

Israeli Olive Oil Company Triumphant in Combating Online BDS Attack

Shmuel Veffer, president and CEO of Galilee Green, a premier boutique olive oil company located in Yavne'el, a rural community in the Galilee, got a nasty surprise last Thursday afternoon. A group of loyal customers from Cullman, Alabama, sent him a private Facebook message informing him that his company's Facebook page had been filled with hateful posts and one-star reviews. The latter endangered his business, as it brought down his page rating from 4.9 stars to just 3.0 within a few hours.

Some clients were intimidated by the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) assault. "I'm sorry, but I had to delete my review from your page," one customer wrote. "I hated to do that, but comments on my review were piling up and were threatening, and they were going to inspect and discredit my own Facebook page like stalkers. I will gladly post another review in the future when you have this under control. But I'm leery of Israel's enemies finding out information about me personally because of a link to my name ... I want to support you, support Israel, and give you kudos for your awesome olive oil. Five stars!!"

Checking the page, Veffer noticed that several offensive posts specifically mentioned the Balfour Declaration in their vilification of the company as well as of Israel as a whole. That day, he recalled, was November 2, the 100th anniversary of that famous document in which the British foreign secretary, Lord Balfour, wrote that his government "view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people."

As Facebook does not allow anyone to delete a review, Veffer's first reaction was to temporarily shut down the ability for anyone to leave reviews at all. Then he turned to his followers, posted a plea for help, and sent out a newsletter to his customers informing them what happened, describing the hateful language being used in the coordinated attack by BDS adherents.

Vicious Attack Backfires

Supporters immediately started posting dozens of positive reviews in response. They also shared the post with anti-BDS Facebook groups, who not only posted positive reviews themselves, but also reported the hostile comments to Facebook in order to get the BDS comments and fake reviews taken down.

Veffer marveled at the support he received from around the world for his 3-year-old company, saying he had even received a message from Rena Nickerson, General Manager of SodaStream Canada, a far larger company than his that had also been a victim of a sustained BDS campaign.

Using social media, Nickerson encouraged her friends to support Galilee Green, saying, "We at SodaStream have seen firsthand how proudly the global pro-Israel community excels at supporting companies that are attacked by those who hate Israel and Jews. Even though Jews and Arabs work side-by-side in SodaStream's southern Israel manufacturing facilities, the BDS movement continues to try to hurt our business. Clearly, they are not seeking peace or coexistence, just hatred. In the end, people are smarter than to believe their vitriol. I am confident Galilee Green will come out stronger through this."

By Saturday night, with over 100 new 5-star reviews, the rating of the company shot back up to 4.2. Meanwhile, Galilee Green continues to report the negative BDS reviews and hostile comments to Facebook. To date, the social media giant has not

responded. {eoa}

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