



Statement by Ben & Jerry's Foundation Board of Trustees Regarding Unilever/Magnum's Audit 12.7.25

This year, the Foundation celebrates forty years of supporting community organizing to advance justice and dignity for all. Since its founding in 1985, it has been intentionally structured as an independent organization to ensure that people-powered justice work can continue free from corporate or political influence.

When Unilever acquired Ben & Jerry's, the Merger Agreement it signed preserved that independence for both the Foundation and the company's independent board, created to safeguard Ben & Jerry's distinctive corporate social mission and brand integrity. For 25 years, Unilever disbursed funds to the Foundation and acknowledged the Foundation's independence. With the creation of Magnum in April, that respect changed. Today, the Foundation's independence and the mission it exists to uphold are under direct threat.

In April 2025, Unilever/Magnum initiated an unusual and opaque audit, despite no allegation of mismanagement. We understand that the final audit report was submitted to Unilever on September 2, 2025. We have never seen it and have been told we will not.

Despite the Foundation's cooperation with the audit, Unilever/Magnum withheld the Foundation's funding for months, straining the grassroots organizations that depend on it. Although we have not been given the audit's final report, we have been told that the central unresolved issue is Unilever/Magnum's demand that Anuradha Mittal, Chair of the Ben & Jerry's Independent Board, be removed as a Foundation trustee. As Chair of the Independent Board, Ms. Mittal has been one of the strongest stewards of the company's founding values and its longstanding commitments to justice and human rights. Her leadership on the Independent Board has been a critical safeguard against corporate interference in Ben & Jerry's three-part mission. Given her record of principled service, the demand for her removal appears to be a targeted effort to weaken that safeguard and is rooted in her advocacy for human rights - the same issue at the center of Unilever's long-running conflict with the Independent Board.

Unilever/Magnum continues to withhold Foundation funding despite its clear contractual obligations. This conflict is not about an audit or governance. Our governance structure has remained the same throughout the decades Unilever has disbursed funds. It is about Unilever/Magnum's attempt to erode the Foundation's independence and impose unprecedented corporate control over an entity specifically designed to be free from such influence. At stake is whether a multinational, billion-dollar corporation can subordinate human rights and justice philanthropy to its political preferences and override the democratic, community-rooted values that have defined the Ben & Jerry's Foundation for decades.

Despite the uncertainty caused by Unilever/Magnum, the Foundation remains unwavering in its mission and committed to responsible, transparent stewardship. We continue to seek a resolution that respects our independence. At the same time, we are prepared to take whatever steps are necessary to protect our autonomy and ensure that our work advancing justice continues, undeterred by corporate attempts to silence it.

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