

# JVP COMMENDS METHODIST PENSION BOARD FOR DIVESTMENT FROM ISRAELI BANKS

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*January 12, 2016*—Jewish Voice for Peace congratulates the United Methodist Church for taking the unprecedented step of divesting from Israeli banks that sustain Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestinian land. The Pension and Health Benefits Fund of the United Methodist Church declared the five largest Israeli banks **off limits for investment** and has divested from the two that it held in its portfolios, due to their deep involvement with financing illegal settlement building in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Rabbi Alissa Wise, deputy director of Jewish Voice for Peace said,

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**“We are proud to work with our partners at United Methodist Kairos Response to encourage the Methodist Church to align its investments with its values by divesting from companies who profit from Israel’s illegal occupation and human rights abuses. This decision is a particularly significant step because it acknowledges the deep connections between Israeli banks and the settlement enterprise, making clear that responsibility for the occupation and ongoing abuses of Palestinian rights does not stop at the Green Line.”**

Divestment from companies that profit from human rights abuses is an effective form of economic pressure intended to encourage Israel to abide by international law.

Working with socially responsible investment firm Sustainalytics, the **pension fund managers** identified Israel-Palestine as one of the “‘high-risk’ countries and areas that demonstrate a prolonged

and systematic pattern of human rights abuses.” Most significantly, this is the first time that a socially responsible investment screening company has included Israel-Palestine in a screen for companies operating in high-risk countries, putting Israel on par with other human rights abusers including Sudan, North Korea, and Saudi Arabia, as well as other illegal occupiers, specifically Morocco-Western Sahara and Turkey-Cyprus.

United Methodist Kairos Response (UMKR) **commended** these actions, while noting that the investment fund manager Wespath still holds stock in ten companies located inside the illegal settlements and in several others that lend important support to Israel’s occupation. A list of those companies is available on the UMKR **website**. The Methodist Church **opposes** Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestinian territories, and in 2014 the Church divested from the British private prison company **G4S** in part due to concerns over its role in Israeli prisons and in the occupied West Bank.

UMKR has submitted four **proposals** to the Church’s next General Conference, which will meet May 10-20 in Portland, Oregon. Three would require divesting from companies involved with the occupation and one would establish a screen to preclude investments in companies doing business in illegal settlements anywhere in the world.

Jewish Voice for Peace supports the efforts of UMKR to encourage the United Methodist Church to divest from the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land.

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# **Tikkun Magazine Applauds the United Methodist Church Boycott of Israeli Banks which are Funding the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank**

by: **Tikkun Staff** on January 13th, 2016 | [4 Comments »](#)

Here is the account from the NY Times:

*The pension board of the United Methodist Church — one of the largest Protestant denominations in the United States, with more than seven million members — has placed five Israeli banks on a list of companies that it will not invest in for human rights reasons, the board said in a statement on Tuesday. It appeared to be the first time that a pension fund of a large American church had taken such a step regarding the Israeli banks, which help finance settlement construction in what most of the world considers illegally occupied Palestinian territories.*

The five banks – Bank Hapoalim, Bank Leumi, First International Bank of Israel, Israel Discount Bank and Bank Mizrahi-Tefahot – are each involved in financing settlement construction in Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories.

**Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor of *Tikkun* magazine, the largest circulation voice of liberal and progressive Jews (and the winner of the Best Magazine of the Year Award from the Religion Newswriters Association in both 2014 & 2015) issued the following statement Jan. 13, 2016:**

“Although we at *Tikkun* do NOT support a general boycott of Israel, and wish to see Israel remain strong and its security intact, we welcome the action of the United Methodist Church Pension Fund. The action of the UMC Pension Fund is narrowly focused on boycotting and divesting from Israeli and other firms that help perpetuate Israel’s Occupation of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the construction of “Jewish-only” settlements . The Occupation of the West Bank with its attendant oppression of the Palestinian people is not only a violation of the highest values of the Jewish people, it is also the Israeli activity that most threatens to turn Israel into a pariah state and thereby weaken its ability to protect its citizens from the real threats it may face from surrounding hostile powers and forces. For that reason, we support all efforts to boycott the products produced on the West Bank in Israeli “Jewish only” settlements and to disinvest from Israeli and global corporations and institutions that help make the Occupation possible. The Jewish people in centuries to come will thank those friends of Israel, like the United Methodists, Presbyterians USA, and the United Church of Christ, who are doing all they can to reverse Israel’s self-destructive policies in the West Bank while distancing from the BDS movement that aims not only at the Occupation of the West Bank but at the totality of Israel and the Israeli people.”

