

# Nestlé's Blatant Misconduct Shows Us the Darkness of Capitalism

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*From inventing the need for mass-scale baby formula leading to the deaths of infants, to redirecting much needed water from impoverished areas to bottle and sell back to the same communities, to exploiting child labor and slavery, Nestlé will stoop to any moral low to make a buck.*

*This article inaugurates Ms. Gjøvik's new column for CovertAction Magazine spotlighting the abuses of U.S. multinational corporations worldwide.—CAQ Editors*

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*Corporations like Nestlé are essentially doomsday machines: man-made creations that will ultimately destroy humanity if allowed to continue as they are. Multinational corporations are required by law to place the financial interests of shareholders above all other matters, even if that requires them to prioritize the bottom line above the common good. In this nightmare of our own creation, if it is more cost-effective for corporations to commit mass atrocities and pay a fine, than to not commit atrocities, the corporation is compelled to commit atrocities to ensure shareholder returns.*

*Further, this maximization of profit through unhinged business practices and investment tactics creates a cycle of destruction further fed by governments and institutions relaxing rules to entice companies to do business in ways that financially benefit that government. This enables the businesses to create more profit by cutting corners around labor rights, safety protections, and environmental standards. As negligence is further normalized, governments must entice businesses with more concessions, which encourages even worse*

behavior from corporations. Governments and business then race each other to the bottom in a destructive spiral that harms everyone.

In the United States, corporations claim a legal status as if they were human beings. While this is a fictional concept, if the corporation Nestlé were a person—Nestlé would be the worst kind of person, someone you would never want to be in the same room with. Nestlé is the American Psycho of corporations.

Yet, a company like Nestlé only exists because of the acquiescence and facilitation of its gross misconduct by governments and society. This case study on Nestlé's business practices highlights some of the most egregious behavior by corporations.



[Source: [nstyle.cz](http://nstyle.cz)]

## A Corporation Called Nestlé

Founded in 1866 by Henri Nestlé, today the Nestlé corporation owns more than 2,000 brands.<sup>[1]</sup> Nestlé is the world's largest food company and is one of the most multinational of companies, with more than 450 manufacturing facilities in more than 79 countries, sales in 186 countries, and employment of 276,000 workers. In 2021, Nestlé reported \$87 billion in sales and \$22 billion in global profit. Around 30% of Nestlé's total sales came from the United States, where Nestlé reported \$26 billion in sales.<sup>[2]</sup>



Henri Nestlé [Source: [nestle.cz](https://www.nestle.cz)]

The Nestlé name is widely associated with a controversy. Nestlé's success is arguably due to its incredible brutality—from inventing the need for mass-scale baby formula leading to the deaths of infants, or redirecting much needed water from impoverished areas to bottle and sell back to the same communities, to exploiting child labor and slavery to gather ingredients for consumer products it admits have no nutritional value—Nestlé is an incredibly unethical company.





*Baby Pieper  
Hartford, Conn.*

"RAISED ON IT"



## Don't Wait Too Long Before You Wean the Baby

**I**F YOU do the little one is likely to be weak and anemic. Mother's milk is, of course, the best food for young babies, but the time comes when it isn't sufficient for the fast-growing body. Doctors say that this is when the baby is about six months old. That's the time to begin using NESTLÉ'S FOOD, because NESTLÉ'S is so like mother's milk that the tiny stomach won't notice the difference.

At about the sixth month, then begin to give the baby NESTLÉ'S once a day in place of a nursing; then gradually increase the NESTLÉ'S until by the seventh or eighth month the baby is entirely weaned. Thus your baby will pass the most critical period of its babyhood, and not even notice it.

Don't tax the little stomach by changing abruptly to cow's milk. Milk as it comes from the cow, so often full of germs and heavy with indigestible curds, is not the food for a little baby; but cow's milk contains something life-giving that nothing else will supply and is the ideal food for the baby after it has been purified and made digestible. That requires a long, patient, scientific process which is all done for you in NESTLÉ'S FOOD.

NESTLÉ'S FOOD is the nearest thing in the world to mother's milk. It is the richest cow's milk from our own sanitary dairies, with the proteids made digestible and the sugar and fats rightly proportioned—all under scientific direction. And this splendid triumph of care and science comes to you as a powder. All you do is to add water and boil two minutes to make it ready for the baby—a bone-building, muscle-building, delicate and satisfying Food.

The coupon brings you a trade-size package of NESTLÉ'S FOOD free, so that you can see for yourself what other mothers have learned for forty years that NESTLÉ'S is the best substitute for mother's milk.

HENRI NESTLÉ, 70 Chambers St., New York. Please send me, free, your book and trial package.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please mention Good Housekeeping Magazine when you write our advertisers

1911 Nestlé ad in *Good Housekeeping* magazine. [Source: [zmscience.com](http://zmscience.com)]

Yet, most of us probably regularly purchase Nestlé products, even if we think we avoid doing

so. Nestlé's owns an impressively extensive list of popular brand names including: Acqua Panna, Alpo, Beneful, Blue Bottle Coffee, Boost, Buitoni, Carnation, Cheerios, Coffee Mate, DiGiorno, Dreyer's, Fancy Feast, Garden of Life, Gerber, Haagen Dazs, Hot Pockets, Kit Kat, Lean Cuisine, Nature's Bounty, Nescafe, Nespresso, Nesquik, Ovaltine, Perrier, Purina, Pure Life, Stouffers, Starbucks Coffee at Home, Sweet Earth, San Pellegrino and Tombstone Pizza.<sup>[3]</sup>

Nestlé is also a major shareholder in L'Oréal, the multinational cosmetics conglomerate, which Nestlé reports as an "associate" on its financial reports.<sup>[4]</sup> L'Oréal itself owns many popular personal care brands like Lancôme, Garnier, Maybelline, Essie, Redkin, NYX, CeraVe, Urban Decay, and Kiehl's.<sup>[5]</sup>



[Source: [zmescience.com](http://zmescience.com)]

## “Nestlé Kills Babies”

Nestlé's most infamous scandal is around its baby formula products.

If mothers are able to breastfeed their babies, they are advised to provide their babies only breast milk for the first six months of life.<sup>[6]</sup> However, in the 1970s, Nestlé began sending representatives dressed as nurses to hospitals in impoverished countries to promote the company's baby formula as replacement for breast milk, including sending families home with one free can. In these areas, the water that must be used to mix up the formula and clean the bottles was not safe.<sup>[7]</sup> Nestlé convinced these mothers to reject their own breast



milk in favor of its infant formula.<sup>[8]</sup> Then, the mothers could not switch back to breastfeeding because, after one can, it was too late in the lactation cycle.

# Good for Babies Good for Profits So its Good for YOU



Babies thrive on SMA and S-26 baby-milks  
Mothers are constantly demanding these  
products. That is why you have a higher  
turnover – which means more profit!

SMA and S-26 – GOOD FOR BABIES  
– GOOD FOR PROFITS  
– GOOD FOR YOU

**STOCK UP NOW – THEY ARE GOOD FOR YOUR BUSINESS**

*This ad was taken from African Business and Chamber of Commerce Review, Mar 1978, a South African publication catering to black businessmen and traders.*

[Source: [theboycottbook.com](http://theboycottbook.com)]

The result was an estimated one million dead babies every year from malnutrition or diseases contracted from dirty water or bottles.<sup>[9]</sup> In 1974, a report was published in Switzerland titled “Nestlé Kills Babies.”<sup>[10]</sup> All of this led to massive boycotts in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Nestlé insisted that the real problem was only access to water, while at the same time beginning to seize public waters for bottling and polluting the water that remained.<sup>[11]</sup>



Protests in 1970s against Nestlé. [Source: [listverse.com](https://listverse.com)]

In May 2007, an investigation found evidence Nestlé was still engaging in questionable infant-formula marketing practices in Bangladesh.<sup>[12]</sup> Then in 2011, Nestlé was investigated for bribery in the Chinese baby formula market—including bribing medical staff to promote its infant formula to new mothers.<sup>[13]</sup>

