

Preparation for a Boycott  
of  
Products Made in Illegal Settlements

proposed by

United Methodists for Kairos Response  
Boycott Committee

# **PREPARATION FOR BOYCOTT**

## **I. Identify in writing the biblical and theological imperatives that address the issues involved in this particular conflict.**

### **A. Theological Imperatives**

#### **From our United Methodist Faith:**

When we profess our faith as United Methodists, (page 34 UMC Hymnal) we are asked,

"Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin? and "Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?"

Our boycott campaign is a conscious way for us as United Methodists, and as Christians to be proactive in resisting the evil of the Israeli occupation, which our church has condemned. God not only asks us to resist evil, but gives us the "freedom and power" to do so. The boycott campaign provides a collective action that allows us to walk faithfully with God in accordance with what we profess to believe.

#### **From Christians in the Holy Land:**

The Kairos Palestine Document, prepared by Christians in the land where Christ was born, provides a careful examination of theological imperatives for actions like boycott. It is highly recommended for its exploration of theological understandings.<sup>i</sup> It identifies the ethic of love as foundational in encouraging us to engage in boycott activities:

4.2.5 "Resistance to the evil of occupation is integrated, then, within this Christian love that refuses evil and corrects it. It resists evil in all its forms with methods that enter into the logic of love and draw on all energies to make peace."<sup>ii</sup>

### **B. Biblical Imperatives**

#### **From the Old Testament:**

##### **Job 20**

"the mirth of the wicked is brief.....  
he will not enjoy the profit from his trading.  
For he has oppressed the poor and left them destitute;  
he has seized houses he did not build. (*emphasis added*)

Companies that operate in the illegal settlements have "oppressed the poor and left them destitute." They pay low wages... well below those required by Israeli law...after taking away their livelihood by seizing their land. They offer poor and dangerous working conditions, and they pollute the agricultural land around the settlements with untreated waste. The settlements are largely built on private

Palestinian property, and Palestinian homes are often destroyed. In the Book of Job, we read that the person who cooperates in these things is not to enjoy the profit from his trading. Boycott is a nonviolent way of assuring this happens.

### **Leviticus 19:11 ESV**

“You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another.”

The settlements are built primarily on land that has been stolen from Palestinians.<sup>iii</sup> Settlement companies deal falsely with US and other governments by declaring their products are made in Israel, when they are not. This allows them to take advantage of tax exemptions meant only for Israeli goods. They also frequently lie about wages. Israeli labor rights organization Kav LaOved writes that Barkan Industrial Park is “away from the eye of the law. Israeli employers have found ways of evading the high court ruling by for instance issuing pay slips with false attendance reports. The normal practice is to register fewer working days than those actually worked, so it appears that the minimum wage is being paid.”

**Sodastream** has lied to its shareholders and the public by making a video claiming Palestinians are glad for the opportunity of working there, despite the candid testimony of individual workers that says otherwise. Sodastream also lies when it claims most of its manufacturing is done at its plants inside Israel. Israeli researchers at the Coalition of Women for Peace (WhoProfits.org) have examined this claim and state that only minor functions like printing of labels are done inside Israel, while the major production site is still in an illegal settlement.

**Royalife** has lied to the courts by claiming it does not exploit its Palestinian workers. 47 Palestinian workers took the unusual step of bringing their charges of exploitation to Israeli courts. Based on evidence, the courts have found in favor of the workers in a number of cases.

**Smartfab** has dealt falsely with American consumers by implying that its products are made in America. Its web site says: “Smart-Fab<sup>®</sup> Inc. is the distribution and marketing arm of an industrial group specializing in manufacturing of disposable fabric substitutes, with more than three decades of technological know-how and business experience. Headquartered in Buffalo Grove, Illinois, Smart-Fab<sup>®</sup> Inc. creates colorful, innovative products...” Actually Smart-fab is produced by a company called Dispobud in the Barkan Industrial Zone, which is part of an illegal settlement in the West Bank. It is shipped to a warehouse in Alabama and then distributed to buyers by the Illinois office of Smart-Fab.

**Ram Quality Products** deals falsely with Toys R Us and with American consumers by putting “Made in Israel” on its packaging. The toys are actually made in the Barkan Industrial Zone, which is part of an illegal settlement. They take advantage of tax exemptions from the US government intended only for products made in Israel.

