

Protecting the Right to Peacefully Address Injustice through Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions

Whereas boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) are constitutionally protected forms of free speech and protest that have often been used by people of conscience to effect positive social and political change;

Whereas a wave of anti-BDS legislation that has been proposed in the U.S. Congress and in state legislatures and public institutions across the United States threatens to penalize the use of these time-honored nonviolent justice-seeking actions;

Whereas United Methodists and other religious communities have long used the nonviolent methods of boycotts, divestment and sanctions to stand in solidarity with oppressed people and to work for justice, and such advocacy measures by the United Methodist Church have proven to be useful tools in helping to bring about a wide range of constructive social change, including the strengthening of labor rights for farm workers in the United States and ending of apartheid in South Africa;

Whereas, in 2005, after studying the success of such efforts, a broad coalition of Palestinian civil society issued a call for a global movement of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) to advance the Palestinians' long-denied rights to self-determination, freedom, justice, and equality;

Whereas, in 2009, Palestinian Christians echoed the call for boycott and divestment in their landmark document, "Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth," ~ an ecumenical confession of faith and urgent call to action often compared to the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" and other Christian manifestos written in times of crisis ~ that has been signed by thousands of Palestinian Christians and endorsed by the 13 Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem;

Whereas, in recent years, more than a dozen 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;

Whereas, in 2012, the United Methodist General Conference approved the resolution "Opposition to Israeli Settlements in Palestinian Land," (#6111) which calls on "all nations to prohibit...the import of products made by companies in Israeli settlements on Palestinian land," i.e. calls for an international boycott of the Israeli settlements;

Whereas, in 2016, the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of the United Methodist Church announced that five Israeli banks would be excluded from their investment portfolios, explicitly because of those banks' involvement in settlement construction in the occupied Palestinian territories;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the {conference or other church body} of the United Methodist Church opposes any state or federal legislation that seeks to restrict the right to address injustice through boycotts, divestment and sanctions and joins the Rabbinical Council of Jewish Voice for Peace in calling on our elected officials "to resist efforts to stifle the movement toward justice for Palestinians through the current wave of 'anti-BDS' legislation;"

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the {Conference Secretary or other person} write a letter to the President of the United States and to the Governor{plural if needed}, the congressional representatives and the members of the legislature{plural if needed} of {the state or states within the region of the conference or other church body}, informing those elected officials of this resolution and attaching the

full text of the resolution, said letter to include the approximate number of congregations and church members within the {conference or other United Methodist region} and/or within the respective state of the recipient;

{Alternate version for conferences outside the U.S.}

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the {Conference Secretary or other person} write a letter to the {head of state} and to the members of the {national or regional legislature}, informing those elected officials of this resolution and attaching the full text of the resolution, said letter to include also the approximate number of congregations and church members within the {conference or other United Methodist region} and/or within the respective political region of the recipient;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the {conference or other church body} urges all United Methodist annual conferences, congregations, and church members to contact their local, regional and national elected officials, to communicate this resolution and to advocate against anti-BDS legislation appearing anywhere in their country.