RESOURCES FOR MAKING SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE ECONOMIC DECISIONS

At the 2013 Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly, Resolution 01-13, “To Promote Peace, Justice and Reconciliation in the Holy Land,” was passed with regard to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. The Working Group on the Middle East has been asked to provide additional information and resource materials for individuals and local churches to engage in a commitment to socially responsible economic practices. These practices encourage investment in Palestinian economic endeavors as well as avoiding products and services by companies that benefit from or support Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestinian territory and water and land resources. This document is a response to that request.

Encourage Investment

There are several Lutheran organizations that provide services and economic benefits to Palestinians. They include:

- Augusta Victoria Hospital [www.avh.org/english.html](http://www.avh.org/english.html)
- Lutheran Schools [www.elcjhl.org/department-of-education/schools/](http://www.elcjhl.org/department-of-education/schools/)

Augusta Victoria Hospital and the Lutheran schools may be given donations through the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Send checks to ELCA Disaster Response, PO Box 71764, Chicago, IL 60694-1764 with either Augusta Victoria or Lutheran Schools in the memo line or contribute through the Disaster Response online address [www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Donate-Now.aspx](http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Donate-Now.aspx)
(Augusta Victoria Hospital is not separately listed on the website)

- Bright Stars of Bethlehem [www.brightstarsbethlehem.org/](http://www.brightstarsbethlehem.org/)

Bright Stars of Bethlehem is recognized by the US Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, associated with the Diyar Consortium, a group of Lutheran-based, ecumenically-oriented institutions serving the whole Palestinian community “from the womb to the tomb”, with an emphasis on children, youth, women and elders and a major employer in Bethlehem. Donations to Bright Stars of Bethlehem can be given through their website or by check to P.O. Box 185, Mount Morris, IL 61054; telephone 815-315-0682.
Investing in these three organizations will positively affect Palestinians and the Palestinian economy. Sending personal/private checks directly to any of these organizations’ locations in Palestine is not recommended because checks may be intercepted and taxed by Israeli authorities.

Fair trade Palestinians products may be purchased from links and information on this Peace Not Walls page: http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Peace-Not-Walls/Advocacy/Palestinian-crafts.aspx

Avoiding Products and Services

It is generally accepted that selective investment along with Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) of companies that benefit from or support Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestinian territory are effective, non-violent tools for social change. They were an important component that resulted in the end of apartheid in South Africa. The Working Group realizes these acts are controversial and have been characterized as anti-Semitic or anti-Israeli, which neither is. For instance, as reported by Fox News, the use of divestment as a persuasive measure to achieve change reportedly is being urged by Chicago Mayor Emanuel, in his latest bid to pressure gun manufacturers and those who do business with them, by asking mutual fund companies Wednesday to “blacklist” and divest from firearms-makers that oppose “common sense gun reforms.” This is a quote from a Fox News report found at this URL:

http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2013/01/30/emanuel-now-asks-mutual-funds-to-blacklist-divest-from-firearms-makers/

Resources that identify such companies are included in the following websites:

- www.whoprofits.org/
  This international oriented website contains extensive research on industries and companies that profit from the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. In the past few years, several of the companies researched on this site have been targeted by campaigns to avoid their products. Additional websites are referenced by this website.

- www.endtheoccupation.org/section.php?id=203
  This address from the website of End the Occupation contains a listing of campaigns that have targeted companies for boycotts or divestment.

- https://afsc.org/document/israel-palestine-no-buy-list
  This American Friends Service Committee web page links to their "no buy" list.
This meeting announcement gives some insight into the AFSC campaign that targets the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association – College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA/CREF), a Fortune 100 financial services organization, the leading retirement provider for people who work in the academic, research, medical and cultural fields. To their credit, last year, TIAA-CREF sold shares of Caterpillar stock held in its Social Choice accounts and have dropped its investment in SodaStream.

**Recommended Products to Avoid**

Local and national campaigns have targeted the following companies and services:

- **Ahava** (beauty products)
- **SodaStream** (water carbonation devices)
  Some of these companies’ products are manufactured in an illegal Israeli settlement.
- **Veolia** (providing segregated bus services in Palestine and Israel); and
- **Hewlett Packard** (automated biometric access control system)

The Working Group on the Middle East recommends that individuals and local congregations prayerfully consider boycotting one or more of these four companies' products.

The success of this approach in achieving social change is dependent on showing broad and deep support. The European Union (EU) has an extensive program promoting support among its member states/nations. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) devotes significant time and resources to this approach.

The United Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church (USA) have raised BDS at their national and/or worldwide assemblies in the past few years. We believe that there is sound theological, Biblical and historical tradition that fully justifies using how we buy and invest as nonviolent tools for creating a world that better aligns with the kingdom of God proclaimed by His Son, Jesus.

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