

Ben & Jerry's gives UK parent firm the cold shoulder in Israel sale spat

Ben & Jerry's has lashed out at its UK parent firm after it sold its ice cream business in Israel in a bid to avert a diplomatic row over the US brand's decision to exit Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories.

Unilever revealed on Wednesday that it had sold off Ben & Jerry's to its Israel licensee for an undisclosed sum.

It followed the US ice cream business's decision, last year, to [stop marketing products](#) in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories on the grounds that sales would be "inconsistent" with its values.

Under the new arrangement, Ben & Jerry's ice cream will be available to all consumers in Israel and the occupied West Bank.

Israel's foreign ministry called the Ben & Jerry's deal "a huge victory".

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"We will fight delegitimation and the BDS campaign in every arena, whether in the public square, in the economic sphere or in the moral realm," Israel's Foreign Minister Yair Lapid said in a statement.

But that view was not shared by the brand which had been accused, by Israel, of being "morally wrong" in its original boycott.

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It said via its Twitter account: "We are aware of the Unilever announcement. While our parent company has taken this decision, we do not agree with it."

The statement added: "We continue to believe it is

inconsistent with Ben & Jerry's values for our ice cream to be sold in the Occupied Palestinian Territory."

Ben & Jerry's and its independent board maintained the right to decide on its social mission when it was bought by Unilever in 2000.

But Unilever said it "reserved primary responsibility for financial and operational decisions and therefore has the right to enter this arrangement".

The company had faced intense lobbying over the Ben & Jerry's boycott, including in the United States, where pension funds had sold Unilever stock in protest at the brand's decision.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation's Wasel Abu Yussef told the Reuters news agency: "The return of Ben and Jerry's to Israeli settlements, which were built on Palestinian land, exposes it to international legal accountability and its name will be on the United Nations blacklist of companies operating in settlements."