

**Protecting the Right to Peacefully Address Injustice through  
Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions**

A Resolution of the Western Jurisdictional Conference, United Methodist Church

Adopted unanimously July 16, 2016

Whereas boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) are constitutionally protected forms of free speech and protest that have often been used by people of conscience to effect positive social and political change;

Whereas a wave of anti-BDS legislation that has been proposed in the U.S. Congress and in state legislatures and public institutions across the United States threatens to penalize the use of these time-honored nonviolent justice-seeking actions;

Whereas United Methodists and other religious communities have long used the nonviolent methods of boycotts, divestment and sanctions to stand in solidarity with oppressed people and to work for justice, and such advocacy measures by the United Methodist Church have proven to be useful tools in helping to bring about a wide range of constructive social change, including the strengthening of labor rights for farm workers in the United States and ending of apartheid in South Africa;

Whereas, in 2005, after studying the success of such efforts, a broad coalition of Palestinian civil society issued a call for a global movement of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) to advance the Palestinians' long-denied rights to self-determination, freedom, justice, and equality;

Whereas, in 2009, Palestinian Christians echoed the call for boycott and divestment in their landmark document, *Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth*, an ecumenical confession of faith and urgent call to action signed by thousands of Palestinian Christians and endorsed by the 13 Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem that has often been compared to the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, and other Christian manifestos written in times of crisis;

Whereas, in recent years, more than a dozen United Methodist Annual Conferences, including several in the Western Jurisdiction, 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;

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;

Whereas, in 2016, the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of the United Methodist Church announced that five Israeli banks would be excluded from their investment portfolios, explicitly because of those banks' involvement in settlement construction in the occupied Palestinian territories;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the 2016 Western Jurisdictional Conference of the United Methodist Church opposes any legislation that seeks to restrict the right to address injustice through boycotts, divestment and sanctions and joins the Rabbinical Council of Jewish Voice for Peace in calling on our elected officials "to resist efforts to stifle the movement toward justice for Palestinians through the current wave of 'anti-BDS' legislation;"

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Conference Secretary write a letter to the President of the United States and to the governors, the congressional representatives and the members of the legislatures of the states within the Western Jurisdiction, informing those elected officials of this resolution of the Western Jurisdictional Conference, said letter to include the approximate number of congregations and church members within the Western Jurisdiction and/or within the respective state of the recipient;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Western Jurisdictional Conference urges all annual conferences, congregations, and church members to contact their governors, congressional representatives and state legislators to communicate this resolution of the Western Jurisdictional Conference and to advocate against anti-BDS legislation anywhere in the United States.