, article 1877.

⁴ ISM International solidarity movement: *Boycott H&M! European groups protest H&M's plan to open seven stores in Israel*, <http://palsolidarity.org>, March 7, 2010.

⁵ Belgo-Palestinian Association, "H&M ouvre son premier magasin en Israël" <http://www.association-belgo-palestinienne.be/infos/breves/hm-ouvre-son-premier-magasin-en-israel/>, March 8, 2010.

⁶ H&M code of conduct: http://www.hm.com/ca/responsabilitedentreprise__responsibility.nhtml.