

COMPANIES PRODUCING GOODS OR SERVICES IN MOROCCO'S ILLEGAL SETTLEMENT OF WESTERN SAHARA

Western Sahara is not a familiar part of the world for many United Methodists, but those in the Central Conferences are very aware of its plight. It is Africa's last colony, illegally invaded and occupied in 1975 by neighboring Morocco. Though the United Nations has agreed that a referendum for self determination must be held in Western Sahara, the Moroccan government has repeatedly prevented that from happening. One reason is the profit it makes in concert with foreign companies that are extracting natural resources from the area illegally.

There are only a small number of public companies involved, but some (in yellow below) are in the portfolios of the United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits. This means clergy and church employees are unwittingly profiting from the exploitation of an occupied people through these companies. Meanwhile, a number of European pension funds have divested from the companies. They know that doing well while doing good is possible. A number of firms have left the region as a result of divestment and shareholder activism. These include Kerr-McGee, FMC Corporation, Wesfarmers and others. A brief interview about the situation is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRZxlmR6do4> A background report from BBC is at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14115273>

AGRIUM (ETR:EGU, NYSE:AGU) – a Canadian fertilizer company which extracted more phosphate from occupied Western Sahara than any other company in 2014, against the wishes of the occupied people. In 2015 all Swedish government investment funds excluded Agrium because of its involvement with illegal resource extraction in Western Sahara.ⁱ

CAIRN ENERGY (LON:CNE) - a Scottish oil company which has also signed an agreement with the Moroccan government to begin drilling in the water off the Western Sahara against the wishes of the W. Saharan population and in violation of international law. In April, 2015, 243 international human rights organizations condemned this agreement.ⁱⁱ

GLENCORE PLC (LON:GLEN) - a Swiss based natural resources company with a subsidiary that has been awarded two oil licenses by the Moroccan government in the waters off Western Sahara.ⁱⁱⁱ

INNOPHOS HOLDINGS INC. (NASDAQ:IPHS) – a US-Mexican firm that is one of the biggest importers of phosphates from Western Sahara. In February 2015, the Norwegian government pension fund recommended blacklisting the company because of its exploitation of resources belonging to the people of Western Sahara.^{iv}

INCITEC PIVOT LTD. (ASX:ICL) – an Australian company that imports phosphates from Western Sahara. The Swedish government pension fund divested from Incitec Pivot in 2013 as a result of this involvement.^v

KOSMOS ENERGY (NYSE:KOS) - a US oil and gas exploration company which has signed an agreement with the Moroccan government to begin drilling in the water off the Western Sahara against the wishes of the W. Saharan population and in violation of international law. In April, 2015, 243 international human rights organizations condemned this agreement.^{vi}

POTASH CORP/SASKATCHEWAN (NYSE:POT) – a Canadian company that is exporting potash from Western Sahara without the consent of the occupied people to whom this valuable resource belongs. All Swedish government funds and the Norwegian government have now divested from Canadian company Agrium Inc, due to its phosphate imports from occupied Western Sahara.^{vii}

SAN LEON ENERGY (LON:SLE) – an Irish company that expanded its oil exploration off the coast of Western Sahara, despite an earlier statement by the Irish foreign minister that “any exploration and exploitation activities that proceed in disregard of the interests and wishes of the people of Western Sahara would be in violation of the principles of international law.”^{viii}

TOTAL SA (NYSE:TOT) – a French oil exploration company which responded to shareholder and international pressure by pulling out of Western Sahara in 2003. However, it began new exploration in the area in 2012-13.^{ix}

* In 2002, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, Hans Corell gave a [legal opinion](#) which agreed with the Sahrawi (the native people of Western Sahara. “If further exploration and exploitation activities were to proceed in disregard of the interests and wishes of the people of Western Sahara, they would be in violation of the international law principles applicable to mineral resource activities in non-self-governing territories,” Corell wrote.^x

ⁱ <http://www.wsrw.org/a105x3208>, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-03-13/agrium-was-no-1-buyer-of-phosphate-from-western-sahara>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.wsrw.org/a105x3211>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.bernedeclaration.ch/media/press-release/press/troubled_waters_off_western_sahara_glencore_plans_to_drill_in_occupied_territory/

^{iv} <http://www.wsrw.org/a105x3138>

^v <https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/55586>

^{vii} <http://www.globalresearch.ca/profit-driven-us-and-british-oil-companies-set-to-violate-international-law-in-western-sahara/5405327>

^{vii} <http://www.wsrw.org/a105x3211>

^{vi} <http://www.ceartaslaw.org/blog/entry/western-sahara-the-collision-of-international-law-and-corporationate-profit.htm>

^{vii} <http://www.wsrw.org/a105x3208>

^{viii} https://www.bernedeclaration.ch/media/press-release/press/troubled_waters_off_western_sahara_glencore_plans_to_drill_in_occupied_territory/

^{ix} <http://www.wsrw.org/a105x3138>

^x https://www.bernedeclaration.ch/media/press-release/press/troubled_waters_off_western_sahara_glencore_plans_to_drill_in_occupied_territory/

^{xi} <http://www.wsrw.org/a105x3138>