

Burgerim: Facts and Information

Background

In recent months, dozens of Burgerim fast food chains have been popping up in the United States with many targeting Muslim communities through their “halal” menus. Burgerim, which translates to “many burgers” in Hebrew, is an Israeli-founded and Israeli-owned company, and continues to operate in Israel with several restaurants open across the region. While Burgerim in the U.S. is technically registered as a separate legal entity from the restaurant chain in Israel, the fact remains that Burgerim was founded on stolen Palestinian land, on the site of massacres, and has benefited from an Israeli economy built on Palestinian dispossession and occupation. As activists have [pointed out](#),¹ the company brands itself as an Israeli company and the distinction the company is now trying to make is disingenuous.

Burgerim’s Israel Connection

In his expansion into the U.S. market, Burgerim’s Israeli president and owner, Oren Loni, has capitalized on his company’s Israeli origins to promote his franchises.² (See [“The Taste of Israel Has Come to Hollywood”](#)). In dozens of news articles, Burgerim restaurants are identified as Israeli with menu items such as [falafel](#)³ highlighted to show its “authenticity”. In another [article](#),⁴ Loni brags about his new successful restaurant chain in Israel, a shawarma restaurant called “Bandora,” the colloquial Arabic word for “tomato,” which again shamelessly appropriates and profits from traditional Palestinian cuisine. In its effort to erase Palestinian culture and identity, Israel and its propagandists regularly appropriate and mislabel traditionally Arab/Palestinian dishes as Israeli.

Boycott Guidelines

The Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) has called for targeted consumer boycotts of exported Israeli goods and “all the products of all Israeli -- and international -- companies that are involved in Israel’s violations of Palestinian rights.” This includes a boycott of *all* Israeli products and companies, not just those in illegal settlements. For example, according to the BNC, “Israeli agricultural exporters are complicit in Israel’s violations of international law as they operate on stolen Palestinian land.” Whether it is occupation dates or burger chains, investing in or purchasing goods from companies profiting from Israel’s crimes is a clear violation of BDS guidelines established by Palestinian civil society. Ultimately, purchasing a restaurant franchise founded on Palestinian dispossession benefits the Israeli corporate owner who has already publicly boasted about his continued [investment](#)⁵ in Israel where he launched other new popular restaurants—on stolen Palestinian land—presumably funded by his American ventures.

The Bottom Line

It is clear that Burgerim as a company is targeting the growing halal consumer market and has made that a part of its business model. This uniquely positions the company in the heart of Muslim and Arab communities across the country. Therefore, the onus is on these communities to identify the costs and benefits of doing business with such a company. From what we can ascertain, the costs of doing business with Burgerim far outweigh the benefits of having a nice “halal” burger. The costs include normalizing Israeli-born businesses in Muslim and Arab communities in the U.S., supporting the continued investment in businesses in Israel, and putting Burgerim investors at risk of a potential boycott campaign that can negatively impact local communities and businesses. It’s unfortunate that such a highly questionable issue would be entertained by some members of our community, but for the above reasons, we advise members of the community against investing in and buying from Burgerim chains.

Sources:

1. “Boycott Burgerim? Yes!” The Civil Arab, July 3, 2019 <https://www.civilarab.com/boycott-burgerim-yes/>
2. “The Taste of Israel Has Come to Hollywood,” Oren Loni Israel Blog, January 22, 2018 <https://orenloniisrael.wordpress.com/2018/01/22/the-taste-of-israel-has-come-to-hollywood/>
3. “Israeli Burger Chain Burgerim Planning Northern California Expansion,” The Jewish News of Northern California, May 22, 2019, <https://www.jweekly.com/2019/05/22/israeli-burger-chain-burgerim-planning-big-northern-california-expansion/>
4. “Meet the Owner of Burgerim,” Medium, Oren Loni, February 14, 2018, <https://medium.com/oren-loni-burgerim-president/oren-loni-meet-the-owner-of-burgerim-ffdcd106a814>
5. Ibid.