

## **Right to Peacefully Address Injustice**

Submitted by the New England Annual Conference

**Whereas** United Methodists and other religious communities have long sought to address injustice using only nonviolent means, and

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

**Whereas** boycotts are a constitutionally protected form of free speech in the United States and many other nations

(US Supreme Court Volume 458, Case 886 (1982) <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/458/886/case.html>), and

**Whereas** the National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine (NCCOP) has issued an urgent call to church bodies around the world, asking them to increase their support for the human rights of all ethnic and religious minorities in the Holy Land and to vigorously defend the right to protest violations of human rights, not only with words, but with nonviolent economic actions such as boycotts and divestment

(<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/open-letter-from-the-national-coalition-of-christian-organizations-in-palestine>), and

**Whereas**, in both 2012 and 2016, The United Methodist Church has called on “all nations to prohibit...the import of products made by companies in Israeli settlements on Palestinian land,” thereby calling for an international boycott of the Israeli settlements

(Resolution #6111, 2016/2012 United Methodist Book of Resolutions), and

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

(Baltimore-Washington, California-Nevada, California-Pacific, Desert Southwest, Detroit, New York, West Ohio, Northern Illinois, Minnesota, New England, Oregon-Idaho, Pacific Northwest, Rocky Mountain [www.kairosresponse.org](http://www.kairosresponse.org)), and

**Whereas**, in 2016, the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of The United Methodist Church (Wespath) announced they had divested from an Israeli business that was constructing Israeli settlements and from two Israeli banks and that five Israeli banks would be excluded from their investment portfolios, after having previously announced their divestment from a company running Israeli prisons

(“Israeli Banks on Ineligible List for Pension Agency” Jan. 13, 2016, United Methodist News Service <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/israeli-banks-on-ineligible-list-for-pensions-agency> <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/16/us/method-ist-church-group-links-divestment-move-to-israel-and-a-firms-prison-role.html>), and

**Whereas** eleven annual conferences and one jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church have affirmed and defended the right to peacefully address injustice through economic actions such as boycotts and divestment (Minnesota, New England, Upper New York, Great Plains, Desert

Southwest, Oregon-Idaho, Florida, East Ohio, West Ohio, California-Nevada, Michigan and the Western Jurisdiction  
<http://um-insight.net/perspectives/kairos-response-commends-resolutions-on/>), and

**Whereas** a recent wave of governmental measures has swept through in dozens of state legislatures in the United States, imposing penalties on citizens and businesses for engaging in boycotts that address Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights or for simply refusing to pledge that they will refrain from such boycotts ([https:// palestinelegal.org/righttoboycott](https://palestinelegal.org/righttoboycott) ), and

**Whereas**, in 2017, as a result of such state legislation, a Mennonite public school teacher in Kansas was denied the right to be considered for a job solely because, in accordance with the stance of her church, she refused to relinquish the option of boycotting products made in Israeli settlements  
("Teacher Sues over Kansas Law Banning Contracts with Israel Boycotters" - Wichita Eagle, October 11, 2017 <http://www.kansas.com/news/politics-gov-ernment/article178313846.html>), and

**Whereas** the United States Congress in recent years has sought to condemn the use of time-honored economic methods such as boycott and divestment for nonviolently addressing injustice (<https://palestinelegal.org/federal>), and

**Whereas** similar laws, governmental measures, and judicial decisions have been appearing in historically democratic societies such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and other democratic societies in Europe, as well as other countries around the world, and

**Whereas**, in 2021 and 2022, U.S. state legislatures and the federal government have been discussing and/ or implementing similarly restrictive legislation that seeks to protect the fossil fuel industry and gun manufacturers  
(<http://nytimes.com/2022/05/27/climate/republicans-blackrock-climate.html>  
<https://jewishcurrents.org/what-the-fossil-fuel-industry-learned-from-anti-bds-laws>  
<https://www.972mag.com/fossil-fuels-climate-bds/>), and

**Whereas** the United Methodist Book of Discipline calls on all Christians to resist unjust governmental interference in the work of the church  
(The United Methodist Book of Discipline 2016, ¶164B),

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the 2024 General Conference of The United Methodist Church opposes any interference by any local, regional, or national government in the right to address injustice through non-violent economic means, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the 2024 General Conference of The United Methodist Church urges all United Methodists to send this resolution to their local, regional, and national elected officials, and to advocate against the suppression of time-honored and nonviolent means of addressing injustice.