Undeterred, in April 2012, Nestlé deepened its involvement in the market by purchasing Pfizer’s baby formula business (SMA) for more than \$11 billion.<sup>[14]</sup> In 2019, Nestlé’s own report still found at least 107 instances of non-compliance with international baby milk marketing rules.<sup>[15]</sup>

Last year, the World Health Organization and UNICEF issued a report finding ongoing *“extensive and aggressive marketing practices used by the formula milk industry to target new and prospective parents”* which *“exploit emotions, the fears and the ambitions of women and families at a time they’re potentially most vulnerable.”*<sup>[16]</sup> Nestlé’s baby formula practices are a stunning example of free-market murder over decades.

## Bottling the Commons

In poor regions, Nestlé and others have been taking water from aquifers, springs, rivers and lakes—and putting it in plastic bottles or turning it into flavored and sugary drinks—then dumping their used and dirty water back into water sources. Locals are then not able to drink tap water and end up paying extortionate prices to the European and U.S. corporations for bottled versions of their own previously uncontaminated tap water.<sup>[17]</sup> In 2020, Nestlé reported \$6.4B in bottled water sales.<sup>[18]</sup>

For years, activists have accused Nestlé of lining its own pockets through back-door

privatization of public water supplies. Access to water is a human right.

Corporate privatization of the commons seizes a public resource and converts it to a private good, and Nestlé has been implicated in this for decades. In fact, the source of America's corporate water crisis can be traced back to 1976 when Perrier opened an office in New York.<sup>[19]</sup> The firm partnered with a U.S. executive who had recently left Levi Strauss, and they built a marketing campaign to convince Americans to pay for water.<sup>[20]</sup>



Source: Council of Canadians ([pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com))

Nestlé acquired Perrier in 1992 for \$2.6B.<sup>[21]</sup> At that time, Perrier had issued a recall due to reports of benzene in the bottled water and also faced a fine in New York for false advertising.<sup>[22]</sup> Perrier was apparently a culture fit for Nestlé.

By 2016, bottled water sales had surpassed soda as the largest U.S. beverage category, with Americans consuming 12.8B gallons that year.<sup>[23]</sup> In addition to seizing public waters, Nestlé's manufacturing process uses far more water than the output provides (only about 70%). Meanwhile, Nestlé also dumps a significant amount of now polluted water back into water basins and aquifers.<sup>[24]</sup>

While other companies moved their operations out of drought-ridden California, Nestlé's CEO said he would pump more out of the San Bernardino National Forest if he could. Nobody actually knows how much Nestlé extracts from this source—which it has been doing without a permit since 1988—paying only \$524 a year to bypass the requirement.<sup>[25]</sup> In 2021, California's Water Resources Control Board asked Nestlé to stop the unauthorized water diversions after a probe revealed multiple violations and depleted resources.<sup>[26]</sup>

Nestlé has shown no shame or contrition for any of this. In fact, former Nestlé chief executive and chairman Peter Brabeck called water a "grocery product" that should "have a market value." He later amended that, arguing water can be a human right, but only 25 liters a day.<sup>[27]</sup> Today, Nestlé's website continues to argue that "non-essential" use of water is not a human right and should "carry a cost."<sup>[28]</sup>

## Slavery-made

Nestlé's unlawful business practices are not limited to fatally unethical marketing. Nestlé has also been implicated in child labor.

The U.S. Department of Labor reports that more than 1.5 million children work in the cocoa



industry in Ghana and the Ivory Coast, which produce 60% of the world's annual cocoa harvest. More than 40% of those children are exposed to dangerous working conditions, including chemical usage, burning fields, swinging machetes, and heavy lifting—activities that international authorities consider the “worst forms of child labor.”<sup>[29]</sup>



Nestlé child laborer in the Ivory Coast. [Source: [change.org](https://www.change.org)]

In *Nestlé USA v. Doe* (2021), former child slaves who were trafficked into Côte d’Ivoire to work on cocoa farms filed suit under the Alien Tort Statute (ATS) against Nestlé USA.<sup>[30]</sup> They accused the corporation of aiding and abetting the illegal enslavement of thousands of children on cocoa farms in Nestlé’s supply chains.<sup>[31]</sup>

