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"We have unquestionable respect for human rights and dignity. We strongly believe in empowering people. All are treated with empathy."

- Wellness Warehouse Corporate Values

Sean Gomes
CEO
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By fax and email: 021 487 5455 and sean@wellnesswarehouse.com

16 August 2010

Dear Sean Gomes,

AHAVA PRODUCTS ARE PRODUCED IN VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW: WE RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THAT YOU DESIST FROM IMPORTING AND SELLING AHAVA PRODUCTS

We write on behalf of Open Shuhada Street. We are an organization dedicated to giving solidarity to Palestinian and Israeli activists working together to peacefully end the Occupation and human rights abuses. Open Shuhada Street stands for non-violence, the mutual respect of human rights, and equality of life for all people living in Israel and Palestine.

According to your mission statement, Wellness Warehouse promotes consumption that "cares for the earth and its people". This commendable policy provides people in South Africa with an ethical choice when buying your products. There can be little doubt therefore that you aim to source products in a manner that is consistent with international human rights values and law.

In this spirit, we request that you do not stock products from the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) and in particular, products made by Ahava Dead Sea Laboratories.

CONQUEST AND OCCUPATION IN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

For decades, the Israeli government has repeatedly violated human rights of the Palestinian people. The War of 1948 scattered refugees across the Middle East, while those remaining within the state of Israel have been treated as second-class citizens. In the Occupied West Bank, the

official policy of separation and legal discrimination is tragically reminiscent of our own history in South Africa.

In a recent report on West Bank settlements, the respected Israeli human rights organisation B'tselem found that:

- More than 300,000 Israeli settlers live in 121 settlements and about 100 outposts.
- Almost 200,000 live in twelve neighbourhoods that Israel established on land it annexed to the Jerusalem Municipality.
- Altogether these 500,000 Israeli settlers have effectively usurped **42 percent of the land area of the West Bank.**

B'tselem concludes that the Israeli "settlement enterprise has been characterized, since its inception, by an instrumental, cynical, and even criminal approach to international law, local legislation, Israeli military orders, and Israeli law."

Furthermore, Israel has a dismal track record regarding the treatment of civilian populations in theatres of war. The UN Commission on the Gaza War headed by former South African Constitutional Court judge, Richard Goldstone, found that Israel had a case to answer for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during Operation Cast Lead in Dec. 2008 – Jan. 2009 in which 13 Israelis and 1417 Palestinians were killed. Israel's disregard of international law should no longer be tolerated.

It must also be noted that actions by the Palestinian resistance require condemnation, particularly suicide bombings and rocket attacks on Israeli civilians – which the Goldstone Commission also described as war crimes.

All people have the right to life and the right to defend themselves – within the limits of the law. Nonetheless, Israeli claims of self-defense cannot justify the ongoing oppression of Palestinians.

In response to their intolerable circumstances, Palestinian civil society has called for economic, military and other international sanctions against Israel. Similarly, the Palestinian Authority has called for the boycott of all products manufactured by the unlawful settlements in the OPT.

WHY AHAVA?

Ahava products are manufactured by Dead Sea Laboratories, a privately held Israeli cosmetics company using minerals and mud from the Dead Sea. Their main factory is located in the Israeli settlement of Mitzpe Shalem in the Occupied West Bank. Ahava products are labeled as of 'Israeli origin,' but according to international law, including UN Security Council resolutions, the West Bank cannot be considered to be part of the State of Israel. Not only does Ahava profit from the occupation by locating its main plant and store in an illegal Israeli settlement, it also extensively uses mud from the Dead Sea in its products, excavated in an occupied area, and thus it **exploits natural resources from the OPT, for profit.** This is theft.

International law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, forbids an occupying power from utilizing the natural resources of the occupied territory for its own benefit. In February 2010, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled that products from the OPT cannot carry the label 'Israeli origin'. The ECJ held that products obtained from the OPT did not qualify for preferential treatment under European Union and Israeli trade agreements.

The Wellness Warehouse website states that you *“promote fair and ethical interactions and business dealings”* and *“accept accountability in all ... areas of responsibility.”* By stocking Ahava products, Wellness Warehouse is unwittingly violating its own code.

We urge you to stop stocking all settlement products, in particular Ahava. By doing so you will help to make the occupation unprofitable, and hasten its end. This is necessary for peace in Israel and Palestine.

Open Shuhada Street looks forward to receiving your reply by no later than close of business on 23rd August 2010. We support non-violent protest and the international boycott of Ahava Products. Should you fail to respond positively to our request Open Shuhada Street will regrettably organise protests at your stores in South Africa.

Yours faithfully,

The Open Shuhada Street steering committee:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Geffen', written in a cursive style.

Zackie Achmat, Nathan Geffen, Doron Isaacs, Daniel Mackintosh, Nabeelah Martin, Ilan Strauss

For more information on Open Shuhada Street visit: www.openshuhadastreet.org