



April 26, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Dr. Bronner's Response to Criticism of Fair Trade Organic Olive Oil from Palestine

Dr. Bronner's uses over 150 metric tons per year of organic olive oil for the velvety smoothness it contributes to our soaps. In early 2007, Dr. Bronner's began sourcing 90% of our olive oil needs from Palestinian producers near the West Bank town of Jenin. There, the trading firm [Canaan Fair Trade](#) was founded by Palestinians who support peaceful co-existence with Israel and see profitable olive farming as one means of improving Palestinians' economic situation. Canaan works closely with the Palestine Fair Trade Association (PFTA), and now purchases oil from 1,700 smallholders organized in the PFTA. Dr. Bronner's funding of the organic and Fair Trade certification by IMO boosted the project's visibility and provided access to high-end markets in Europe and the U.S. We are also advancing funds far ahead of purchases, which helps Canaan and the PFTA to further develop processing and storage infrastructure.

Because Palestinian olive oil competes with subsidized olive oil from EU countries, oil production in the past has not been lucrative for smallholders and the local economy. But now, PFTA growers are guaranteed a minimum price to cover costs of production and receive a combined organic and Fair Trade premium of 25%. Canaan donates additional funds for education, tree planting and logistics projects. Beyond our trade relationship, Dr. Bronner's supports Canaan with logistics and distribution contacts and provides technical support as well. Our cooperation with Canaan allows Palestinian growers to trade directly with growing high-value markets for organic and Fair Trade materials while redeveloping their traditional livelihoods.

The balance of our olive oil comes from Israel. [Sindyanna](#), a Fair Trade business run by Jewish and Arab women in Israel, supports Arab-Israeli producers. And in light of the vision of peace that the olive branch symbolizes, we are also sourcing olive oil from the Jewish Israeli Strauss family farm in Israel, a pioneer in organic olive oil production. Michael Strauss, former elite Israeli Defense Force scout, is a big supporter of our mixing Palestinian and Israeli olive oil in our soaps, as can be seen in this video:

http://www.drbronner.com/olive_oil_from_the_holyland.html

An excellent article and overview of these projects and efforts appeared in Haaretz's Israeli news magazine Colbo: http://www.drbronner.com/pdf/drbronnerpress_colbo_article.pdf

Recently, we have become aware of attacks on Canaan Fair Trade in the US. The basis appears to simply be that the source is Palestinian, which the attackers conflate with terrorism against Israel. This is similar to calls to boycott Israeli businesses, conflating them with settlers taking Palestinian land. In neither case generally is there any direct connection. In particular, Canaan Fair Trade is an example of what fair trade is about: disadvantaged farmers facing the obstacles and difficulties of reaching markets in the midst of a conflict situation, are being organized on fair-trade terms that help them and their families negotiate these obstacles and connect with



markets in the west. The fair trade premium is invested back into the communities that produce the olive oil, for community development projects, educational scholarships and improving production efficiencies. In regards to scholarships to universities in the West Bank, we abhor any and all glorifications of terrorism that have or will occur on these diverse campuses, but that should not distract from the importance and value of a college education for disadvantaged Palestinians.

Even taking a narrow Israeli security view, it is in Israel's interest that Palestinians have gainful employment and access to markets, as economic desperation and lack of economic opportunity contributes to the radicalization of Palestinian youth. Israel itself imports all kinds of Palestinian agricultural produce for domestic consumption, and is a primary export market for Palestinian olive oil. Our olive oil from Canaan is exported to Israel for refining, which Dr. Bronner's Israeli distributor helps coordinate as well as the shipping. The Israeli government would hardly permit this if it believed that the olive oil was funding terrorism.

We the fourth and fifth generation family at Dr. Bronner's are proud of our Jewish heritage and are strong supporters of Israel's right to exist and security, and contribute annually to Magen David Adom, the Israeli Red Cross. Nazis murdered Dr. Bronner's parents and much of his extended family, and stole the family soap business. Dr. Bronner's sister Lotte emigrated to Israel in 1936 to the Ein Gev kibbutz, and we have family throughout Israel that we visit frequently. Lotte died last month and we celebrated her passing with a memorial page and short video interview she gave discussing amongst other things her childhood and mixing Israeli and Palestinian oil in our soaps: http://www.drbronner.com/dr_bronners_lotte.html Our Timeline has more details of our history: <http://www.drbronner.com/timeline.html> Dr. Bronner's launched our soaps in Israel last year with presentations by ourselves and Nasser Abufarha, Executive Director of Canaan Fair Trade, which the Israeli press covered positively: http://www.drbronner.com/dr_bronner_press_the_mkt.html

Just as we are comfortable saying that Lotte emigrated to "Israel" in 1936 even though technically it was still "Palestine", we respect the national aspirations of the Palestinian people in saying that our Palestinian olive oil comes from "Palestine". We are optimistic that we can rise above religious and sectarian differences and realize our transcendent unity: that we are All-One based on mutual respect and recognition of each others' rights and history.

Sincerely,

David Bronner
President
Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps