

Protecting the Right to Peacefully Address Injustice

Resolution submitted to the United Methodist General Conference 2020 by UMKR and partners

Whereas United Methodists and other religious communities have long sought to address injustice using only non-violent means, and

Whereas measures such as boycotts have proven to be useful tools in helping to bring constructive social change, as evidenced by the civil rights movement in the United States and the anti-apartheid campaign in South Africa, and

Whereas boycotts are constitutionally protected forms of free speech in the United States and many other nations,¹ and

Whereas the National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine has issued a request asking church bodies around the world to prayerfully consider increasing their support for the human rights of all ethnic groups and religious bodies in the Holy Land, with particular regard to the rights of ethnic minorities, religious minorities including Christians, children who've been imprisoned, as well as the right to nonviolently protest such violations of basic rights, and to do so with actions as well as words,² and

Whereas in 2012 the United Methodist General Conference approved the resolution "Opposition to Israeli Settlements in Palestinian Land" (#6111), which calls on "all nations to prohibit...the import of products made by companies in Israeli settlements on Palestinian land," i.e. calls for an international boycott of the Israeli settlements,³ and

Whereas thirteen United Methodist annual conferences have called for their own conference and/or the denomination to consider divesting from companies that support and profit from the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land,⁴ and

Whereas in 2016 the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of The United Methodist Church (Wespath) announced that five Israeli banks would be excluded from their investment portfolios after having previously announced their divestment from a company running Israeli prisons,⁵ and

Whereas eleven annual conferences of The United Methodist Church and one jurisdiction have voted to specifically affirm the right to peacefully address injustice through boycotts, divestment and sanctions,⁶ and

Whereas a recent wave of governmental measures has been proposed or has been passed in various state legislatures that impose penalties on citizens and corporations for engaging in boycott, divestment and sanctions,⁷ and

Whereas, as a result of such state legislation, in 2017 the right of a Mennonite public school teacher in Kansas to be considered for a job was denied specifically because she refused to reject a personal boycott of products made in Israeli settlements in accordance with the stance of her church,⁸ and

Whereas the United States Congress has sought to officially condemn the use of time-honored economic methods for nonviolently addressing injustice,⁹ and

Whereas the United Methodist Book of Discipline calls on all Christians to resist unjust governmental interference in the work of the church,¹⁰

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the General Conference of The United Methodist Church opposes any interference by any local, regional, or national government in our right to address injustice through nonviolent economic means, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Conference of The United Methodist Church urges all United Methodist annual conferences, congregations, and church members to contact their local, regional and national elected officials, to communicate this resolution and to advocate against suppression of time-honored and non-violent means of addressing injustice.

FOOTNOTES

1. US Supreme Court Volume 458, Case [886](#) (1982)
<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/458/886/case.html>
2. <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/letters-received/open-letter-from-the-national-coalition-of-christian-organizations-in-palestine/>
3. Resolution #6111, 2016/2012 United Methodist Book of Resolutions
4. www.kairosresponse.org Baltimore-Washington, California-Nevada, California-Pacific, Desert Southwest, Detroit, New York, West Ohio, Northern Illinois, Minnesota, New England, Oregon-Idaho, Pacific Northwest, Rocky Mountain
5. “Israeli Banks on Ineligible List for Pension Agency” Jan. 13, 2016, United Methodist News Service <http://www.umc.org/news-and-media/israeli-banks-on-ineligible-list-for-pensions-agency> and <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/16/us/methodist-church-group-links-divestment-move-to-israel-and-a-firms-prison-role.html>
6. www.kairosresponse.org and <http://um-insight.net/perspectives/kairos-response-commends-resolutions-on/> Minnesota, New England, Upper New York, Great Plains, Desert Southwest, Oregon-Idaho, Florida, East Ohio, West Ohio, California-Nevada, Michigan and the Western Jurisdiction
7. <https://palestinelegal.org/righttoboycott>
8. “Teacher Sues over Kansas Law Banning Contracts with Israel Boycotters” - Wichita Eagle, October 11, 2017 <http://www.kansas.com/news/politics-government/article178313846.html>
9. <https://palestinelegal.org/federal>
10. ¶164B The United Methodist Book of Discipline