

Petition to the General Conference, 2008, The United Methodist Church
Promoting Peace through Ethical Investment

The following petition was submitted to General Conference by the Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA). It was not printed in the book of legislation that all delegates received prior to General Conference. According to the General Conference petitions secretary, the MFSA petition was combined with other similar petitions and listed as Petition Number 80132 (found on page 793 of *The Daily Christian Advocate*, Vol 2, Sec 1). MFSA has sent a letter to the petitions committee (which will meet on the day prior to General Conference), making the case that this petition differs substantially from the others with which it was combined and that it should be printed in its entirety for the delegates. If the Petitions Committee chooses not to do this, delegates still have the option of using the information in the MFSA petition to amend the petition they have before them.

PETITION TEXT:

WHEREAS, Resolution # 312 of the 2004 United Methodist *Book of Resolutions* affirms and supports Israel's right to exist within secure borders, the right of Palestinians to self-determination and the formation of a viable state, and a just solution for Palestinian refugees,

WHEREAS, there is an urgent and growing humanitarian crisis among the Palestinian people including lack of access to health care, extreme poverty, malnutrition, water shortages and the inability to farm agricultural lands,

WHEREAS resources that might be used for needed domestic programs in Israel are diverted instead to maintain the occupation of Palestine and the militarization of the Israeli society,

WHEREAS, according to the Israeli Human Rights group B'TSELEM ¹ as of September 2007, 1,024 Israelis and 4,274 Palestinians have died since September of 2000.

WHEREAS, we acknowledge and lament the pain and suffering of both peoples and cannot, in sound Christian conscience, be silent in the face of that suffering.

WHEREAS, the destruction of Palestinian homes and confiscation of Palestinian land is made possible by the use of armored bulldozers, helicopter gunships, tanks and other equipment that may have been purchased from the U.S. corporations in which the United Methodist Church may hold investments,

WHEREAS, by a vote of 877 to 19, the General Conference in 2004 voted to resolve that, "The United Methodist Church opposes continued military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, the confiscation of Palestinian land and water resources, the destruction of Palestinian homes, the continued building of illegal Jewish settlements, and any vision of a 'greater Israel' that includes the occupied territories and the whole of Jerusalem and its surroundings," (Book of Resolutions, 2004, #312).

¹ B'TSELEM: www.btselem.org Statistics from 9/29/2000 – 9/24/2007.

WHEREAS, United Methodist policy “prohibits investment in enterprises that have policies or practices that are so morally reprehensible that investment in these companies is not tolerated by the church.” [*Book of Resolutions*, 2004, #213.1, “Avoidance by Divestment”],

WHEREAS, The 2004 *Book of Discipline* states, “It shall be the policy of The United Methodist Church that all general boards and agencies, including the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, and all administrative agencies and institutions, including hospitals, homes, educational institutions, annual conferences, foundations, and local churches, shall, in the investment of money...endeavor to avoid investments that appear likely, directly or indirectly, to support violation of human rights...The boards and agencies are to give careful consideration to shareholder advocacy, including advocacy of corporate disinvestment” (2004 *Book of Discipline*, ¶ 716),

WHEREAS, many Annual conferences, in the past three years have adopted resolutions calling for General Conference and the whole United Methodist Church to divest from companies that support, and profit from, ongoing Israeli military occupation of Palestinian land and other longstanding violations of human rights,

WHEREAS, the New England Annual Conference in June 2007, after two years of extensive research, published a list of 20 companies that it recommended for divestment,

WHEREAS, divestment as a longstanding policy of The United Methodist Church and other ecumenical partners, constitutes a form of nonviolent, moral, economic means of seeking to change unjust corporate behavior – in this case, for ending all corporate support for Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territories,

WHEREAS, 40 years of military occupation and the continued seizing of more and more land for illegal settlements, constitutes both justice delayed and justice denied to more than two generations of Palestinians,

Therefore, be it resolved, that the 2008 General Conference calls upon the UMC General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, and all general boards, administrative agencies and institutions, including hospitals, homes, educational institutions, annual conferences, foundations, and local churches to undertake the following process of phased, selective divestment from companies that support the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and other violations of human rights in Palestine/Israel:

- 1) review their investment portfolios and within six months identify a list of companies that are supporting the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories or that violate the human rights of Palestinians or Israelis, and to publish, maintain and distribute the list and constantly re-evaluate the relationship of companies to the occupation and human rights violations in the region, guided by Resolution #213, “Investment Ethics” (2004 United Methodist *Book of Resolutions*, p. 554-559),

- 2) before placing a company on the list, the Board of Pensions in cooperation with other general agencies should write to that company, explain our concerns as United Methodists, and request a change in the company's relationship to the Israeli occupation.
- 3) If no change in policy is reported within 60 days as being taken or contemplated, the company's name should be placed immediately on the divestment list along with explanatory details and shared with the whole church;
- 4) Once a company is placed on the list, no further stock shall be purchased until that company ends its activities that support the occupation; United Methodist general agencies and institutions should use currently held stock for shareholder actions and other forms of socially responsible action in keeping with the **Investment Ethics** policy, #213 in the 2004 *Book of Resolutions*. If a company continues to refuse to change its activities then after two years, all remaining stock shall be divested until such time as the company ends its support of Israel's occupation;
- 5) That the General Boards of Pensions & Health Benefits, Global Ministries, and Church & Society, work in cooperation with the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical and human rights partners to coordinate nonviolent, moral efforts to end all corporate support for occupation and human rights violations in Palestine/Israel;

Be it further resolved that The United Methodist Church at the same time supports positive investments that promote capacity building in partnership with poor and marginalized communities in Palestine/Israel, that fulfill the Call to Action in 2004 Resolution #206 "Economic Justice for a New Millennium" (#206, p. 538),

Be it further resolved that we ask every United Methodist to prayerfully consider taking the same action with the personal and pension assets under their control, and request that other investment managers such as mutual fund companies, pension plans, and bank trustees to the same.

Be it further resolved that we affirm our longstanding support of Christian presence in the Holy Land through forms of economic support and investment.

DATE: October 26, 2007

SUBMITTED BY: Kathryn J. Johnson, on behalf of

PETITIONER IDENTIFICATION: Methodist Federation for Social Action