



What is Toys “R” Us’ involvement in Israel?

Toys “R” Us is the world’s largest toy retailer, with profits of over \$300 million in 2009.¹ The chain operates more than 1,500 stores worldwide, with twenty-six of these stores located in Israel, and two in Jerusalem.² Toys “R” Us also sells three Israeli brands in its stores: Smart Trike, EduShape and Tiny Love. Together, these brands account for 124 products available at Toys “R” Us stores internationally. The Israeli chain of Toys “R” Us stores is owned by Super-Pharm, which operates franchises for many international companies that have expanded into the colonies.³

What is Toys “R” Us’ link to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land?

Super-Pharm, which is the Israeli branch of Shoppers Drug Mart, owns the Israeli chain of Toys “R” Us. Super-Pharm also has 137 drug stores across Israel, and at least three in the Ma’ale Edomim, Pisgat Ze-ev and Gilo illegal Israeli colonies established within the occupied Palestinian territories.⁴ Also, 18% of Super-Pharm’s shares are held by Bank Leumi,⁵ which operates several branches in the occupied Palestinian territories and the occupied Syrian Golan Heights,⁶ and whose main private owner is the State of Israel.⁷

The establishment of colonies and colonial infrastructure on occupied territories is illegal according to Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and is considered a war crime according to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Toys “R” Us’ partnership with Super-Pharm means that it is profiting from the illegal colonization of Palestine, and is signalling its consent for this colonization through its continued financial ties with the colonies. By entering into business with Super-Pharm, which makes its profit by providing for the needs of colonist communities, Toys “R” Us is also complicit in normalizing the lives of colonists who are illegally colonizing Palestinian land.

Why boycott Toys “R” Us?

Toys “R” Us’ investments in Israel are in violation of the *UN Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and other Business with Regard to Human Rights*, which outline the responsibilities of businesses to comply with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other UN treaties. Article 3 (Section C) of the *Norms* forbids companies from engaging in and profiting from war crimes, crimes against humanity, and any other violation of international law. Corporations are also prohibited from engaging in actions that obstruct or impede economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights.⁸ Super-Pharm is actively supporting Israel’s violations of international humanitarian law by investing heavily in the colonies, therefore Toys “R” Us’ partnership with Super-Pharm means that Toys “R” Us also stands in violation of the *Norms*.

Toys “R” Us also contributes to the Israeli economy by operating stores in Israel and by selling Israeli products. This financial investment in the state of Israel is problematic because it represents a signal to the Israeli government that apartheid and other war crimes 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.⁹ Accordingly, Toys “R” Us should not invest in, nor profit from, a state that systematically violates the rights of Arab citizens of Israel, and Palestinian residents of the occupied territories.

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. Thus, even apart from Toys “R” Us’ financial interests in the colonies, social justice- minded Canadians would still want to boycott Toys “R” Us for its involvement in Israel, in an effort to economically pressure Israel to cease its occupation.

How is Toys “R” Us violating its own corporate commitments?

Toys “R” Us’ website states that the company strives to be a good corporate citizen through a commitment “to serving its communities as a caring and reputable neighbour through programs dedicated to keeping kids safe and helping them in times of need.”¹⁰ The website also elaborates on their stated corporate value of responsibility by affirming: “We believe that honesty, integrity, and compassion are the foundation upon which we work together and conduct our business.”¹¹

Unfortunately, Toys “R” Us’ involvement in Israel makes it impossible for the company to fulfill its stated goals. Palestinian children in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are systematically denied their rights by the Israeli government, and live in fear of violence at the hands of its army.¹² Nearly 2,000 children have been killed by the Israeli Army since September 2000, more than one quarter of all Palestinians killed by the Israeli Army during that period.¹³ The 2008-2009 Gaza Assault left 56,000 children homeless and 431 children dead.¹⁴ Save the Children has also documented the regular and widespread abuse of Palestinian children in Israeli prisons, seven hundred of whom are imprisoned in the West Bank alone each year.¹⁵ By boycotting Toys “R” Us, the company is forced to consider Palestinian children under its commitment to protect the well-being of children around the world.

When should the boycott of Toys “R” Us end?

The boycott of Toys “R” Us will end when Israel withdraws from the Palestinian territories; or when Toys “R” Us closes its Israeli outlets, stops selling Israeli products, and ends its partnership with Super-Pharm.

How else can I pressure Toys “R” Us 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 Arab territories. All concerned citizens can visit the CJPME Website for additional tools to pressure Toys “R” Us to join the boycott.

- CJPME encourages individuals to go to its Toys “R” Us boycott action alert at www.cjpme.org/consumerboycott.htm to send their complaints and questions to the executive management of Toys “R” Us.
- A selection of letter templates is also available on the CJPME Boycott site at www.cjpme.org/consumerboycott.htm

¹ Hoover’s Profile. “*Toys R Us, Inc.*” answers.com. Accessed 11 November 2010.

² Toys “R” Us. “*International Locations.*” <http://www1.toysrus.com/our/intl/intlMidEast.cfm>. Accessed 9 November 2010.

³ Krieger, Matthew. “*Leumi Snaps up 18% of Super-Pharm.*” The Jerusalem Post. 19 July 2007.

⁴ Super-Pharm website. http://www.super-pharm.co.il/superpharm/web/branches/region_list.aspx?ref=2. Accessed 16 November 2010.

⁵ Krieger, “*Leumi snaps up 18% of Super-Pharm.*”

⁶ Bank Leumi website. “*Branches and Services Search.*”

⁷ “*Steven Scheer Israel FinMin backs Brodet as Bank Leumi chairman.*” Reuters U.K., 2 August 2010.

⁸ *UN Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and other Business with Regard to Human Rights. E/CN.4/Sub.2/2003/12/Rev.2.* Section E, paragraph 12.

⁹ *Ibid.* Section E, paragraph 11.

¹⁰ *About Us.* <http://www.toysrusinc.com/about-us/>. Accessed 9 November 2010.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Palestinian Right to Return Coalition. *Al-Awda Launches New Palestinian Children's Rights Campaign.* 27 October 2010.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Palestinian Ministry of Health, February 2009.

¹⁵ Palestinian Right to Return Coalition. *Al-Awda Launches New Palestinian Children's Rights Campaign.* 27 October 2010.