

A CALL FOR MORALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT A Non-violent Strategy to Ending the Occupation

Summary

The movement toward a resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict through nonviolent means is now accelerating. There is a window of opportunity to reach a just settlement. In spite of past setbacks and much skepticism, many people on both sides of the conflict cling to the hope for peace. As people of faith, the God we believe in is the God of hope and peace. We must not give in to despair.

Regardless of whether this new opportunity bears fruit in the political arena, we believe that serious ethical and moral issues pertaining to the occupation still need to be addressed by people of faith. Hence the challenge is for churches to consider seriously the issue of **morally responsible investment**.

The facts of the creation of the State of Israel are well known. Israel took 78% of historic Palestine in 1948. Palestinians rejected the creation of Israel because it was founded on the denial and violation of Palestinian rights, but in 1988, for the sake of peace, the Palestinian National Council accepted UN resolution 242 thus clearly expressing its willingness to recognize the state of Israel provided it withdraw from all occupied territories. The same desire for a just peace prevails and is possible within the scope of international law.

As a Christian organization, Sabeel believes in faithfulness to the God of love, justice, mercy and peace. There are moral reasons for responsible investment that will help move the political situation toward a just resolution. From a faith perspective, we call attention to the ethical and moral imperatives that must guard and guide all people and institutions including governments. We believe that in the international arena these imperatives are best embodied in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law*, which includes the Fourth Geneva Convention.

There are multiple examples of violations of human rights in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Under international law, occupied people are to be protected. Land is not to be confiscated or built on by the occupiers. Collective punishment, torture and degrading treatment is unlawful. Transferring the occupying power's civilian population into occupied territories is illegal.

Sabeel believes that we must recognize and name the evils that are facing the peoples of Israel-Palestine on both sides of the conflict. God calls us to value all people and stand up for all who are oppressed regardless of their nationality. Christian Churches have a God given responsibility to act. At a minimum we cannot ourselves participate even indirectly in supporting and enabling unjust policies. In this context we need to consider the following:

- **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 oppression of others.

- Investment in such companies can be seen as condoning the harm of innocent civilians under occupation and the illegal Israeli settlement policies that lead to human rights violations.
- Investment in such companies enables the government of Israel to sustain the ongoing violation of human rights of innocent civilians.
- Continuing such investments, once the facts are brought to our attention, constitutes deliberate condoning of the evil practices.

The legal call for Morally Responsible Investment is clear in the *Fourth Geneva Convention* to which Israel is a Signatory; The International Court of Justice Ruling on the Wall (July 9, 2004), and more than 100 U.N. resolutions. (See full document below.) We are concerned that these lawful bodies and their judgments not be delegitimized.

The 'facts on the ground' are growing worse daily. Israel has rejected the appeals of the international community. As Israeli civil rights lawyer, Shamai Leibovitz said, "As an Israeli thoroughly familiar with Israeli politics, I believe that selective economic pressure is the most effective way to end the brutal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and bring some peace and security Israelis and Palestinians. If the Jewish people are ever to become 'a light of all nations' (Isaiah 42:6) and return to their core values of justice and human dignity, Israelis and Jews of conscience must call now for effective measures to end the occupation of millions of Palestinians."

Therefore, Sabeel recommends:

That churches exert pressure on companies and corporations to divest from businesses that support the occupation.

When such pressures fail to yield positive results, Sabeel calls on Churches to divest from companies and corporations that do not respond and comply with morally responsible investment.

For a full copy of the text including further information on the current programs and work of Sabeel, please see www.sabeel.org. If you have any questions about this document or have other questions, please be in touch with our office at: sabeel@sabeel.org