**Ahava** also deals falsely with consumers and with the US government by labeling its products “Made in Israel” when they are made in the illegal West Bank settlement of Mitzpe Shalem. The company violates the Hague Conventions and the Geneva Conventions by extracting natural resources from occupied territories and selling them for profit abroad.

**Keter Plastics** deals falsely with consumers and governments by putting “Made in Israel” on all its products manufactured in the West Bank settlement zone of Barkan.

### **More Old Testament verses: (on treatment of employees)**

#### **Leviticus 19:13**

“Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. “Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight.”

#### **Deuteronomy 24:14**

“Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns.”

**Royalife** has had lawsuits brought against it by 47 workers for withholding wages and creating hazardous working conditions, and the courts have ruled in favor of many of them.

### **From the New Testament:**

#### **James 5:4** NIV (New International Version)

“Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.”

Kav LaOved, the leading Israeli labor rights group, states: “Israeli employers in the settlements and industrial zones in the West Bank continue to routinely deny the rights of their Palestinian workers on a much larger scale than they do their Palestinian brethren working in Israel. The vast majority of workers earn less than the minimum wage, their wages are withheld from time to time, their social rights are denied and they are exposed to dangers in their workplaces, as the State Comptroller has also pointed out.”<sup>iv</sup>

Israel’s Coalition of Women for Peace states: “Palestinian workers lost their land and livelihood to the Israeli occupation. 11% of Palestinian workers in settlements work on confiscated lands originally owned by their families or one of their relatives. Providing Palestinians with jobs on their own stolen land is another humiliating insult that they are forced to bear in order to provide for their families. The settlement industry’s revenues are a direct result of shameless exploitation of Palestinian land, labor and resources. The industry’s existence on occupied land enables, deepens and perpetuates the Israeli occupation.”<sup>v</sup> (*WhoProfits web site*)

Adri Nieuhof, a Dutch specialist on the occupation, has examined the ways in which employers in the settlements evade labor laws:<sup>vi</sup>

“Amongst the companies whose labor practices were criticized in the Kav LaOved report was Royalnight, a textile manufacturer owned by **Royalife**. In 2003, Royalife established a factory in the Barkan Industrial Park located near the Ariel settlement in the northern West Bank. Royalnight’s sheet sets, bed skirts, quilted blankets, and decorated pillows are exported to and marketed in the United States and Europe. According to Kav LaOved’s report, Palestinian workers who come from all over the

West Bank have to work under poor health and safety conditions at Royalnight's textile plant. To evade liability, work permits are issued under the name of a different employer, and workers employed through a Palestinian contractor are paid less.

In 1999, the United Nations Economic and Social Council criticized the practice of Israeli companies, including most of those operating in the Barkan park, moving their factories to the West Bank to escape the higher health and environment standards applicable in Israel. Kav LaOved states in its report that the Royalnight textile plant is no different: "Health and safety standards are poor, the working environment is noisy and the air is full of fabric dust. Most work is carried out standing, and the workers take five minutes breaks at their own expense."

The report adds: "[Workers] complain of exposure to dangerous cleaning substances and of working near cutting machines lacking safety devices. The company does not employ a Health and Safety official and the workers have received no instructions or cautions regarding possible dangers of operating machinery."<sup>vii</sup>

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For those who worry about a possible backlash to the churches from those who criticize the boycott or other principled action, we offer the following New Testament Scripture:

**Luke 6: 20-22**

Blessed are you...<sup>[2][3]</sup> when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of man.

**Luke 6: 24-26**

"Woe to you...:<sup>[2]</sup> ...when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets."

**Matthew 5:11-12** English Standard Version (ESV)

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

To those who still oppose boycott out of fear for generating controversy, we must ask

- Are we in the churches so concerned about what others think that we refuse to endure persecution and false witness against us for the sake of Christ?
- Have we forgotten Christ's command to stand for the poor and persecuted?
- Do we value the personal comfort we derive from interfaith harmony here at home over the very lives of people who are suffering daily under Israel's occupation?

In the words of Rabbi Brant Rosen, "At the very least, will we put our money where our moral conscience is?"<sup>viii</sup>



















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