

Why Boycott the Israeli Settlements?



Learn why many United Methodists around the world support boycott and other forms of nonviolent economic action for a just peace in the Holy Land.

A Moment of Truth: Kairos Palestine

A word of faith, hope and love
from the heart of Palestinian suffering



To Answer the Call from Palestinian Christians

Christians in the Holy Land today are struggling to keep our faith traditions alive in the land of Christ's birth. Like their Muslim neighbors, they suffer every day under a cruel occupation that denies their basic human rights and attempts to destroy all hope for remaining in the land of their ancestors. In 2009, they issued an urgent appeal called ***Kairos Palestine***, in which they asked churches around the world to take ethical, nonviolent steps, including boycott and divestment, to help end the Israeli occupation. Their request was a call to action for Christians everywhere – to help bring equality, freedom, and a just, lasting peace to everyone in Israel and Palestine. With courageous honesty, they have said, "The Israeli occupation is an evil and a sin that must be resisted and removed...**Taking action to end the oppression is not working against Israel...It will benefit both peoples**, when justice and the peace that comes from that are secured for all the people of the Holy Land." More than 3,000 Palestinian Christians have signed this petition, and many churches are responding to their call through economic action. *(Photo by the Anglican Church of Canada)*

To Answer the Call from our Missionaries

Every living United Methodist missionary who has served in the Holy Land has asked the church to heed the call from Palestinian Christians for the benefit of all the region's people. They have seen firsthand the terrible oppression suffered by people under occupation, and have unanimously endorsed nonviolent measures like boycott of settlement products, selective divestment, and sanctions to help bring it to an end. These measures have been used by the church to help end other situations of injustice and can make a difference again for a just and lasting peace. *(Photo of settlement by Larry George, UMKR)*



To Answer the Call from our Church

"For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall." (Eph. 2:14) Christ has told us to love our neighbors as ourselves. If we saw our homes destroyed, our land taken and our children arrested and held without charge, if we were separated by walls from schools, jobs, and hospitals, what would we want our neighbors to do? Our church has called for a boycott of settlement goods. *(Photo of wall through Palestinian land by Susanne Hoder, UMKR)*

Settlements Divide and Destroy Communities

Settlements and the segregated roads that connect them divide Palestinian areas into isolated and impoverished communities completely separated from their neighbors.



On the map, blue lines are Israeli-only highways dividing the West Bank, shown in the dotted border. Dark gray areas are part of Israel; light gray and blue areas are controlled by Israel. Orange areas are Palestinian. (Map by Jan de Long. Photo of settlement by James Beck, UMKR)

The Fourth Geneva Convention forbids an occupying power from moving its own people onto land it occupies. Since 1967, however, Israel has built more than 120 illegal colonies called "settlements" in occupied territory, which includes East Jerusalem. Using tax incentives and other economic benefits, Israel has encouraged over 650,000 Jewish settlers to move onto Palestinian land. This is a serious, ongoing violation of international law and an enormous obstacle to peace between the two peoples.

To make way for these illegal settlements, more than 27,000 Palestinian structures have been demolished, leaving thousands of people homeless. Bulldozers often show up without warning, and families are forced to watch as all they own is destroyed. Christian friends of UMKR near Bethlehem recently received demolition orders despite clear documents showing legal registration of their land since 1916.

Only Israel, among all the nations of the world, considers these settlements legitimate. Last year 17 governments of the European Union called on their citizens to avoid doing business in or investing in illegal settlements. According to a spokeswoman from the US State Department, "Every

administration in recent memory has said that the settlements are illegitimate." Every United Methodist General Conference since 2004 has passed a resolution calling for an end to Israeli settlements on Palestinian land. In 2012, the General Conference called on all nations to boycott settlement products.



United Methodists visit a destroyed home in 2010. All that's left is the shed for animals, a crude shelter for a family with children. (Photo by James Beck, UMKR)

Walls and Checkpoints Steal Land, Impede Movement

The Separation Wall, checkpoints, and barriers throughout the West Bank turn Palestinian communities into open-air prisons.



The Separation Wall surrounds Bethlehem, confiscating the residents' farmland for Israel and isolating Bethlehem from other communities. (Photos above and top right by Susanne Hoder and Yvonne Turner, UMKR)

Israel says that the Separation Wall is for security, yet it is not built on the border between Israel and occupied Palestinian territory; in fact, 85% of the Wall's route is on Palestinian land. Much of it extends deep inside the West Bank. In effect, the Wall is illegally annexing Palestinian land to Israel. The International Court of Justice has declared the Wall illegal and called for all portions in the occupied territory to be dismantled. Israel has ignored the court's decision.



Workers line up at checkpoints hours before dawn, hoping to be allowed through to reach their jobs and provide for their families. Employers cannot be sure when or if workers will arrive. (Photo by Dylan Collins)



Interminable delays at checkpoints make normal life impossible; a ten-minute trip before occupation now can take hours. Businesses are crippled, and farmers' crops often spoil before reaching market.

There are also hundreds of checkpoints and other roadblocks in occupied territory; they separate Palestinian villages and families from each other, jobs, hospitals, and their own farmland. Like the Wall, most checkpoints are not on the border with Israel. They impede travel inside the West Bank.

Palestinians live with the fear that in an emergency they will not be able to reach a hospital. Many mothers have given birth at checkpoints, and dozens of newborns have died there. Other patients have died or suffered irreversible setbacks at checkpoints. Such deliberate delays in medical care are illegal under international law and have been condemned by human rights organizations around the world.



Hedy Epstein, Holocaust survivor and human rights advocate:

"I was really not prepared for all the horrors that I saw. I had heard about checkpoints. And I thought a checkpoint was something like a tollbooth on a highway here in the United States. It's not like that at all. And it's gotten worse every time I return. The way they are now, they remind me of when animals are rounded up and taken to slaughter, it's just so humiliating."

Unequal Water Allocation Threatens Palestinian Lives

“Water discrimination has become another tool to wear down the Palestinians socially and politically.” – Amira Hass, Israeli journalist



Israeli settlers have access to four times as much water as Palestinians – enough for pools and gardens. (Photo at left by GreatMirror.com. Photo at right by Susanne Hoder, UMKR)

Israel controls all the water in the occupied territories, and water restrictions have created a humanitarian crisis for Palestinians. Despite the fact that the region’s largest aquifer lies primarily beneath the West Bank, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians don’t have access to running water.

Israel takes Palestinian water, then sells a small fraction of it back to Palestinians at exorbitant prices. Supplies are frequently cut off. Every year, Israel destroys dozens of cisterns, wells, and other structures that Palestinians depend on. According to a UN study, “springs are increasingly being confiscated by Israeli settlers, who have used threats, intimidation and fences to ensure control of water...close to the settlements.”

In Gaza, home to 1.8 million Palestinians, the underground aquifer is depleted and contaminated. A report by Save the Children states that water-related illnesses like typhoid fever and diarrhea have increased sharply. More than 90% of the water supply is unfit for human consumption.



Palestinian children struggle to fill their bottles while the water is flowing from an outdoor pipe in their village. In Gaza, where drinkable water is especially scarce, over half the population is under the age of 18. (Photo by MIFTAH)

“Discriminatory Israeli policies in the OPT [occupied Palestinian territories] are the root cause of the striking disparity in access to water between Palestinians and Israelis...The lack of water has already forced many villagers to leave the area.”

From “Thirsting for Justice,” a report by Amnesty International