Nestlé USA effectively controls much of the cocoa production in the Ivory Coast and operates “with the unilateral goal of finding the cheapest source of cocoa in the Ivory Coast,” resulting in a “system built on child slavery to depress labor costs.”<sup>[32]</sup> Nestlé knowingly profited from the illegal work of children and Nestlé’s contracted suppliers were able to provide lower prices than if they had employed adult workers with proper protective equipment.<sup>[33]</sup>

In Nestlé’s Petition for Certiorari, Nestlé’s lawyers did not deny there was slavery in its supply chain but instead argued, among other things, that corporations cannot be liable for violations of customary international law or human rights violations.<sup>[34]</sup> Nestlé lawyers extensively referenced the Nuremberg Trials in their argument for impunity, desperately pleading that even the corporation that supplied Zyklon B gas, which the Nazis used to kill millions, was not convicted during that trial.<sup>[35]</sup>

During oral arguments, the U.S. Justice Department, on behalf of the U.S. government, supported Nestlé. Deputy Solicitor General Curtis E. Gannon contended that a new act of Congress would be needed to create liability for domestic corporations under the ATS (liability which the lawyer described as corporations being “discriminated

against”).<sup>[36]</sup> Gannon, on behalf of the United States, said the case against Nestlé alleging child slavery could “*threaten foreign affairs interests*” for the U.S. government.<sup>[37]</sup>

Upon inquiry from Chief Justice John Roberts as to whether the U.S. government believes a corporation could ever be liable for setting up a U.S. corporation and sending U.S. employees to the Ivory Coast for the express purpose of setting up a cocoa farm that uses child slavery, Gannon responded, “*Well, I think that it—it depends on how much conduct happens in the United States and how much conduct happens overseas.*”<sup>[38]</sup>

Deputy Solicitor General Curtis Gannon, the U.S. government’s lawyer, famously authored the Justice Department memorandum approving President Trump’s “Muslim Ban” (Executive Order 13769) in 2017, when he was Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for DOJ’s Office of Legal Counsel. Before joining the Justice Department, Gannon worked at the infamous union-busting firm Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher.<sup>[39]</sup>

*Nestlé USA v. Doe* was dismissed in favor of Nestlé.

The decision was the latest in a series of U.S. rulings imposing strict limits on lawsuits brought in federal court based on human rights abuses abroad.<sup>[40]</sup> To make matters worse, which is only possible with the depravity of a corporation like Nestlé, the company was also alleged to have orchestrated a chocolate price-fixing conspiracy, violating antitrust laws in the sales of its products manufactured with child slave labor.<sup>[41]</sup>

Nestlé’s human slavery supply chain is not exclusive to chocolate. In 2020, a documentary exposed Nespresso’s supply chain use of child labor on Guatemalan farms.<sup>[42]</sup> The documentary visited seven farms linked to Nespresso and found children working eight hours a day, six days a week, and who looked as young as eight years old.<sup>[43]</sup>

Earlier, investigations also found migrants were lured by false promises to work in Thailand’s seafood sector, then kept in debt bondage and degrading conditions. When workers died on the job, it said the bodies were simply “*thrown into the water.*” In 2014, Nestlé confirmed the forced labor was part of its supply chain in Thailand.<sup>[44]</sup>

## Waste... All the Way Down

Nestlé’s misconduct also includes degradation of the environment and a direct role in causing the current climate crisis.

