

PHILLY: SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE: PLEASE DON'T BUY SABRA HUMMUS!



Sabra Dipping Company, LLC is a U.S.-based corporation that produces "Middle Eastern style" foods including hummus, baba ghanoush, and Mediterranean salsa. Sabra products are widely available throughout the U.S. and Canada. As of November 2009, Sabra Dipping Company had a 40% market share in the United States, and had become the largest hummus manufacturer in the world.

Sabra's corporate headquarters is on 49th St and Astoria Boulevard in Astoria, Queens, New York. In November 2008, Sabra announced the construction of a new \$61 million plant near Richmond in Chesterfield County, Virginia, which is expected to open in mid-2010.

Founded in 1986 as Sabra-Blue & White Foods, the company was sold to Israeli food manufacturer The Strauss Group in 2005. Strauss and PepsiCo each own 50% of Sabra.

The Strauss Group is a publicly-traded corporation (TASE: STRS) and is the second largest Israeli food and beverage company. Strauss is widely touted as one of the great success stories of Israeli industry. According to a Strauss Group report, "Hummus is one of our national foods [sic], and can be found in just about every Israeli home." Strauss reported revenues of over \$1.6 billion (6,246 million NIS) for 2008.

The Strauss Group is well known for its vigorous support of the Israeli Defense Forces. On its website statement on "Corporate Responsibility," a section entitled "In the Field with Soldiers" boasts:

Our connection with soldiers goes as far back as the country, and even further. We see a mission and need to continue to provide our soldiers with support, to enhance their quality of life and service conditions, and sweeten their special moments. We have adopted the Golani reconnaissance platoon for over 30 years and provide them with an ongoing variety of food products for their training or missions, and provide personal care packages for each soldier that completes the path. We have also adopted the Southern Shualei Shimshon troops from the Givati platoon with the goal of improving their service conditions and being there at the front to spoil them with our best products.

Historically, the Israeli army has been a consistent violator of human rights and international law. But even by the abysmal standards of the Israeli army, Israel's "elite" Golani Brigade has a history of severe human rights abuses against Palestinian and Lebanese people. According to the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, the Golani Brigade "is known as a brigade that struggles with no small number of disciplinary problems and scandals, caused by bad behavior ranging from revolts against commanders to abuse of Palestinians."

Yigal Amir, the right-wing extremist who assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, was a member of the Golani Brigade. A 1995 *New York Times* article on Golani Brigade reported, "One day reporters came upon some of them [Golani Brigades] in a Palestinian village near Bethlehem, dragging youths into a bus packed with soldiers beating their clubs on the steel seat frames in unison and chanting wildly: 'We are Golani! We are insane!'... 'In Golani, everybody hits,' Mr. Amir's comrade, Mr. Nagar remembered." The *Times* article noted that, in addition to Amir, "Three men who had served in Golani have committed widely publicized murders of Arabs and an Israeli peace campaigner."

Ha'aretz noted: "In virtually every conflagration, Golani is rushed to the conflict point. In April 2002, during the intifada, the brigade played a central role in Operation Defensive Shield and the missions preceding it, and Golani's actions in the Jenin and Tul Karm refugee camps led to the elimination of a number of wanted militants... Golani participated in the siege on Yasser Arafat's Muqata compound in Ramallah, the capture of the casbah in Nablus (along with the Paratroops), and in the difficult fighting in Jenin refugee camp... In the... Second Lebanon War, it saw fierce battle with Hezbollah in the villages of Maroun al-Ras and Bint Jbail and suffered 14 casualties between two battalions."

"Breaking the Silence," a group of ex-Israeli soldiers, has documented numerous cases of Golani Brigade involvement in human rights abuses. For example, in November 2008 members of the Golani Brigade filmed themselves forcing a captive, blindfolded Palestinian to sing humiliating songs, some of a sexual nature, including some celebrating the Golani Brigade itself. In December 2005 a Golani Brigade officer was convicted of beating a Palestinian detainee and threatening to cut off his penis.

As a shopper, you vote with your dollar. Instead of voting for Sabra-Strauss and the Golani Brigade, wouldn't you prefer to vote for a local Philadelphia-based business that isn't providing "personal care packages" for the thugs of the Israeli army to abuse occupied Palestinians? Locally made alternatives to Sabra hummus include Bobbi's, Hellen's, Wakim's, and Moshe's – please ask the manager of your store to stock these instead of Sabra. (Note: Tribe Hummus, Sabra's leading competitor, is also owned by an Israeli company that supports the land confiscating and environment-damaging Jewish National Fund – please Boycott Tribe Hummus too!) You can also make your own hummus easily, inexpensively and deliciously:

HOMEMADE HUMMUS

Chick peas, aka garbanzo beans (1 cup of dried chick peas, soaked in water overnight or until soft – or one 15 oz can – reserve the water!)

¼ cup olive oil

3 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed

¼ cup lemon juice

4 tablespoons tahini (sesame cream – look for it near the peanut butter in the store)

Sea salt to taste



Blend all ingredients in a food processor or blender to a smooth, thick puree. Add a tablespoon at a time of the reserved water to get the desired consistency. Chill the hummus and then serve it on a flat dish, with a little additional olive oil spooned over the top and a good sprinkling of paprika. Garnish with lemon wedges and serve with warm pita bread.

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To get involved in local organizing to end the Israeli occupation and promote justice for the Palestinian people, please contact the Philadelphia BDS coalition: phillybds@gmail.com. Thanks!