

## **Protecting the Right to Peacefully Address Injustice**

Whereas United Methodists and other religious communities have long sought to address injustice using only nonviolent means, and

Whereas measures such as boycotts have proven to be useful tools in helping to bring constructive social change, as seen in the civil rights movement in the United States and the global anti-apartheid campaign for South Africa, and

Whereas boycotts are a constitutionally protected form of free speech in the United States and many other nations,<sup>1</sup> and

Whereas the National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine (NCCOP) has issued an urgent call to church bodies around the world, asking them to increase their support for the human rights of all ethnic and religious minorities in the Holy Land and to vigorously defend the right to protest violations of human rights, not only with words, but with nonviolent economic actions such as boycotts and divestment,<sup>2</sup> and

Whereas, in both 2012 and 2016, the United Methodist Church has called on “all nations to prohibit...the import of products made by companies in Israeli settlements on Palestinian land,” thereby calling for an international boycott of the Israeli settlements,<sup>3</sup> and

Whereas thirteen United Methodist annual conferences 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,<sup>4</sup> and

Whereas, in 2016, the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of The United Methodist Church (Wespath) announced they had divested from an Israeli business that was constructing Israeli settlements and from two Israeli banks and that five Israeli banks would be excluded from their investment portfolios, after having previously announced their divestment from a company running Israeli prisons,<sup>5</sup> and

Whereas eleven annual conferences and one jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church have affirmed and defended the right to peacefully address injustice through economic actions such as boycotts, and divestment,<sup>6</sup> and

Whereas a recent wave of governmental measures has swept through dozens of state legislatures in the United States, imposing penalties on citizens and businesses for engaging in boycotts that address Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights or for simply refusing to pledge that they will refrain from such boycotts,<sup>7</sup> and

Whereas, in 2017, as a result of such state legislation, a Mennonite public school teacher in Kansas was denied the right to be considered for a job solely because, in accordance with the stance of her church, she refused to relinquish the option of boycotting products made in Israeli settlements,<sup>8</sup> and

Whereas the United States Congress in recent years has sought to condemn the use of time-honored economic methods such as boycott and divestment for nonviolently addressing injustice,<sup>9</sup> and

Whereas, in 2017, twenty Christian leaders of major denominations and organizations, including the United Methodist Church and the National Council of Churches, published an open letter addressed to the U.S. Congress in which they strongly opposed “any legislation that suppresses legitimate criticism of public policy, and that restricts freedom of expression and our ability to determine our own witness through investment and selective purchasing practices” and further declared: “we collectively affirm and defend the right of churches and organizations to use economic measures in the specific case of Israel-Palestine. This is consistent with how churches and church-related organizations have employed economic measures as nonviolent tactics in many instances of seeking justice and peace throughout history,”<sup>10</sup> and

Whereas similarly restrictive laws, governmental measures, and judicial decisions have been appearing in historically democratic societies such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany and other democratic nations in Europe, as well as other countries around the world, and

Whereas, in 2021 and 2022, U.S. state legislatures and the federal government have been discussing and/or implementing similar legislation that seeks to protect the fossil fuel industry and gun manufacturers;<sup>11</sup> and

Whereas the United Methodist Book of Discipline calls on all Christians to resist unjust governmental interference in the work of the church,<sup>12</sup>

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church opposes any interference by any local, regional, or national government in our right to address injustice through nonviolent economic means, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Conference urges all United Methodists of the conference to contact their local, regional, and national elected officials, to communicate this resolution and to advocate against the suppression of time-honored and nonviolent means of addressing injustice.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Conference Secretary will inform all federal and state legislators that represent the region of the \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Conference of the adoption of this resolution and will include the full text of the resolution in that correspondence.

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## FOOTNOTES

1. US Supreme Court Volume 458, Case 886 (1982)  
<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/458/886/case.html>
2. <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/open-letter-from-the-national-coalition-of-christian-organizations-in-palestine>
3. Resolution #6111, 2016/2012 United Methodist Book of Resolutions
4. [www.kairosresponse.org](http://www.kairosresponse.org)  
Baltimore-Washington, California-Nevada, California-Pacific, Desert Southwest, Detroit, New York, West Ohio, Northern Illinois, Minnesota, New England, Oregon-Idaho, Pacific Northwest, Rocky Mountain
5. “Israeli Banks on Ineligible List for Pension Agency” Jan. 13, 2016, United Methodist News Service  
<http://www.umc.org/news-and-media/israeli-banks-on-ineligible-list-for-pensions-agency> and  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/16/us/methodist-church-group-links-divestment-move-to-israel-and-a-firms-prison-role.html>

6. [https://www.kairosresponse.org/pr\\_acs2017\\_23resolutions.html](https://www.kairosresponse.org/pr_acs2017_23resolutions.html)  
<http://um-insight.net/perspectives/kairos-response-commends-resolutions-on>  
Minnesota, New England, Upper New York, Great Plains, Desert Southwest, Oregon-Idaho, Florida, East Ohio, West Ohio, California-Nevada, Michigan and the Western Jurisdiction
7. <https://palestinelegal.org/righttoboycott>
8. “Teacher Sues over Kansas Law Banning Contracts with Israel Boycotters” - Wichita Eagle, October 11, 2017 <http://www.kansas.com/news/politics-government/article178313846.html>
9. <https://palestinelegal.org/federal>
10. [https://www.kairosresponse.org/20\\_christian\\_leaders\\_letter\\_congress\\_nov2017.html](https://www.kairosresponse.org/20_christian_leaders_letter_congress_nov2017.html)
11. <http://nytimes.com/2022/05/27/climate/republicans-blackrock-climate.html>  
<https://jewishcurrents.org/what-the-fossil-fuel-industry-learned-from-anti-bds-laws>  
<https://www.972mag.com/fossil-fuels-climate-bds/>
12. ¶164B The United Methodist Book of Discipline