**Rabbi Michael Lerner**, editor of *Tikkun* is author of two national best sellers, both published by Harpers: *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation* and *The Left Hand of God: Taking Back our Country from the Religious Right*. He is also the author of *The Politics of Meaning, Spirit Matters, The Socialism of Fools—Anti-Semitism on the Left*, and with Cornel West *Jews and Blacks: A Dialogue on Race, Religion and Culture in America*. His latest book is *Embracing Israel and Palestine: A Strategy for Middle East Peace*.



April 1, 2016

Dear UMKR:

We come together as Palestinian-American Christians and Muslims and American Jews to support the efforts of the United Methodist Kairos Response in your work to align the values of your denomination with your investments and divest from the Israeli occupation. As sisters and brothers of faith who also work for justice and peace for the people of Palestine and Israel, we applaud your initiative and stand in solidarity with you.

We commend your commitment to advancing conversations and resolutions within the United Methodist Church that will provide a chance for more people of conscience to step forward to express outrage over the confiscation of Palestinian land, destruction of Palestinian farms and groves and homes, choking of the Palestinian economy, and daily harassment and collective punishment of Palestinians.

The time of silence over Israel's oppressive occupation of Palestine is over. Communities of faith, universities, and local municipalities are increasingly voicing their support for nonviolent popular resistance against the occupation – including the kind of principled, targeted divestment efforts such as the United Methodist Church is preparing to undertake.

We encourage your efforts to divest from corporations that profit from or support Israel's occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the siege of Gaza. This work is an important part of a bigger project to bring about justice, equality, and freedom not just for Israelis and Palestinians, but for us all.

Sincerely,

Palestinian Christian Alliance for Peace  
Jewish Voice for Peace



We are writing to you on behalf of Jewish Voice for Peace to urge you to vote in favor of the resolution "Aligning United Methodist Church Investments with Resolutions on Israel/Palestine."

We urge you to follow the path of peacemakers by following Micah's prophetic call to do justice,

love kindness, and walk humbly with your God. Few places are more deserving of peacemaking than the Holy Land, where neither Israeli nor Palestinians enjoy real peace and security.

We believe that doing justice requires you to take a look at the investment that your church may have in companies that profit from the Israeli occupation and are obstacles to a just peace in Israel and Palestine. Take the example of Caterpillar, which profits from the demolition of Palestinian homes and from the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian olive trees. Or take a look at Motorola and Hewlett Packard, both involved in the maintaining of a system of walls and checkpoints that are aimed at continuing the expansions of illegal, Jewish-only settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Divesting from these companies is not about divesting from Israel. It is about divesting from war and injustice while pressuring companies to conduct their own businesses ethically. Together with our allies, the Sisters of Mercy and Sisters of Loretto, Jewish Voice for Peace has been pressuring Caterpillar for 8 years with shareholder resolutions calling on the corporation to take some responsibility for the destruction caused by its bulldozers. The company has not budged. Motorola and Hewlett Packard have been approached as well.

We believe that loving kindness requires (1) an honest look at the role that anti-Semitism and anti-Arab racism play in our society and (2) authentically expressing a true concern for the well-being of both Israelis and Palestinians. Neither people will find peace when they meet as occupier and occupied. We believe that the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem harms both peoples and must end now.

The path of the peacemaker we suggest here is neither anti-Semitic or anti-Arab. It does not single out either Jews or Arabs, but focuses rather on injustice and human rights violations. Indeed, in Jewish Voice for Peace's book, *Reframing Anti-Semitism*, now in its fourth printing, we reject the notion that any state – including the State of Israel – is above criticism or nonviolent protest.

We believe that walking humbly with God requires us to walk together as Christians, Jews, and Muslims, holding steadfast to our understandings of justice and kindness, while accepting that individually we hold a small portion of the solution, but collectively we can help bring peace to the Holy Land.

## **Jewish Voice for Peace**

### **ABOUT JEWISH VOICE FOR PEACE**

Jewish Voice for Peace is America's largest Jewish grassroots peace group dedicated to reaching a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians based on the principles of equality and international human rights law. JVP works with activists in Palestine and Israel, and in broad coalition with other Jewish, Arab-American, faith-based, and peace and social justice organizations to support the aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians for justice, security and self-determination.