Nestlé’s plastic packaging is produced from plastic resin created by petrochemical companies like Exxon, Total, Aramco and Shell. The process of manufacturing plastic, as well as the extraction of the raw materials for it, releases enormous amounts of carbon dioxide, approximately 108M metric tons per year.<sup>[45]</sup>

Plastic also enters into the product. Concentrations of microplastic in bottles of Nestlé Pure Life water were as high as 10,000 pieces of plastic per liter of water, the highest of any

brand tested.<sup>[46]</sup> Some of the microplastics the researchers found in Nestlé's water included polypropylene, nylon, and polyethylene terephthalate.<sup>[47]</sup> Nestlé was sued in 2018 over the high levels of microplastics, with plaintiffs alleging Nestlé "intentionally, negligently and recklessly concealed and omitted the truth" about the plastic contamination.<sup>[48]</sup>

Nestlé released a statement saying that it had "ambitions" for its packaging to be 100% recyclable or reusable by 2025. However, environmental groups and other critics pointed out that Nestlé had not released clear targets or a timeline to accompany its ambitions, nor made additional efforts to help facilitate recycling by consumers.<sup>[49]</sup> Greenpeace released a statement saying,

"Nestlé's statement on plastic packaging includes more of the same greenwashing baby steps to tackle a crisis it helped to create. It will not actually move the needle toward the reduction of single-use plastics in a meaningful way, and sets an incredibly low standard as the largest food and beverage company in the world."<sup>[50]</sup>

In the organization "Break Free From Plastic"'s 2020 report, Nestlé was named one of the world's top plastic polluters for the third year in a row.<sup>[51]</sup> Nestlé even admitted that most of its bottles are not recycled, even while Nestlé concurrently flooded the market with misleading advertisements claiming the opposite. Only about 31% of plastic bottles end up getting recycled, creating millions of tons of garbage every year, much of which ends up in landfills or the ocean.<sup>[52]</sup>

A single plastic bottle can take anywhere from 450 to 1,000 years to decompose in a landfill.<sup>[53]</sup>

After so much controversy, Nestlé largely divested from its North American water-bottling hustle, selling most of the business in 2021.<sup>[54]</sup> While Nestlé is no longer the face of the U.S. bottled water problem, it is still responsible for the damage to the environment and the terrible systems it put in place.





[Source: [boucherie-abolition.com](http://boucherie-abolition.com)]

Nestlé was also caught purchasing palm oil from mills with reckless means of production, including chopping down millions of hectares of forests and removing Indigenous peoples from their lands.<sup>[55]</sup> In 2010, Greenpeace campaigned for Nestlé to end deforestation in its supply chain.

Nestlé promised to do so by 2015, but in 2017 Nestlé noted 47% of its palm oil still came from problematic plantations.<sup>[56]</sup> Then in 2019, Nestlé was also accused of sourcing palm oil from producers linked to the forest fires in Indonesia.<sup>[57]</sup> A recent Global Witness report documented the still ongoing harm, terror and impoverishment of communities due to corporate pursuit of palm oil, including by Nestlé.<sup>[58]</sup> Rest assured, Nestlé still claims to be “*working hard*” on the issue.<sup>[59]</sup>



[Source: [palmoildetectives.com](http://palmoildetectives.com)]

Further, a former Nespresso executive warned in 2016 that Nespresso pods create extensive waste. Made from a combination of plastics and aluminum, the coffee pods are not biodegradable. It can take between 150 to 500 years for the aluminum and plastic capsules to break down in a landfill. In order to recycle the pods, the aluminum capsules have to be shredded, the coffee has to be taken away with water, the varnish has to be burned and the aluminum has to be re-smelted.<sup>[60]</sup>

Nespresso capsules are not pure aluminum due to Nestlé's intellectual property and anti-competitive interests: The capsules contain silicon as part of a patent which was used to prevent rivals from making their own pods that could work in Nespresso machines.<sup>[61]</sup> As of 2019, 70% of Nespresso pods were assumed to be headed to landfills.<sup>[62]</sup>



L'Oréal has its own shameful history, starting with the company's founder, known Nazi sympathizer Eugène Schueller.<sup>[63]</sup>

L'Oréal faced protests and boycotts due to testing cosmetics on animals,<sup>[64]</sup> suspected use of child labor to obtain mica for cosmetics,<sup>[65]</sup> deceptive advertising,<sup>[66]</sup> and high levels of lead in

lipstick products.<sup>[67]</sup>

L'Oréal also allegedly uses carcinogenic and endocrine-disrupting chemicals in its beauty products, including: formaldehyde, PFOAs, carbon black, titanium dioxide, BHA and others.<sup>[68]</sup> L'Oréal is currently facing numerous lawsuits over PFAS contents in its beauty products.<sup>[69]</sup> [Source: [whathappensinthechairstaysinthechair.blogspot.com](http://whathappensinthechairstaysinthechair.blogspot.com)]

