

Boycotting SodaStream for Peace and Justice in Israel and Palestine

By Tyler Levitan

As some of you may already know, it's become much easier to make your own carbonated beverages at home. There are a handful of machines on the market today that can help you do this, but the most widely available of them is a brand called SodaStream. SodaStream markets itself as a “green” and “environmentally-friendly” alternative to purchasing carbonated beverages in cans or bottles. However, what SodaStream fails to disclose is that its machines are manufactured in an illegal Israeli settlement in the West Bank of Palestine. Supporters of human rights have therefore joined forces to identify SodaStream's marketing as a form of greenwashing.

The Palestinian West Bank has been militarily occupied by Israel since 1967, following a war in which Israel gained control over the entirety of historic Palestine. To this day, despite the demands of international law, Israel militarily occupies this territory, along with the Gaza Strip—both of which are meant to encompass the yet-to-be-established Palestinian state. Israel has annexed Palestinian East Jerusalem—meant to be the capital of this future state—and the Syrian Golan Heights, neither of which have been recognized by the international community. Israel's military occupation of Palestine is the longest ongoing military occupation in the world.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of this military occupation is the presence of over 600,000 Israeli colonists, or ‘settlers’, living in the Palestinian West Bank. While these Jewish-Israelis are granted full rights of the state, Palestinians of the West Bank are deprived of these same civil and political rights. They live under a separate legal system—subject to Israeli military law—and are confined to living in ever-shrinking cantons that are being eaten up by Israel's ongoing colonial project. Palestinians live under a matrix of Israeli control through a series of checkpoints, roadblocks, a separation barrier, and Jewish-only settler bypass roads. The Israeli military imposes curfews, assassinates Palestinians, and invades communities at will, abducting and imprisoning Palestinian civilians without trial, including children. Settlers often inflict violence against Palestinians, with the Israeli army unwilling to come to their defense.

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SodaStream is directly connected to this system of control and segregation, as its machines are produced in the illegal Israeli settlement of Ma'ale Adumim. Ma'ale Adumim separates the West Bank into two, making it impossible for there to be a viable Palestinian state. By having its main production factory in this illegal settlement, SodaStream takes advantage of weak environmental and labour protection laws, as well as major tax breaks, which incentivize Israeli businesses to move into these illegal settlements. Consumers, however, are led to believe that SodaStream is “green”, and as its label states, that it is “Made in Israel.”

By purchasing SodaStream, consumers are unwittingly supporting the continuation of this extremely violent and unethical system of control, segregation and discrimination towards Palestinians. Palestinian civil society has called on supporters of human rights to engage in boycotts, to divest from, and eventually, for states to place sanctions on Israel, until Israel complies with international law by upholding basic Palestinian rights. This has become an effective non-violent tool of resistance that Palestinians are encouraging supporters of human rights around the world to engage in. As Israel continues to expropriate Palestinian lands with Western impunity, Palestinians are left with no other options. Boycotts of SodaStream have become widespread throughout Western Europe, the United States, and are now gaining ground throughout Canada. Independent Jewish Voices – Canada, the United Church of Canada, district labour councils, student groups, and many others have called for boycotts of SodaStream. The first information picket about SodaStream in Ottawa took place at a Bank Street retailer on

Sunday, November 10th. Despite being presented with facts about SodaStream, and presented with ethical alternatives for do-it-yourself carbonated beverage makers, this retailer has refused to stop stocking the product in their store.

It is vitally important that we support non-violent struggles against systems of mass oppression. The Israeli occupation of Palestine, and the ongoing theft of Palestinian land and resources, is a serious crime that we all must acknowledge. As the Harper government, along with other friendly Western governments, refuse to hold Israel to the same standards as every other country, it is up to us, citizens of the world, to use our power as consumers to support Palestinian human rights.

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