

Proposed Business Resolution for General Assembly 2016

Divestment from Corporations Complicit in the Violation of Palestinian Rights

Summary:

Israel's nearly half-century-old military and governance systems for maintaining its occupation dominate all aspects of Palestinians' daily lives, leaving them powerless, as a people without a country, without the rule of law, and without rights, including the most fundamental human and legal rights.

These abuses violate the basic principles of our Unitarian Universalist faith. Unitarian Universalists should therefore neither support nor seek to profit from such abuses. This Resolution calls upon the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) to act in accordance with its principles by divesting and refraining from purchasing securities of five major corporations that directly profit from or support the occupation and its abuses of Palestinian human rights: Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, HP Inc., Hewlett Packard Enterprise, and G4S.

These corporations are each complicit in severe abuses of human and legal rights. They supply the Israeli military with tools and services for demolition of homes by the military, biometric identification, expansion of Israeli settlements, surveillance of Palestinians, seizure of Palestinian farms and orchards, and prisons that hold children and political persons without due process.

Other major religious denominations have acted in accordance with their consciences to end their indirect support of the abuses of Palestinian human rights under the Israeli occupation. The Presbyterian Church USA is divesting from Caterpillar, Hewlett Packard, and Motorola Solutions; and the United Church of Christ is divesting from these same companies, plus G4S. Many other religious organizations have made similar commitments to divest.

Unitarian Universalists have expressed their opposition to Israel's military occupation in many ways over many years. The General Assembly called for an end to the occupation in a General Resolution adopted in 1982 and also in an Action of Immediate Witness adopted in 2002. It is time for Unitarian Universalists to cease investing in companies that profit from human rights abuses and to join with other faith and secular groups in helping to end the human rights abuses suffered by the Palestinian people.

Therefore, this Resolution calls upon the UUA to: (a) refrain from purchasing shares in Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, HP Inc., Hewlett Packard Enterprise, and G4S; (b) engage in shareholder activism with these corporations as it deems appropriate; and (c) divest from ownership of stock in these corporations in accordance with its fiduciary responsibilities if the process of shareholder activism fails despite reasonable efforts. This Resolution will have accomplished its work when these corporations end their direct profiting from or support for the human and legal rights violations associated with the Israeli occupation.

Text of the Resolution

WHEREAS, Unitarian Universalist congregations covenant by our First and Second Principles to honor the inherent worth and dignity of all persons and to affirm and promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations; and by our Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Principles to uphold the use of the democratic process, the goals of peace, justice, and world community, and respect for the interdependent web of all existence; and

WHEREAS, Israel's five decades of military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem¹ deprives Palestinians of their humanity, while dehumanizing their occupiers. Examples of such abuse include: the collective punishment of entire families and towns for actions by individuals; demolition of homes; imprisonment of men, women, and children for months and longer, often in solitary confinement, without charges or trial—the most basic attributes of due process; cruel and arbitrary restrictions on movement, preventing married couples from living together; separating family members from each other; preventing people from leaving their villages; causing truckloads of locally farmed produce to rot after standing for hours in the summer sun at checkpoints; diversion and draining of aquifers; preventing farming; and severely limiting access to water, health care, and education;²

WHEREAS, Unitarian Universalists recognize our interdependency and connections with Palestinians and Israelis by virtue of our humanity and the fact that our United States tax dollars³ and certain corporations in which we invest provide essential support for the occupation; and

WHEREAS, the UUA guidelines for Socially Responsible Investment state, "We also favor investments in companies that demonstrate positive environmental practices; respect for human rights, labor rights, and other legal and ethical standards; ...We seek to avoid companies that perform poorly in these areas;" and

WHEREAS, in 1985, the UUA General Assembly passed a Business Resolution calling on the UUA and Unitarian Universalist congregations to divest from corporations doing business in South Africa to

1 See:

- a) B'Tselem, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, <http://www.btselem.org/>
- b) Amnesty International – Israel and Palestine, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/Israel-and-Palestine> .
- c) Al Haq, Palestinian Human Rights Organization, <http://www.alhaq.org/>
- d) United Nations Human Rights Council, "2014 Report on the situation of Human Rights in the Occupied Territories," <http://www.refworld.org/docid/531439c44.htmlh>
- e) For information on treatment of children in Israeli military detention see Military Court Watch at <http://www.militarycourtwatch.org/> and No Way to Treat a Child at <http://www.nowaytotreatachild.org/> .

2 The occupied Palestinian territories are defined in this Resolution and by recognized authorities as including the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem.

- a) United Nations resolutions consider the Occupied Palestinian Territory to include East Jerusalem and call for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from the territories. *See* United Nations Resolution 242 at <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/un/un242.htm> .
- b) Israel is considered an occupying power of Gaza because of its almost total control over the borders, sea, and air space over the Gaza Strip, and its total control over the movement of all people and things to and from the Gaza Strip. *See* Amnesty International information at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE15/007/2009/en/>. The people of Gaza are imprisoned in a territorial area that is smaller than the City of Detroit, Michigan.

