

Eight more United Methodist regional conferences call for actions to end Israel's occupation

Thousands of church members petition the general church in advance of General Conference 2016

During the 2015 legislative sessions of regional conferences of the United Methodist Church, eight conferences representing hundreds of thousands of church members – California-Pacific, Desert Southwest, Minnesota, New England, Pacific Northwest, Oregon-Idaho, Susquehanna and West Michigan – have asked their own conferences, the denomination, or both to eliminate holdings in companies with ties to illegal settlements on occupied land. These decisions answer the urgent call from Palestinian Christians for ethical, nonviolent actions such as divestment and boycott to end the Israeli occupation. This call, in *Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth*, was signed by thousands of Palestinian Christians and is supported by all United Methodist missionaries who have served in the Holy Land.

The 2015 actions follow nineteen divestment resolutions adopted by UMC annual conferences in previous years. These United Methodist conferences have joined [groups](#) of many faiths worldwide in supporting economic actions to end the Israeli occupation. They have also affirmed the right of the church, like any investor, to decide whether to profit from a situation it has condemned.

In advance of the upcoming UMC General Conference 2016, to be held May 10-20 in Portland, Oregon, the church-wide justice movement United Methodist Kairos Response has prepared four [resolutions](#). All have been adopted by bodies of the church, in some cases with minor amendments, and all will be considered by the 2016 General Conference. Two of these resolutions pertain specifically to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land, and two are broader in scope.

UMKR's multi-faceted approach to divestment provides concrete answers to issues raised at the 2012 United Methodist General Conference in Tampa, FL. Two of the current resolutions call for investment screens of companies that profit from illegal settlement activity in any occupation, not only Israel's. The broader of these includes all companies that support and profit from illegal settlements; the other focuses on companies that are producing goods and services within such settlements. Two more resolutions address concerns some delegates expressed about targeting companies for practices that could be beyond their control, or without allowing enough time for shareholder advocacy to succeed.

In the second group, one resolution calls for divestment from Caterpillar because of two factors clearly within its control: (1) the company has explicitly refused to adopt the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, despite a direct request by the United Methodist General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, and (2) through the Foreign Military Sales Program, the company supplies Israel with 60-ton bulldozers which it knows are used as [weapons](#) in Israel's military operations, and allows its sole representative in Israel to [service](#) these weapons on the battlefield. Another resolution specifies Caterpillar, Hewlett Packard and Motorola Solutions because, despite many years (7-10) of church [engagement](#) with those companies, there has been "no indication of any willingness to change their involvement in Israel's occupation." United Methodist researchers have detailed information on [companies](#) involved in illegal settlement activity; these findings are supported by extensive [documentation](#) from the Israeli research center "Who Profits from the Occupation."

United Methodist Kairos Response is a global grassroots movement in the United Methodist Church responding to the urgent call from Palestinian Christians – in *Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth* – for action that will help to end Israel's occupation.

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