



INVESTING FOR PEACE

A GUIDE FOR LOCAL CHURCH
ACTIVISTS





GAZA STREET LIFE

A teenager from Gaza City pops a wheelie on his bike while showing a peace sign — June 2016

Image: © Amos Trust/Nick Welsh 2016

“ WE LEARNED IN SOUTH AFRICA THAT THE ONLY WAY TO END APARTHEID PEACEFULLY WAS TO FORCE THE POWERFUL TO THE TABLE THROUGH ECONOMIC PRESSURE.

ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU'S CALL TO THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)
JUNE 2014



A Palestinian flag flies over the Sumud Peace Camp in the South Hebron Hills.

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INTRODUCTION

“We, a group of Christian Palestinians, after prayer, reflection and an exchange of opinion, cry out from within the suffering in our country, under the Israeli occupation with a cry of hope in the absence of all hope, a cry full of prayer and faith.”

These are words from **A MOMENT OF TRUTH** (2009) by Kairos Palestine to the international community asking for creative and peaceful resistance strategies and shows of costly solidarity:

“Palestinian civil organisations, as well as international organisations, NGOs and certain religious institutions call on individuals, companies and states to engage in divestment ... These advocacy campaigns must be carried out with courage, openly and sincerely.”

Many European church development agencies recognise this need to act decisively against Israel's settlement policies. In their report **TRADING AWAY PEACE** (2012), they state:

“there is much more that national governments and the EU can do to ensure their policies do not directly or indirectly support settlements and the associated injustices.”

We believe that all of us have a critical role to play in this quest for a just peace. Members of the British Christian community responded to Kairos Palestine with **TIME FOR ACTION** (2012); a commitment to support and promote such strategies to bring about the end of the occupation of the West Bank including East Jerusalem and the blockade on Gaza.

In light of this, we ask for the UK Churches to implement morally responsible investment policies to ensure that companies that they procure from and invest in do not profit from, or advance the occupation.

We in the UK are joining a worldwide movement on morally responsible investment. Several churches globally have already applied policies which have resulted in the exclusion from their investments of companies profiting from the occupation of Palestinian territory.

This booklet seeks to outline the need for and ways of approaching morally responsible investment. See how you and your community can support this important campaign in the ‘ACT NOW’ section on page 13.

THE LEGAL CASE

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets out that all persons, no matter whom and no matter where, have the right to freedom of thought, to live free from torture, to move freely, to organise peacefully, to be represented politically, and many other important rights.

These rights form the basis of international law, which sets out clear guidelines on the responsibility of states to uphold human rights. This applies everywhere, especially in cases of conflict and occupation.

Israel's occupation and the practices associated with it break a wide-range of international laws. These include, but are not limited to:

- The development of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem, which violates the Fourth Geneva Convention and constitutes a war crime.
- The continued construction of the Separation Wall on Palestinian land, which was declared illegal by the International Court of Justice.

- The forceful transfer of Palestinians from their homes, including children as young as 12, taken to Israel and held in prison without trial, is a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and constitutes a war crime.
- The exploitation of Palestinian natural resources such as land, offshore minerals, quarries & water is considered pillage and prohibited by the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Hague Regulations. International law specifies that pillage is prohibited for the occupier, as well as by private companies which may be given access by the occupying power.

According to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, companies have an obligation “*to avoid causing or contributing to adverse human rights impacts*”.

This means that if they are involved, even secondarily, in any of these violations, they can be held liable. The UN has specified that civil society has a key role to play in helping to make sure that these standards are upheld.

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Our goal, as a part of civil society, is to help Palestinians achieve their rights by insisting on Israel's compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

We can do so by making sure that our own institutions are not assisting or participating in human rights violations directly, or indirectly, by investing in companies that do.

Morally responsible investment is a part of our ethical and legal duty to prevent unlawful harm to people.

THE ETHICAL CASE

"Where you put your money, there your heart will be also." MATTHEW 6:21

The Bible makes it clear that the Earth is the Lord's and all the resources placed within it. We are stewards of these resources and our use of them is not to be driven by our self-interest and our own careless consumption, but by care for the wellbeing of our neighbour, as well as ourselves.

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We therefore have a moral obligation to use our resources and investments to promote human flourishing, to support justice and to end oppression.

We should not be investing in activities that cause harm to others or are deemed illegal under IHL.

There are multiple examples of violations of human rights in the context of Israel's occupation. IHL specifies that people living under occupation must be protected until the occupation comes to an end.

It is illegal to build on or confiscate their land. It is illegal to kill or harm innocent civilians.

It is forbidden to use collective punishment, degrading treatment and torture. It is illegal to transfer parts of an occupying powers' civilian population into occupied territory. IHL also forbids the acquisition of territory through war.

“ WE AS CHRISTIAN PALESTINIANS,
AND ESPECIALLY CHRISTIAN WOMEN,
CALL ON PEOPLE TO STOP SUPPORTING
COMPANIES WHO PROFIT FROM THE
OCCUPATION OF PALESTINE AND THE
DISPOSSESSION OF THE PALESTINIAN
PEOPLE.

MIRA RIZEK, GENERAL SECRETARY
YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
OF PALESTINE (YWCA)



A section of the illegal Israeli Separation Wall
in Bethlehem — August 2016.

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Earning money through investment in companies whose products and services are used in such a way as to violate International Law and human rights is equivalent to profiting from unlawful acts and from the oppression of others.

Investment in such companies can be seen as condoning the harm of civilians under occupation; and ignoring the human rights violations caused by illegal Israeli settlement policies. Investment in such companies enables the government of Israel to sustain the ongoing violation of human rights.