Nestlé's food products have also been found to contain not just toxic chemicals, but also low-quality filler products, including a "horsemeat" scandal in one of its pasta brands in 2013.<sup>[70]</sup>

## A Friend of Paramilitaries

Nestlé apparently does not care who it harms with its supply chain or marketing, so why would labor rights be any different?

In the U.S., the National Labor Relations Board's public database shows 169 Unfair Labor Practice charges filed against Nestlé (though there may be more under the names of other subsidiaries).<sup>[71]</sup>

In one recent case, the NLRB found against Nestlé USA in 2020, issuing an order against the corporation for unfair labor practices at a Wisconsin facility that produces DiGiorno pizza.<sup>[72]</sup>



[Source: [wpr.org](http://wpr.org)]

The NLRB ordered Nestlé USA to cease and desist from, among other things: coercively interrogating employees about their protected concerted activities, and suspending or discharging employees because they engage in protected concerted activities.”<sup>[73]</sup> The Board ordered Nestlé to post a notice to employees admitting it violated federal labor laws and promising to follow federal labor laws going forward.<sup>[74]</sup>

The year before, a report by AFL-CIO alleged that Nestlé had been involved in several workers' rights abuses, that Nestlé USA management had continually interfered with workers' organizing rights, and Nestlé was involved in anti-union campaigning.<sup>[75]</sup>

Nestlé's union busting is deadly in South America. A Colombian trade unionist, Luciano



Romero, campaigned for the rights of workers at Nestlé's factory in Colombia for years, including documenting violations of human rights at the factory. Before his murder, Romero was repeatedly falsely branded as a guerrilla fighter by the local representatives of Nestlé. He was also accused, without grounds, of being responsible for a bombing on the factory premises in 1999. In Colombia, a defamation of this kind can effectively amount to a death sentence.<sup>[76]</sup>

In September 2005, Luciano Romero was stabbed 50 times in a murder by paramilitaries.<sup>[77]</sup>

In 2006, Nestlé and the paramilitary members were sued for the murder of Romero, as the company had a long-standing relationship with the paramilitary forces and Romero's widow alleged the murder was in retaliation for his blowing the whistle on Nestlé's use of expired milk in its popular Milo brand drink.<sup>[78]</sup>



[Source: [lawanddisorder.org](http://lawanddisorder.org)]

In 2007, Romero's killers were convicted and, while passing sentence, the judge also ordered an investigation into the role of management at the Nestlé subsidiary where Romero worked.<sup>[79]</sup> A criminal complaint was filed against Nestlé in Swiss courts in 2012, but then dismissed in 2013 due to the statute of limitations having expired.<sup>[80]</sup> The European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights then submitted a complaint calling on the European Court of Human Rights to examine the judiciary that dismissed the complaint, which was also promptly dismissed.<sup>[81]</sup>

In 2012, a flyer was left at the home of Rafael Esquivel, another Nestlé labor union leader, with a death threat stating "you will have to be exterminated, you have until first December to disappear from Valle, otherwise you will see blood running on second December."<sup>[82]</sup> In 2013, more death threats were sent to dozens of trade union members and human rights defenders, including other members of a Nestlé labor union.<sup>[83]</sup>

In 2013, the same trade union Romero had worked with accused Nestlé of ordering the

murder of Oscar López Trevino, who had worked for the company for 25 years. Trevino was shot and killed by paramilitaries that year, following the initiation of a hunger strike campaign by workers against Nestlé over unfulfilled labor agreements.<sup>[84]</sup>



Oscar López Trevino [Source: [teamsternation.blogspot.com](http://teamsternation.blogspot.com)]

Today, Nestlé has a page on its website entitled “Does Nestlé allow labor unions?” which Nestlé answers: “Nestlé supports collective dialogue and negotiations with employee unions...wherever local legislation applies...Nestlé suppliers should allow Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining, unless government policies or other norms prevent them from doing so.”

