**For Immediate Release**

Media Contact
M. Theresa Basile
info@kairosresponse.org
(323) 253-9087

**Global denomination United Methodist Church (UMC) leads divestment from bonds of Israel, other occupier governments**
Church's primary investment agency, Wespath, fulfills and expands 2024 resolution of denomination's legislative body; BDS success reflects many years of grassroots advocacy by UMKR.

August 8, 2025 – The United Methodist Church (UMC), one of the world's largest Christian denominations, has become the world's first church to announce a historic policy to divest and exclude the bonds of governments maintaining prolonged illegal military occupations, namely Israel, Turkey and Morocco, thereby fulfilling the call of the church's General Conference in 2024.

**Success for Palestinian BDS justice movement**

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Wespath, the church's primary investing agency, manages the pensions and health benefits of the church's clergy in a portfolio of more than $26 billion, the world's largest reported portfolio of a faith-based institution. For decades, justice advocates in the church have called for this agency to divest its holdings that support and profit from the Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territories.

Since 2010, United Methodists for Kairos Response (UMKR), named for the Palestinian Christian movement Kairos Palestine, has led the call for United Methodist ethical investing that would reflect the church's long-held positions supporting Palestinian human rights and freedom from occupation.

The UMC's General Conference, the denomination's top decision-making body, on April 30, 2024 adopted a landmark resolution written and submitted by UMKR, calling for all church investors to avoid investing in the government bonds of Israel, Turkey, and Morocco, due to their prolonged, illegal military occupations of their neighbors: Palestine, Northern Cyprus, and Morocco. Various United Nations bodies have identified these decades-long occupations as illegal and violating the rights of the peoples whose territories they are controlling and colonizing.

This groundbreaking legislative success in 2024 - the first Christian denomination to call for divestment from Israel's bonds - was the result of many years church-wide education, grassroots mobilization, and denominational lobbying by UMKR.  This church movement was launched in 2010 with the express goal of achieving significant divestment action in the denomination, in response to the [Palestinian BDS Call of 2005](https://bdsmovement.net/bds-call) (BDS: boycott, divestment, sanctions) which was echoed in the Kairos Palestine Document "A Moment of Truth" in 2009.

A grassroots movement that is independent of the institutional church and dependent largely on volunteers and individual donors, "UMKR has faced considerable challenges over the last 15 years in bringing our message for a just peace in Palestine/Israel to church leaders and members on four continents," said Theresa Basile, a UMKR co-founder who today coordinates diverse programs and campaigns in the movement and serves as Communications Director.

**Petitioning Wespath**

Resolutions adopted by the UMC General Conference express the political and social positions of the denomination on specific issues, but they are not binding actions for church agencies. In the spring of 2024, Wespath leaders [had promised to undertake](https://www.umnews.org/en/news/resolution-opposes-investment-in-israeli-bonds?mkt_tok=MDc4LUpYUS02NDMAAAGS4PKR57kNAqgircdRlJuaL1m5K0_ACOT0tt6Lo-t9-xv7tcEOPG52Ff3SIiM4ZQktvWP9plnP5sPBOcRpuXzYw2xSUtCc4X05FAowtV9DpWMIxg) "a prayerful discernment process" to determine their response to the divestment action mandated in General Conference resolution 3226.

This year, UMKR launched a [church-wide petition](https://www.kairosresponse.org/wespath_petition_2025.html), with 22 bishops and other church leaders as advance signers, urging Wespath to fulfill the divestment resolution of General Conference, stating:

"The resolution makes clear the church’s intention to avoid profiting from the suffering and oppression caused by these decades-long occupations: Israel’s occupation of the West Bank including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip since 1967, Turkey’s occupation of Northern Cyprus since 1974, and Morocco’s occupation of Western Sahara since 1976.

"The United Nations has identified flagrant human rights violations in all of these occupations, including: land confiscation, theft of natural resources, home demolitions and illegal colonization, deprivation of food and water, violence against civilians, mass incarceration for population control, and brutality against children."

**Enhanced Human Rights Investing Policy**

The [agency announced](https://www.wespath.org/News/Human-Rights-Exclusion#!/page:1) August 6, 2025 that it would be fulfilling that General Conference call for divestment from those three occupier government bonds, and, inspired by the human rights standards embodied in that resolution, it would be expanding the call to include other governments maintaining prolonged military occupations (such as China and Russia), as well as those with a history of authoritarianism or corruption and those subject to comprehensive sanctions.

"This new investing framework reflects our church's Social Principles quite well. We are proud and pleased that UMKR's resolution has inspired even broader action for human rights by Wespath" said Lisa Bender, co-chair of UMKR's Steering Committee.

**Timely Action Amidst Atrocities**

The announcement by Wespath comes in the midst of [growing international outrage](https://www.timesofisrael.com/25-western-nations-call-for-end-to-gaza-war-say-suffering-has-reached-new-depths/?utm_campaign=thisweek&utm_medium=email&utm_source=ak&utm_term=99692.327247.rzKnt0) over Israel's [genocidal](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jul/28/israel-committing-genocide-in-gaza-say-israel-based-human-rights-groups?emci=58c25844-a273-f011-8dc9-6045bda9d96b&emdi=6196ca90-ce73-f011-8dc9-6045bda9d96b&ceid=63782) assault on Palestinians in Gaza and the expansion in  [settlers and military violence](https://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/2025/07/16/israel-is-displacing-palestinians-on-a-scale-not-seen-since-1967/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Wire&sourceid=1001761&emci=855bf99a-6062-f011-8dc9-6045bdfe8e9c&emdi=95182e32-6262-f011-8dc9-6045bdfe8e9c&ceid=359586), [ethnic cleansing](https://www.nrc.no/news/2025/july/west-bank-israeli-state-backed-settler-violence-drives-mass-displacement-of-palestinian-communities), and [annexation](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/7/23/israeli-parliament-approves-symbolic-motion-on-west-bank-annexation) plans in the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem. That outrage has been reflected in bolder actions by [world powers](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/gaza-suffering-has-reached-unimaginable-levels-say-26-foreign-ministers-2025-08-12/) and increasing calls for sanctions on Israel in the[U.S. Congress](https://www.commondreams.org/news/senate-arms-sales-israel).

"We are very pleased with Wespath's announcement. By not investing in Israeli bonds, we reduce our United Methodist complicity in Israel's genocide, apartheid regime, and its 77-year-old occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories," said Carol Garwood, UMKR Steering Committee Co-chair.​

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United Methodists for Kairos Response (UMKR), an independent grassroots justice movement in the United Methodist Church, is responding to Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth, a statement of faith and urgent call to action from Christians in Palestine. UMKR seeks – through nonviolent means and in partnership with Palestinian Christians – freedom, justice, and equality for all Palestinians and Israelis. Learn more at <https://www.kairosresponse.org>.

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