Jewish Voice for Peace calls for:

- A U.S. foreign policy based on promoting peace, democracy, human rights, and respect for international law
- An end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem
- A resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem consistent with international law
- An end to all violence against civilians

## **An Open Letter to The United Methodist Church from the Jewish Voice for Peace Rabbinical Council**

We write to you as members of the Jewish Voice for Peace Rabbinical Council to encourage your efforts to initiate phased selective divestment from corporations which profit from or support Israel's occupation of the West Bank. We applaud your initiative and want to communicate our support as Jewish leaders who also work for justice and peace for the people of Israel and Palestine.

We know you will likely be criticized by groups that claim to speak for the entire Jewish community. However, as Jewish leaders, we believe there is by no means a uniformity of opinion on this issue in the American Jewish community. There is in fact a growing desire within the North American Jewish community to end our silence over Israel's oppressive occupation of Palestine.

Every day Jewish leaders – we among them – are stepping forward to express outrage over the confiscation of Palestinian land, destruction of farms and groves and homes, the choking of the Palestinian economy and daily harassment and violence against Palestinian people. Members of the Jewish community are increasingly voicing their support for nonviolent popular resistance against these outrages – including the kind of cautious, highly-specified divestment such as the United Methodist Church is preparing to undertake.

Your Church has long been active in pursuing justice and peace by nonviolent means, including divestment, in many places around the world. As Christians, you have your own particular stake in the land to which both our traditions have long attachments of faith and history. We particularly acknowledge the oppression of Palestinian Christians under Israeli occupation and the justice of your efforts to relieve the oppression directed against your fellows.

To advocate for an end to an unjust policy is not anti-Semitic. To criticize Israel is not anti-Semitic. To invest your own resources in corporations which pursue your vision of a just and peaceful world, and to withdraw your resources from those which contradict this vision, is not anti-Semitic. There is a terrible history of actual anti-Semitism perpetrated by Christians at different times throughout the millennia and conscientious Christians today do bear a burden of conscience on that account. We can understand that, with your commitment to paths of peace and justice, it must be terribly painful and inhibiting to be accused of anti-Semitism.

In fact, many of us in the Jewish community recognize that the continuing occupation of Palestine itself presents a great danger to the safety of the Jewish people, not to mention oppressing our spirits and diminishing our honor in the world community. We appreciate the solidarity of people of conscience in pursuing conscientious nonviolent strategies, such as phased selective divestment, to end the occupation.

With prayers for peace,

Rabbi Margaret Holub, JVP Rabbinical Council  
Rabbi Brant Rosen, JVP Rabbinical Council  
Rabbi Alissa Wise, JVP Rabbinical Council  
Rabbi Julie Greenberg, JVP Rabbinical Council  
Rabbi Michael Feinberg, JVP Rabbinical Council  
Cantor Michael Davis, JVP Rabbinical Council  
Rabbi Rachel Barenblatt, JVP Rabbinical Council  
Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb, JVP Rabbinical Council  
Rabbi Laurie Zimmerman, JVP Rabbinical Council  
Rabbi Rebecca Alpert, JVP Rabbinical Council  
Rabbi Joseph Berman, JVP Rabbinical Council  
Rabbi Brian Walt, JVP Rabbinical Council

Rabbi Jeremy Milgrom, JVP Rabbinical Council

Rabbi David Mivasair, JVP Rabbinical Council  
David Basior, Rabbinical Student, JVP Rabbinical Council

Alana Alpert, Rabbinical Student, JVP Rabbinical Council

Ari Lev Fornari, Rabbinical Student, JVP Rabbinical Council

## Letter and Video of Support from 140 Israeli Citizens, 2012

*See some of the signers of this letter in the accompanying video at [www.kairosresponse.org](http://www.kairosresponse.org), in the Endorsement Statements section*

Dear United Methodist Friends,

We write to you as citizens and residents of Israel who support the United Methodist proposal to divest from companies involved with Israel's occupation. Understanding that a decision to divest may sound harsh at first and that quite a few misconceptions exist concerning this initiative, we would like to offer our view.

We understand that this is a decision about how the church will invest its own money, and we applaud the effort to make the church's actions consistent with its values. In view of this effort, we are asking you to support the Palestinian call for actions such as divestment from the Israeli occupation. We would like to stress that this form of divestment is far from being anti-Israeli or anti-Semitic. We support and encourage your resolution to divest from companies that profit from the Israeli Occupation. We are convinced that measures such as this do not target Israeli, Jewish or any other individuals, but companies which profit from Israel's military occupation and violations of human rights as stipulated in international law. We believe that the proposed United Methodist divestment resolution is therefore extremely responsible and worthy.

The effectiveness of the divestment campaign is undeniable. Some companies are actually moving out of the illegal settlements as global economic actions continue. Even the most mainstream Israeli commentators say that Israel must fundamentally change its ways, and that Israeli PR alone will no longer succeed in maintaining the brutal reality of Israel's discriminatory policies.