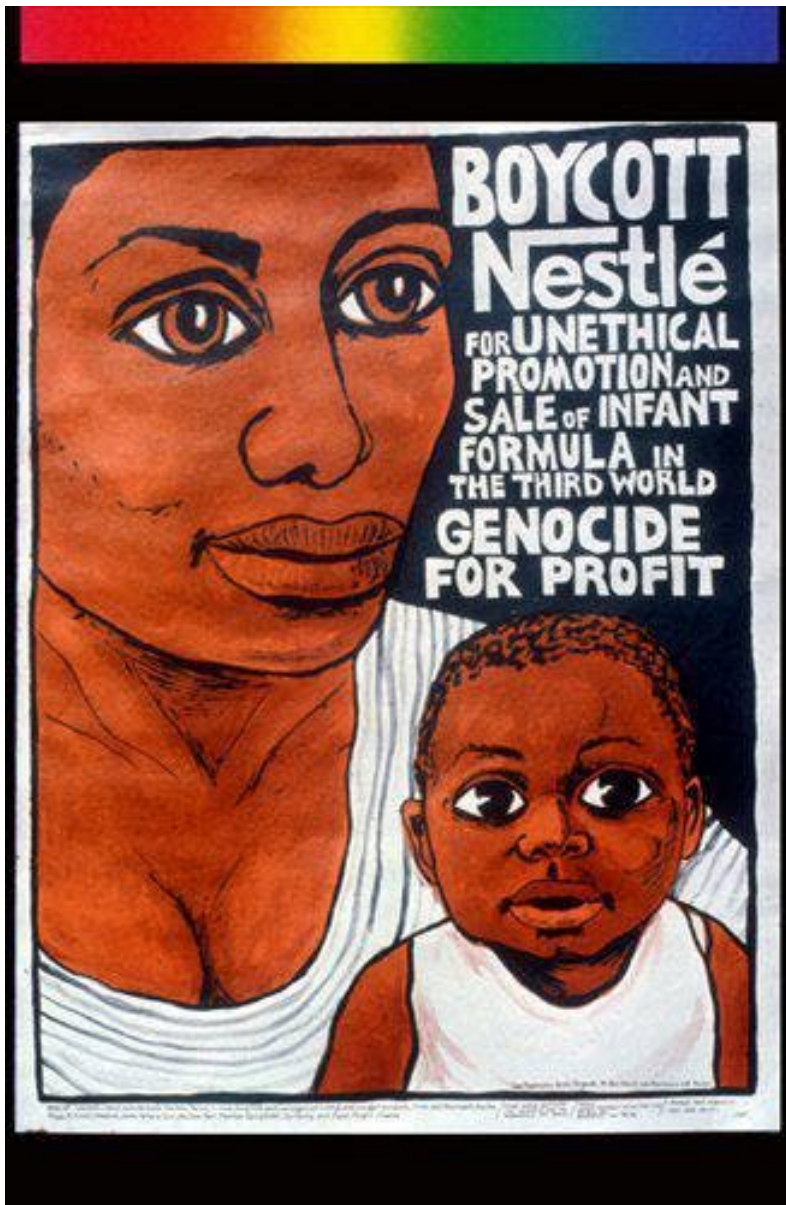
Nestlé’s own website says it does not believe suppliers need to allow for human rights if it is contrary to local “norms.”<sup>[85]</sup>

## Spying on Critics

Nestlé is just as bad with its critics. In 2003, Nestlé used a private security company to infiltrate the anti-globalization group ATTAC. Nestlé planted a spy who joined ATTAC’s editorial board and monitored ATTAC’s research and drafting of a book criticizing Nestlé’s practices that was published in 2004 (“*Attac Contre L’Empire Nestlé*”).<sup>[86]</sup> The spy even attended workgroup meetings at members’ homes.<sup>[87]</sup>

