

# PHILLY BDS

## A Coalition for Justice and Human Rights in Israel-Palestine

**TO:** Osem Group Investments, Ltd. Tribe Mediterranean Foods, Inc.

**SUBJECT:** Osem violations of corporate responsibility

**DATE:** August 27, 2010

As a coalition of Philadelphia area organizations working for human rights, social justice, and peace in Israel-Palestine, we are appalled by Osem's financial support of and partnership with The Jewish National Fund. Osem is facilitating activities that directly violate international law and U.S. foreign policy, actively promote racial discrimination, and contribute to the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. We urge Osem to adhere to standards of corporate social responsibility that prohibit support for violations of international law and human rights. We request that Osem reconsider its policies, and withdraw support for the The Jewish National Fund.

Tribe food products are the second largest selling hummus in the United States. As concerned U.S. citizens, we insist that proceeds from the sale of your products in our country be consistent with U.S. foreign policy, as well as the principles of the Geneva Convention, human rights and international law. Currently they are not.

Documentation regarding the human rights and international law violations committed by the Jewish National Fund over the past 60 years is abundant. The JNF was created in 1901 to acquire land and property rights in Palestine for exclusive Jewish settlement. Less well known is the JNF's role in the dispossession of Palestinians from their homes and ancestral lands since 1948, the disastrous environmental effects of the planting of non-native trees on the ecosystems of Palestine, or the fact that the JNF pine forests were planted on the ruins of Palestinian villages that had been razed in order to prevent their owners from ever returning to reclaim their homes. Because by law all land owned or administered by the JNF is reserved for the exclusive use of "the Jewish people in perpetuity," the JNF has played a key role in the ethnic cleansing of its indigenous people.

After the 1948 Nakba and the expulsion of approximately two-thirds of the Palestinian population from their homeland, the JNF was repackaged as an environmentalist organization carrying out forestation activities. The JNF's forests, parks and recreational facilities, planted and built on the ruins of hundreds of destroyed and depopulated Palestinian villages have critically served to veil from public view the continuing official Israeli attempts to erase the traces of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. The JNF is thus fundamentally complicit in the denial of displaced Palestinians' rights to return, restitution and compensation, and in green-washing Israel's regime of colonization and occupation.

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Today the Jewish National Fund, with significant support from Tribe and Osem, continues its work of appropriating land for Jews and evacuating Palestinians. Since 1967, the JNF has been the essential partner of the Israeli government and the army in building the infrastructure of the Occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem – building Jewish-only roads and expanding Jewish settlements on stolen Palestinian land. Today its \$600 million “Greening the Negev” project is forcing native Bedouins into seven urbanized Bantustans, destroying their traditional way of life and building Jewish-only suburban enclaves – complete with non-native green lawns and water-wasting sprinkler systems – where a desert community has existed for thousands of years.

We call upon Osem to cease its support of the JNF, and to endorse the “Boycott From Within” in which Palestinians, Jews, citizens of Israel, and members of the global community join the Palestinian call for a Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions campaign against Israel. Together we call for: an end to the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza; dismantling of the “separation barrier;” recognition of the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinians citizens of Israel to full equity; and respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.

Corporations have a responsibility to uphold human rights and international law. We call on Osem to withdraw public and financial support of the Jewish National Fund and to join the Boycott From Within.

Signed,

Philadelphia BDS Coalition, [phillybds@gmail.com](mailto:phillybds@gmail.com)

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Philadelphia Jews for a Just Peace