3 The United States Government currently provides about \$3.7 billion annually in military aid to Israel <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33222.pdf> .

help end the human rights abuses of the apartheid regime, now recognized as an action that helped restore the dignity and humanity of all South Africans, including white South Africans;⁴ and

WHEREAS, Unitarian Universalists have expressed their opposition to Israel's military occupation and its associated human rights abuses in many ways over many years including passage by the UUA General Assembly of a General Resolution in 1982 and an Action of Immediate Witness in 2002;⁵ and

WHEREAS, Caterpillar, HP Inc., Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Motorola, and G4S profit directly from and support the occupation and its associated abuses. Caterpillar provides Israel's military with specialized bulldozers, including unmanned bulldozers, to demolish Palestinian civilian homes and property. HP Inc. and Hewlett Packard Enterprise provide IT services and systems to the Israeli military as well as identification systems to monitor and control the Palestinian population. Motorola Solutions provides invisible radar fences, surveillance, and communication equipment to Israel's army. G4S provides security equipment and services to Israel's prisons and interrogation centers, West Bank settlements, and military checkpoints;⁶ and

WHEREAS, the UUA's investments in these corporations make it complicit to the extent it seeks to profit from violations of our basic Unitarian Universalist principles and values;⁷ and

WHEREAS, many of the abuses of Palestinian rights, such as those detailed above, are illegal under international law, and Israel's annexation, confiscation, and colonization of Palestinian lands are illegal under the United Nations Charter and the Fourth Geneva Convention;⁸ and

WHEREAS, there will not be real peace and security for the people of Israel while Israel continues to violate the fundamental rights of Palestinians; and

4 UUs have supported three statements on Israel/Palestine:

a) In 1982, the UUA General Assembly passed a General Resolution which in part called for, Opposition to the creation and maintenance of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and continued commitment to the United Nations Resolution 242 under which Israel should withdraw from lands conquered in 1967 . . ." See <http://www.uua.org/statements/ united-states-policy-relation-israeli-palestinian-arab-conflict> .

b) In 2002, the UUA General Assembly passed an Action of Immediate Witness which called for: "Freedom from occupation and equal rights for all, including the right to exist in peace and security; Opposition to Israeli settlements, land confiscations, house demolitions, and other violations of international law; Opposition to all attacks on civilians, whether by suicide bombers, F-16 or helicopter gunships or any other means;" See <http://www.uua.org/statements/toward-peace-and-justice-middle-east> .

c) In 2002, 240 Unitarian Universalist ministers signed a petition calling for consideration of the peace proposal by Saudi Arabia that included Israel's return to the 1967 borders. See <http://uujme.org/home/Home/Resolutions-of-the-Unitarian-Universalist-Associat/2002-Petition-from-UU-Minister>

5 For comprehensive and current information on the involvement of corporations named in the resolution see the American Friends Service Committee database, at <http://investigate.afsc.org/> .

6 See the UUA 1985 UUA Business Resolution on opposition to apartheid in South Africa at <http://www.uua.org/statements/uua-opposition-apartheid> .

7 As of December 31, 2015 the UUA Common Endowment Fund held stock in Caterpillar, HP Inc., Hewlett Packard Enterprise, and Motorola Solutions, but did not hold stock in G4S.

8 The United Nations Security Council has passed more than thirty resolutions demanding the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories including East Jerusalem and condemning the transfer of Israeli citizens into the occupied territories, the latter being a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. See <http://www.militarycourtwatch.org/page.php?id=w5Vc8BWPAQa401322A5Bh8sJaEXA> .

WHEREAS, other major religious denominations and organizations have acted in accordance with their consciences by committing to end their investments in the abuse of Palestinian rights. The Presbyterian Church (USA) is divesting from Caterpillar, Hewlett Packard, and Motorola Solutions; and the United Church of Christ is divesting from these same companies, plus G4S. The Friends Fiduciary Corporation, eleven conferences of the Methodist Church, the World Council of Churches, the Church of England, the Church of Ireland, and the Australian Council of Churches are divesting or supporting divestment from one or more corporations complicit in the human rights abuses of Israel's occupation; and

WHEREAS, we as Unitarian Universalists seek to join with other religious and secular organizations, as proud leaders and supporters of an international movement to end the abuses of Palestinian rights by selective divestment from specific corporations;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this General Assembly calls upon the UUA to refrain from purchasing securities of Caterpillar, HP Inc., Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Motorola Solutions, and G4S; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the UUA shall direct Fund fiduciaries to engage in shareholder activism with Caterpillar, HP Inc., Hewlett Packard Enterprise, and Motorola Solutions,⁹ as deemed appropriate by them, and divest from them in such manner and at such times as they deem to be in the best interests of the UUA if shareholder activism fails to achieve voluntary compliance after reasonable effort. Fund fiduciaries shall exercise their discretion in determining the appropriate balance between shareholder activism and the magnitude and urgency of the human and legal rights crises that divestment is intended to help end, with due regard for the UUA's determination to end its investments in Israel's perpetuation of these abuses. This Resolution will have accomplished its work when these corporations cease to profit from or end their support for the human and legal rights violations described above; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the President or the Treasurer of the UUA shall provide a progress report to each General Assembly beginning in 2017 and each General Assembly thereafter, on the status of divestment efforts and/or shareholder activism, until the earlier of either (a) the above-referenced corporations cease supporting human and legal rights abuses in occupied Palestine; or (b) the UUA divests all securities in those corporations.

⁹ The Fund listed no holdings in G4S at the time this Resolution was submitted.