

UMKR celebrates boycott success in Palestinian territories

United Methodists for Kairos Response (UMKR) welcomes the news that Israel's SodaStream has [ceased](#) its production in the illegal Israeli settlement of Ma'ale Adumim, and French company Veolia Environnement has sold all its operations in the occupied West Bank. Both companies will be removed from UMKR material listing companies involved in the settlements, though SodaStream's new location in an area recently cleansed of its Bedouin inhabitants is an ongoing cause for concern.

The withdrawal of SodaStream and Veolia reflects the success of boycott and divestment campaigns launched by Palestinians in 2005, and affirmed specifically by Palestinian Christians in 2009. In recent years, both SodaStream and Veolia have seen significant losses as retailers and municipalities cancelled contracts over their involvement in the occupation. Concerns about boycott and divestment have also caused large public companies like Unilever, Heineken and Assa Abloy to pull their operations out of the settlements. Another company, Ahava, is reportedly [negotiating](#) to sell its settlement operations to a Chinese firm as a result of boycott pressure.

According to Rev. Alan Kinney of UMKR, "These developments should dispel any doubt that boycott works. It helped to end apartheid in South Africa, and it can help end Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. When illegal settlements lose their economic base they cannot be sustained."

In 2012, the United Methodist Church called on all nations to ban the import of products produced in the illegal settlements of the West Bank. UMKR undertook a [study](#) of those products in 2013, and found that at least 40 settlement companies export their goods to the United States. Some are sold in American stores and others are used in manufacturing of commercial goods. Companies as diverse as Deere & Company, Williams Sonoma and Toys R Us are importing settlement products.

UMKR encourages consumers to learn about these product origins, and to avoid purchases that would support the illegal settlements. Letter writing campaigns to retailers and importers are under way in United Methodist Churches. More information is available on the [website](#) of United Methodists for Kairos Response.

Palestinian labor unions have endorsed boycott and divestment as nonviolent tools that can end the occupation. That occupation has all but destroyed the Palestinian economy, which was largely self-sustaining before Israel began diverting vital water resources, uprooting orchards, limiting transportation and destroying agricultural land. In August, the United Electrical Workers Union (UE) in the U.S. joined labor unions in South Africa and other countries in endorsing the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement. According to the UE [website](#), this action was taken "to pressure Israel to end the occupation and grant Palestinians their freedom."

United Methodists for Kairos Response is a global grassroots group within the United Methodist Church seeking to respond to the urgent call of Palestinian Christians for actions that can end the Israeli occupation of their land. For more information, visit www.kairosresponse.org.

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Dec. 2016 – Please note that this press release has been updated with UMKR's new name: United Methodists for Kairos Response.