



## **More United Methodists Divest From Companies Supporting Israel's Occupation**

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**For Immediate Release**, June 20, 2013 – Four United Methodist annual or regional conferences (New England, Minnesota, Pacific Northwest and Upper New York) have voted this month to divest or have their funds divested from companies involved with Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. They joined five other conferences (West Ohio, New York, Northern Illinois, California Nevada and California Pacific) which had already taken similar action, bringing the total to nine regional bodies representing thousands of churches.

The companies targeted in the recent resolutions included Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, Hewlett Packard and, in one case, General Electric. All play significant roles in the occupation.

In addition, at least five other conferences<sup>i</sup> have asked the denomination's General Board of Pension and Health Benefits to divest its holdings in companies that profit from the occupation. Two more conferences, Susquehanna and Eastern Pennsylvania, established official task forces this month to examine the issue.

As United Methodists learn about Israel's land confiscation, home demolitions, and the segregated systems of transportation, water, and laws that discriminate against Christians and Muslims, there is a strong sense that the church must act. Palestinian Christians have called on churches around the world to help end the occupation of their land.<sup>ii</sup>

According to John Wagner of United Methodist Kairos Response, "Our denomination has a long history of upholding human rights around the world. The question now is whether we will bring the same resolve to the situation in the Holy Land, where our fellow Christians have asked for our help."

The divestment movement has gained momentum as illegal Israeli settlements expand on Palestinian land and Israeli attacks on Christians and Muslims increase. In 2012, Friends Fiduciary Committee, which handles investments for the Quaker denomination, divested from Caterpillar, Hewlett Packard and Veolia Environnement because of their involvement in the occupation. This spring, the Mennonite Church and the American Friends Service Committee declared twenty nine companies profiting from the occupation ineligible for investment.

Divestment is a nonviolent form of economic protest long used to encourage companies to end unjust practices. The church has engaged for years<sup>iii</sup> in dialog with Caterpillar, Hewlett Packard, and Motorola Solutions about their role in Israel's occupation. Those calling for divestment say it will strengthen the church in future negotiations by providing a consequence for ignoring the church's concerns.

In 2012, Caterpillar stock was downgraded by MSCI, a prestigious ratings agency, and then dropped from the socially responsible portfolios of the giant US pension fund, TIAA CREF, which divested \$72 million of Caterpillar stock. At that time the company's role in the occupation was given as a reason.<sup>iv</sup> Large European pension funds have also divested from companies involved with the occupation. According to Susanne Hoder of the New England Conference, "Divestment is a good move financially and an essential move morally for the church."

**About UMKR**: United Methodist Kairos Response is a global grassroots network of laity and clergy within the United Methodist Church working to end Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. Responding to an urgent call from Palestinian Christians, UMKR advocates principled investment decisions and consumer choices that will have an impact on the occupation. Through research, education and advocacy, UMKR supports non-violent means of securing a just peace for all the peoples of Israel and Palestine. For more information, see [www.kairosresponse.org](http://www.kairosresponse.org)

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<sup>i</sup> Virginia (2005), Rocky Mountain (2006), North Central NY (2006), Baltimore Washington (2007), Detroit (2010).

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.kairopalestine.ps/>

<sup>iii</sup> [https://www.kairosresponse.org/Corporate\\_Engagement\\_04-11.html](https://www.kairosresponse.org/Corporate_Engagement_04-11.html)

<sup>iv</sup> <http://forward.com/articles/158433/israel-was-key-issue-in-caterpillar-dump/>.