The continued violent oppression of the Palestinian people is a crime. The continued theft of land, water and natural resources from Palestinians is a crime. At the very least, we expect conscientious people and organizations not to take part in crime. We expect people of conscience not to carry on in a "business as usual" manner under these circumstances. When an organization finds out that it is invested in projects that profit from crime, the decent thing to do would be to disinvest from those projects.

The words of the Kairos Palestine Document, supported by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and others who stand for justice, stress the depth and moral conviction of your call. We hope and trust that the universal principles concerning human rights will guide you towards an action of solidarity with Palestinians who share your faith and all other Palestinians. We strongly believe that divestment is a positive action that will pressure Israeli and international policy makers to end the occupation, and strengthens those aspiring and working for justice and peace in the region.

Sincerely,

*(see the signatories on the following page)*



1. Noa Abend
2. Uri Agnon
3. Manal Amoury, Ph.D
4. Steve Amsel
5. Eliran Arazi
6. Dorit Argo
7. Nitzan Aviv
8. Daphne Banai, Tel Aviv
9. Oshra Bar
10. Hillel Barak
11. Miri Barak
12. Ronnie Barkan
13. Dr. Rann Bar-On
14. Dr. Dalit Baum
15. Ronnen Ben Arie
16. Ofra Ben Artzi
17. Sara Benninga
18. Zvi Benninga
19. Alma Biblash
20. Theodor Bughici, Hebrew University
21. Guy Butavia
22. Smadar Carmon
23. Eliyahu Cauffman
24. Dr. Ellen Chaikin, Jerusalem
25. Natalie Cohen
26. Ron Cohen
27. Maayan Dak
28. Dr. Uri Davis
29. Ruth Edmonds
30. Shiri Eisner
31. Ofer Engel
32. Hamutal Erato
33. Lina Falah
34. Naama Farjoun
35. Pnina Feiler, Reg. Nurse
36. Tamar Freed
37. Hagar Garti
38. Avner Gilaad
39. Angela Godfrey-Goldstein
40. Neta Golan
41. Tsilli Goldenberg
42. Dina Goor
43. Michal Goren
44. Ohal Grietzer
45. Sarah Grumet
46. Mya Guarnieri
47. Noam Gur
48. Gil Gutglick
49. Amos Gvirtz
50. Connie Hackbarth
51. Ilana Hammerman
52. Shir Hever
53. Iris Hefets
54. Ruth Hiller
55. Guy Hirschfeld
56. Seffy Hurwitz
57. Yael Kahn
58. Michal Kaiser-Livne
59. Dafna Kaminer
60. Reuven Kaminer
61. Liad Kantorowicz
62. Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta
63. Dr. Asaf Kedar
64. Assaf Kintzer
65. Annelien Kisch-Kroon
66. Victor Kozaski
67. Micha Kurz
68. Idan Landau
69. Mihal Leibel
70. Noam Lekach
71. Dr. Hadas Leonov
72. Eytan Lerner
73. Roi Livne
74. Yonatan Livneh
75. Ilan Lonai
76. Yuval Lotem, Jaffa
77. Adv. Henry Lowi
78. Yossef Lubovsky
79. Gal Lugassi
80. Naomi Lyth
81. Prof. Bezalel Manekin
82. Daniel Margalit
83. Dr. Ruchama Marton
84. Dr. Anat Matar
85. Edo Medicks
86. Yossef(a) Mekyton
87. Gregory Molev
88. Susanne Moses
89. Andreas Moses
90. Dr. Yael Munk,  
The Open University, Israel
91. Dorit Naaman, PhD
92. Dr. Dorothy Naor
93. Ofer Neiman
94. Dr. David Nir
95. Elyakim Nitzani
96. Prof. Nurit Peled
97. Leiser Peles
98. Yaar Peretz
99. Einat Podjarny
100. Jonathan Pollak
101. Ayman Qwaider
102. Micha Rachman
103. Alison Ramer
104. Prof. Tamar Rapoport
105. Mosi Raz
106. Renen Raz
107. Dr. Hili Razinsky
108. Deb Reich
109. Larissa Riahi
110. Gregory Rokhlenko
111. Yehoshua Rosin, Rehovot
112. Leehee Rothschild
113. Lizi Sagie
114. Dr. Michal Sapir
115. Herzl Schubert, Tel-Aviv
116. Noa Shaindinger
117. Ayala Shani
118. Tal Shapira
119. Yonatan Shapira
120. Itamar Shapira
121. Inbal Sinai
122. Ora Slonim
123. Dr. Kobi Snitz
124. Sonya Solovioy
125. Marcelo Svirsky
126. Ruth Tenne
127. Amir Terkel
128. Daphna Thier
129. Uri Thier
130. Tzvia Thier
131. Amiel Vardi
132. Sahar M. Vardi
133. Michael Warschawski
134. Einat Weizman
135. Elian Weizman
136. Rebekah Wolf
137. Sergio Yahni
138. Iaroslav Youssim
139. Karen Zack
140. Shimri Zameret