The spy was employed by a company called Securitas and run by a former MI6 officer working for Nestlé. ATTAC took legal action over the breach and expressed concern that trade unionists at Nestlé sites in Colombia who have been targeted by paramilitaries may have been put in danger.<sup>[88]</sup> Nestlé was found liable for the spying and a Swiss court ordered Nestlé and its security company to pay compensation.<sup>[89]</sup>

Just this year, Nestlé was caught offering “quid pro quos” to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, an influential U.S. policy group.<sup>[90]</sup> Nestlé was identified as a top “contributor,” sending the policy group hundreds of thousands of dollars.<sup>[91]</sup>



Boycott Nestlé poster from 1978. [Source: [zmscience.com](http://zmscience.com)]

## Taking Until There Is Nothing Left

There appears to be no line that Nestlé is unwilling to cross, with a key example being Ethiopia.

Following 30 years of wars and famines, the people of Ethiopia were suffering terribly in the 1990s.<sup>[92]</sup> Nestlé acquired a company whose subsidiary was nationalized by the Ethiopian government in 1975 (decades prior) and then sold in 1998.<sup>[93]</sup>

In 2001, despite the struggles in Ethiopia, Nestlé filed a claim for \$6 million from the Ethiopian government, "*as a matter of principle.*"<sup>[94]</sup> \$6 million is only 0.01% of Nestlé's annual sales, but would be a devastating loss to an already struggling country.<sup>[95]</sup> Nestlé eventually reduced the request to \$1.5M following public outrage.<sup>[96]</sup>



## Conclusion

Nestlé's rebuttal to most accusations of misconduct is essentially to claim it is an ethical, caring and child-friendly teddy-bear of a transnational corporation which just does not know what goes on in its supply chain and always wants to do better, but is constantly harassed by hateful critics. When caught red-handed, Nestlé is then willing to point to IG Farben and use the legal precedent from the Holocaust to argue why it should be granted impunity for egregious human rights abuses.

Since 2000, only considering the United States, Nestlé and its subsidiaries were cited for more than a hundred legal violations, facing \$27 million in fines.<sup>[97]</sup> One must ask: Is all of this misconduct and devastation contributing to anything actually beneficial to society? No. Nestlé, a food company, has recently acknowledged that more than 60% of its food and drink products do not meet a "recognized definition of health" and that some products "will never be healthy."<sup>[98]</sup> Nestlé does not even sell food with nutritional value. Nestlé sells terrible ideas and filler, produced through human rights violations, but which drive billions in profit for the soulless corporation.

However, as terrible as Nestlé is, it is only one head of the corporate hydra. There are many others. We can talk about protests and boycotts—we can write exposés and file lawsuits—but this only attempts to hold the line. To actually stop the downward spiral, we must abolish the atrocity of capitalism and globalization that is the multinational corporation.

While claiming corporations have the rights of a human, yet also requiring these corporations to only prioritize shareholder profit and pleasure, we have created a demented Dionysian monster that happily views fiscal opportunity in the destruction of humanity.

We cannot sit back and hope the United States will intervene for the benefit of the common good. When the democratically elected government of Guatemala decided to impose obligations on real estate owned by the United Fruit Company, the U.S. violently overthrew that government. When Chile elected a socialist president who wanted to nationalize copper mines, that democratic government was destroyed by the U.S. and replaced with a dictatorship headed by General Augusto Pinochet.<sup>[99]</sup> The U.S. has a long history of siding with corporate interests at all costs.



Diego Rivera's famous painting "Glorious Victory" about United Fruit and the 1954 coup in Guatemala, hanging in Moscow's Pushkin Museum. [Source: [pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com)]

With Nestlé, the United States has already worked to fight lawsuits and dismiss charges attempting to hold Nestlé accountable for horrendous human rights violations. The U.S. is apparently happy to race to the bottom, hand-in-hand with these monstrous corporations. The corporation and the state have already become one institution, with extensive centralized economic power, and increasingly destructive behavior.

We need a global awakening and revolution by the people. As Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said in 1809: "None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free."

We are not free and together we are our only hope to stop this downward spiral of environmental degradation and human rights abuses.

## Notes

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