

ACTION REQUEST 06

2015 OREGON-IDAHO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

TITLE: ALIGNING INVESTMENTS WITH VALUES REGARDING PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

SPONSORING GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL: OREGON-IDAHO HOLY LAND TASK FORCE

CO SPONSORS:

OREGON-IDAHO METHODIST FEDERATION FOR SOCIAL ACTION

OREGON-IDAHO PEACE WITH JUSTICE

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY RECOMMENDATION: YES 12, NO 9, ABSTAIN 3

We petition the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference to take the following actions:

Direct that the Conference Treasurer/Benefits Officer, and the Northwest United Methodist Foundation, to the best of their abilities in consultation with the annual conference's Holy Land Task Force, divest all Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference funds from stock held in Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, and Hewlett-Packard, and continue to exclude these companies from the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference investments until these companies end their involvement with the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine; and

Direct that the Conference Benefits Officer and the Executive Director of the Northwest United Methodist Foundation report to the 2016 Annual Conference on the Conference Benefits Officer and the Northwest United Methodist Foundation's response to this directive; and

Call for all Oregon-Idaho United Methodist boards and agencies, districts, local churches and individuals to prayerfully consider avoiding companies involved in Israel's occupation of Palestine when making investment decisions; and

Encourage United Methodists to partner with Jews, Christians, Muslims and other people of conscience working for corporate accountability, human rights, true peace and security for all people in Israel and Palestine, and an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

What will this action accomplish? The United Methodist Church unequivocally affirms Israel's right to exist within internationally recognized borders, and to defend its security through all legal and moral means. Divestment is not aimed at Israel itself, but at the continued occupation of land beyond its internationally recognized borders.

Thirteen annual conferences (Baltimore-Washington, California-Nevada, California-Pacific, Detroit, Minnesota, New England, New York, Northern Illinois, Pacific Northwest, Rocky Mountain, Upper New York, Virginia, and West Ohio) have already passed divestment resolutions, as have other Protestant denominations (notably the Presbyterian Church in 2014). This action will demonstrate that we stand behind the principles of Social Justice in the United Methodist Social Principles and Resolutions. This

action is in keeping with our calling to stand with Christians across the world, including Palestinian Christians, who have urged Christians everywhere to put their actions behind their words and to support Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions.

Why is it important? As Christians, we are called by Jesus to be peacemakers. The Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities affirm the teaching as summarized by Moses and quoted by Jesus, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Matthew 22:37-40). We honor Micah’s call in the Old Testament to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God, and we follow Christ’s call to love our neighbors as ourselves, by rejecting all violence and acts of provocation that lead to violence. All peoples have the right to security, and yet security for one people can never be achieved by denying security to others.

As Christians, we are called to be in fellowship with the body of Christ both near and far. The Christian leadership in Palestine and Israel have been working for years to (1) dissuade their people from using violence in response to oppression, and (2) finding effective non-violent means by which to achieve justice. They have asked us, as Christians, to take this step of divesting. Jesus calls us to be peacemakers and to use the instruments of peaceful persuasion. As United Methodists, we are called to support members of Christ’s church around the world, including Palestinian Christians who are being forced to leave the Holy Land, due to Israel’s confiscation of their property and the severe hardships of living under occupation. The United Methodist Church should not profit from the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian land, or from the confiscations and/or destruction of Palestinian homes, orchards and lives. We are committed to ensuring that our denomination’s finances are used in a manner consistent with Christ’s teaching, our beliefs, and international law.

The UMC Book of Discipline discourages investment in companies “that directly or indirectly support the violation of human rights.” ¶716) Palestinian human rights are violated by companies that sustain illegal settlements, segregated roads, checkpoints, the separation barrier, home demolitions and other realities of the occupation. **Caterpillar** provides Israel with militarized bulldozers and earth-moving equipment, which are used to uproot olive groves, demolish Palestinian homes, construct settlements and build segregated roads and the separation barrier. **Motorola Solutions** provides surveillance systems for Israeli settlements, military bases and the separation wall, as well as communication devices for the Israeli military. **Hewlett Packard** owns Electronic Data Systems, which provides biometric monitoring of checkpoints inside the West Bank. **HP** also provides data storage for settlements, and manages information technology for the Israeli Navy. United Methodists and our ecumenical partners have engaged these companies on this issue for ten years, with no meaningful response. Because of the failure of these companies to change their practices in response to our repeated advocacy, it is now time to divest from them. There may be other companies engaged in similarly unjust practices, but it will only be appropriate to divest from them after we have tried other means to work with them to change.

How will it be carried out? By whom? The Oregon-Idaho Holy Land Task Force will work with the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, and the Northwest United Methodist Foundation to encourage boards and agencies, districts, local churches and individuals to review their investment portfolio with an eye to divesting from these and other companies that are profiting from the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine. The Holy Land Task Force will further identify opportunities for individuals, congregations and districts to partner with those working for corporate accountability, human rights, true peace and security for all people in Israel and Palestine, and an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

How much will it cost? Where will the money come from? The only expected cost will be the conference staff time required to carry out these actions. Annual Conferences who have already divested their conference held stock in these companies report no losses to their portfolios, and no accusations of fiduciary impropriety.