# Ben & Jerry's CEO dismissed amid dispute with Unilever over political activism



Ben & Jerry's has announced that its parent company, Unilever, has dismissed its chief executive, David Stever, amid ongoing disputes regarding the ice cream brand's political activism. This development comes following a court filing by Ben & Jerry's, which alleges that Unilever has made attempts to stifle its socially driven initiatives.

The court documents, submitted to the US District Court for the Southern District of New York, claim that Unilever's actions are in direct violation of the merger agreement established when the brand was acquired in 2000. This merger allowed for the formation of an independent board dedicated to safeguarding Ben & Jerry's mission and strong stance on social issues. The filing specifically accuses Unilever of "repeatedly threatening Ben & Jerry's personnel," including its CEO, with potential repercussions for failing to align with Unilever's efforts to diminish the brand's social activism.

The document reveals that on March 3, 2025, Unilever informed the independent board of its decision to remove Stever, a leader who has been with the company since 1988 and took the helm as CEO only in 2023. The court filing asserts that this decision to replace him was made without the necessary consultation mandated by their merger agreement, indicating a lack of adherence to previously agreed-upon protocols.

Ben & Jerry's history of political engagement has marked it as a brand willing to take bold stances on various social issues. Tensions between the ice cream maker and Unilever have reportedly escalated in recent years, particularly following Ben & Jerry's announcement in 2021 to halt sales in the West Bank, an action that Unilever attempted to block, leading to further legal disputes. The brand's advocacy extended to calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, against which Unilever allegedly intervened.

Additionally, last month, Ben & Jerry's accused Unilever of attempting to prevent it from publicly criticising US President Donald Trump, adding another facet to the ongoing conflicts between the two corporations. As this situation unfolds, it remains unclear how these disputes will ultimately impact both the brand and its governance structure within Unilever. Unilever has yet to provide public commentary regarding the allegations or the leadership change.

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

## References

* <https://www.morningstar.co.uk/uk/news/AN_1742382854808754700/ben--jerrys-claims-ceo-fired-by-unilever-over-political-activism.aspx> - This article supports the claim that Ben & Jerry's CEO, David Stever, was fired by Unilever due to disputes over the brand's political activism. It also mentions the court filing and the tensions between Ben & Jerry's and Unilever.
* <https://www.irishexaminer.com/business/companies/arid-41596216.html> - This article corroborates the information about Ben & Jerry's accusing Unilever of firing its CEO due to disagreements over the brand's social mission. It also highlights the legal disputes between the two companies.
* <https://www.businesstimes.com.sg/international/global/ben-jerrys-says-parent-unilever-decided-oust-ice-cream-makers-ceo> - This article confirms that Unilever decided to oust Ben & Jerry's CEO, David Stever, amid ongoing disputes over the brand's social goals. It mentions a performance review where Stever was chastised for supporting Ben & Jerry's social initiatives.
* <https://www.morningstar.co.uk/uk/news/AN_1742382854808754700/ben--jerrys-claims-ceo-fired-by-unilever-over-political-activism.aspx> - This article provides additional details about the merger agreement and the independent board set up to protect Ben & Jerry's social mission, which Unilever allegedly violated.
* <https://www.irishexaminer.com/business/companies/arid-41596216.html> - This article mentions the historical context of Ben & Jerry's political engagement and the specific incident of halting sales in the West Bank, which led to legal disputes with Unilever.
* <https://www.businesstimes.com.sg/international/global/ben-jerrys-says-parent-unilever-decided-oust-ice-cream-makers-ceo> - This article supports the claim that Unilever is preparing to spin off its ice cream division, which includes Ben & Jerry's, amidst these disputes.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/business/ben-jerry-s-claims-boss-fired-by-unilever-over-political-activism-b2717853.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data