# Ben & Jerry's in legal dispute with Unilever over 'ideological clashes'



The ice cream brand Ben & Jerry's is currently embroiled in a legal dispute with its parent company, Unilever, over allegations of unlawful dismissal of its CEO, David Stever. This conflict highlights potential ideological clashes regarding the brand's progressive social mission, which has been integral to its identity since its founding in 1978.

Ben & Jerry's, known for its outspoken view on various social issues including civil rights and environmental sustainability, contends that Stever's removal from his position was motivated by his political statements and commitment to the brand's social mission. This accusation was made in a court filing in the Southern District of New York, asserting that Unilever had violated a merger agreement established at the time of its acquisition of the ice cream company in 2000. The agreement stipulated that any removal of the CEO must involve consultation and participation from an independent advisory committee within the company's board.

The company was co-founded by Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield in Vermont and has maintained an ethos of promoting social justice. Following its acquisition by Unilever for approximately $326 million, the brand retained an independent board, which was intended to uphold its progressive stance on social and political issues. This independence allowed Ben & Jerry's to advocate for various causes, including LGBTQ+ rights and climate justice, and to publicly assert its commitment to human rights.

The tension between Ben & Jerry's and Unilever surfaced prominently when Ben & Jerry's took a public stance against selling ice cream in Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank in 2021. In response, Unilever sold its business interest in Israel to a local company, a move that was met with criticism from Ben & Jerry's and resulted in legal action. The brand's initial lawsuit contended that Unilever's actions infringed upon its commitment to social responsibility and political expression.

As part of the recent filing, Ben & Jerry's claims that Unilever has imposed restrictions on its communication, censoring statements related to political issues, including an objection to a post mentioning Donald Trump, and blocking posts about Black History Month and significant social movements. In the complaint, the company accused Unilever of "inappropriate muzzling" concerning discussions around Palestinian refugees, indicating ongoing tensions over the controlling narratives around socio-political activism.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.businessinsider.com/ben-and-jerrys-unilever-ousted-ceo-silenced-mission-court-docs-2025-3> - This article corroborates the allegations made by Ben & Jerry's against Unilever, specifically regarding the removal of CEO David Stever and Unilever's efforts to silence Ben & Jerry's social activism.
* <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ben-jerrys-says-unilever-fired-its-ceo-over-his-political-position/> - This report supports the claim that Ben & Jerry's accuses Unilever of unlawfully firing its CEO due to his commitment to the brand's social mission and political stances.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source provides background information on the ongoing legal dispute between Ben & Jerry's and Unilever, highlighting ideological clashes over the brand's social mission.
* <https://www.benjerry.com/our-story> - This webpage provides historical context about Ben & Jerry's founding and its commitment to social justice, which is central to the current conflict with Unilever.