Continuing such investments, once the facts are brought to our attention, constitutes deliberate condoning of these practices. We have a moral duty to withdraw our investments in these companies.

WHAT ARE WE ASKING CHURCHES TO DO?

- To fully disclose financial information and lists of their investments in companies and businesses, in a simple and coherent way.
- To identify any companies in their investment portfolio which are currently profiting from situations in which international law is violated, including illegal exploitation of natural resources, illegal construction of the separation barrier and its related infrastructure and illegal settlements.
- To put in place a comprehensive investment screening process, specifically relating to violations of international law to identify companies in their existing portfolio profiting from illegal activity and to prevent future investments in such companies.
- To ask churches to review their current policy of corporate engagement with companies in their investment portfolio found to be profiting from violations of international law. To make it time-bound, structured. This may potentially result in a change of investment strategy.

ACT NOW: WHAT CAN I DO?

Together we can take effective action in support of human rights and justice for Palestinians. As individuals we can take bold positions, but as a collective, we can really affect change.

We have seen in recent years how churches around the world have successfully applied policies to exclude companies which profit from the occupation of the Palestinian territory from their investments.

STAGE 1.

RAISE AWARENESS AND CREATE A SUPPORT BASE AT LOCAL LEVEL

- Use the content of this leaflet to raise awareness in your local church about the opportunities of morally responsible investment. From pocket money to pensions, your money is doing something good or ill. It is likely that members of your church are savers, members of a Trade Union, members of pension funds or give/tithe money to the church... when we entrust our money to others it gives us some power that we can use to uphold human rights.

“ BUILDING PEACE IS DIFFICULT,
BUT LIVING WITHOUT PEACE IS
A CONSTANT TORMENT. THE MEN
AND WOMEN OF THESE LANDS,
AND OF THE ENTIRE WORLD,
ALL OF THEM, ASK US TO BRING
BEFORE GOD THEIR FERVENT
HOPES FOR PEACE.

POPE FRANCIS, VISIT TO THE HOLY LAND
— MAY 2014



Banksy's 'Peave Dove' in Bethlehem,
August 2016.

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- Hold events with speakers or films related to your concerns for Palestine to help raise this issue and make the case.
- Reflect on the power of responsible investment by discussing the quotes from Archbishop Desmond Tutu.
- Find out if other church leaders or networks have spoken on this. Share this in your own church.
- Decide how your church community could take this issue further. For example, you could form small group who would be willing to take things further in your church. (See more information about this in 'Stage 2' on page 16.)

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STAGE 2.

START CAMPAIGNING WITH YOUR CHURCH AT NATIONAL LEVEL

You'll need to outline a strategy with a clear aim and a set of realistic steps on how to get there:

- Start by mapping out what you know/need to know about your church.
- Does your denomination have an ethical investment policy? If so, does it include anything about Palestine/Israel?
- Who are the key decision makers within your denomination when it comes to investments? How can you contact this group?
- Is there a regional/diocesan group or representative for this work?

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STAGE 3.

APPLY PRESSURE

Now that you've got some support and identified who you need to talk to, it's time to focus your action:

- Share the concerns expressed in this briefing with any targets you've identified in your denomination. Can you write to them or ask for a meeting?
- Ask what they're doing already on this issue and share with them what we're asking churches to do in Section 4 of this briefing. Be open to listening to their response and having a positive conversation with them.
- Ask how decisions are made in your denomination and who they suggest you speak to so you can understand the process for change better.
- You can rally support for your cause by, for example, creating a petition calling for a morally responsible investment policy towards the Palestinian territory and Israel which could be used by local churches in addressing national structures.

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- Keep a clear log of your actions and the responses you get. This information will be invaluable in any public or press work you may do, and in helping you decide what steps you take next.
- Be prepared to be persistent! It can take many attempts to set up meetings and frustration is a common feeling when pushing for change. Change can take a long time, but each step will take us closer to fulfilling our moral duty.

At a national level, we'll also need a lot of support in moments of escalation. Sign up for regular email updates at SABEEL-KAIROS.ORG.UK to find out about national days of action and get more information.

And last but not least, let us know what you're doing! It may be that there are other groups in your denomination already taking action on this that we can link you up with. Please email us at info@friendsofsabeel.org.uk

We can also give you advice with the action you are taking and be a support and friend to you throughout your journey.

“ I WAS PROUD TO WORK TOGETHER WITH CHRISTIAN ALLIES IN THEIR CAMPAIGNS TO BRING THEIR CHURCH'S INVESTMENT POLICIES IN LINE WITH THEIR VALUES OF HUMAN RIGHTS, PEACE, AND DIGNITY. THESE ARE VALUES THAT WE SHARE.

RABBI ALISSA WISE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR, JEWISH VOICE FOR PEACE



Painted tyres at Sumud Peace Camp in the South Hebron Hills — October 2017.

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“ PEACE IS NOT THE PRODUCT OF TERROR OR FEAR. PEACE IS NOT THE SILENCE OF CEMETERIES. PEACE IS NOT THE SILENT RESULT OF VIOLENT REPRESSION.

PEACE IS THE GENEROUS, TRANQUIL CONTRIBUTION OF ALL TO THE GOOD OF ALL. PEACE IS DYNAMISM. PEACE IS GENEROSITY. IT IS A RIGHT AND IT IS A DUTY.

ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ROMERO
7TH JANUARY, 1978



Sabeel-Kairos
Taking Action for Palestine

amos  **trust**