הוועד הישראלי נגד הריסת בתים  
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March 25, 2012

Dear Friends in the United Methodist Church,

As the Director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), I have been proud to support the efforts of the United Methodist Church to address Israel's 45-year Occupation. I especially support the work of United Methodist Kairos Response in translating a courageous moral stand against oppression into concrete actions such as the resolution to divest from corporations profiting from Israel's Occupation.

I have worked with United Methodists for many years on the issue of the Occupation. I have shared information with UMKR and others working on this issue, especially regarding Israel's demolition of over 26,000 Palestinian homes. (One rebuilding project in Beit Arabiya, a Palestinian home demolished in late January for the fifth time, was financed by the love donations of the Methodist churches of Minnesota, some of whom came to rebuild with us.) ICAHD has hosted Methodist fact-finding missions here in Israel/Palestine and Salim Shawamreh, whose home it is that was demolished, has spoken together with me at the United Methodist General Conference.

Certainly the measures advocated by UMKR, which have steadily gained support in the larger Church itself, are responsible and effective ones. Targeting Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, Hewlett Packard and other corporations profiting from the suffering of the Palestinians exposes an intolerable American complicity, one that drags Methodists themselves into an active if non-direct involvement. Only by publicly disassociating itself morally and financially from policies of oppression, while endeavoring to end the oppression itself, will the United Methodist Church redeem its moral space. This is the essence of the divestment campaign.

As part of the Israeli peace camp, I can testify as to how important your moral stand is to us – and it is even more vital for the beleaguered and isolated Palestinian people. We in Israel who work tirelessly for peace are comforted that UMKR exists, is active and receives the support it does from the wider Methodist Church. We urge you to continue to give practical expression to your moral concerns by supporting the divestment campaign. Do not let external attacks, come as they will, divide you or weaken your resolve. We look forward to the day when we all come together at Beit Arabiya to celebrate the end of Occupation and the dawn of a just peace. In that, you will have been instrumental.

In solidarity,

Jeff Halper, Director  
The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD)  
Jerusalem

# Open Letter Endorsing Selective Divestment by the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church, and the Episcopal Church

<http://icahdusa.org/2012/03/open-letter-endorsing-selective-divestment/>

March 10, 2012

We, the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions-USA, write to you, the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church, and the Episcopal Church, to support and encourage you in your efforts to selectively divest from corporations that are complicit in Israel's ongoing policy of occupation and Jewish colonization of Palestinian land under Israel's control. We are pleased that you have taken a leadership role to divest in hopes of bringing peace to the people of Israel/Palestine.



We are concerned that the Jewish Council on Public Affairs (JCPA), the Israel Action Network, and similar groups, which claim to be the “voice of American Jews,” have launched a coordinated smear campaign to label your divestment efforts as divisive, anti-Israel, anti-Jewish, and anti-Semitic.

Although the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions-USA is an inclusive organization, we do have substantial Jewish representation. Our Board of Directors consists of fifty percent American Jews. To the degree that we are Jewish, we clearly state that the JCPA and the Israel Action Network do not speak for us.

It is our belief that the JCPA and Israel Action Network, rather than being the “voice of American Jews,” are actually acting in this matter on behalf of the Government of Israel.

The JCPA and Israel Action network, according to their own websites, are a part of the United Jewish Federation, which in turn is the parent organization of United Israel Appeal and partner of the Jewish Agency of Israel. Testimony at the 2011 Russell Tribunal Hearings in South Africa reveals that United Israel Appeal and the Jewish Agency of Israel are legally a part of the Government of Israel and serve as part of the central mechanism for Israel's system of apartheid. At a minimum, the JCPA and Israel Action Network have a responsibility to disclose to the public and to your churches this association and conflict of interest.

We all have a moral responsibility to end our own complicity in human suffering. We appreciate the steps your churches are taking to ensure that your investments are consistent with opposing oppression and restoring justice to Israel/Palestine.

In support of peace,

*Tom Stern*  
*Chair of the Board*  
*Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions-USA*