

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,

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Rabbi Brant Rosen, JVP Rabbinical Council
Rabbi Alissa Wise, JVP Rabbinical Council
Rabbi Julie Greenberg, JVP Rabbinical Council
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