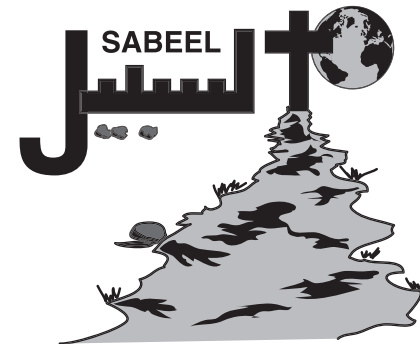


Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center
www.sabeel.org

A CALL FOR MORALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT:

A Nonviolent Response to the Occupation



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is acting in ways consistent with its own policy statements on the Middle East, with our participation in the wider Anglican Communion, and its call to peacemaking in the world.

Christian Council of Sweden has appealed to their member churches and their aid organisations to participate in the campaign, **Support a Just Peace in the Middle East - End the Occupation of Palestine. Many churches and organisations support this campaign, among them Caritas, Diakonia, Evangelical Alliance, Swedish Organisation for Individual Relief (SOIR), YWCA-YMCA, The Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation, Student Sweden Christian Movement, Church of Sweden, Church of Sweden Women, Mission Covenant Church of Sweden and Baptist union of Sweden. The Swedish campaign is a response from churches and Christian organisations in Sweden to the invitation from the World Council of Churches to work towards an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories.

The campaign includes:

- Co-ordinated, focused work to raise opinion and lobbying
- Support for the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme, EAPPI.
- Exerting political pressure to make the EU suspend its free trade agreement with Israel.
- Specific action: Boycotting produce from the illegal settlements on occupied territory.

*** New Profile aims to transform Israel from a highly militaristic society to a civilian society dedicated to equality of gender and ethnicity and firmly based on universal human rights. One of several characteristics of militarism is the use of force to obtain political objectives. New Profile deems Israel's occupation of the Palestinians to be a use of force to obtain the political objective of creating the 'greater Israel.'

New Profile opposes the Occupation on three counts:

1. Its destruction of Palestinian life, society, land, and property.
2. Its role in maintaining militarism in Israel.
3. Its erosion of Israel's socio-economic and moral fabric.

We therefore seek non-violent means of ending this catastrophic Occupation. One such means is using economic sanctions to pressure the government to change its policy. To this end New Profile welcomes and supports selective divestment aimed at divesting from companies that contribute to the continuation of the Occupation by supplying arms, other equipment, or staff.

We welcome all such endeavors, believing firmly that ending the occupation is not only to the benefit of the Palestinians but also necessary for the welfare of Israel, its youth, and future generations. Over 20,000 Israeli soldiers have died in its wars since 1948. Enough. It is time to beat our swords into ploughshares, to bring security to Israel by giving the Palestinians their freedom and recognizing their absolute right to exist, and to build a future for today's Israeli youth and generations to come by creating a civilian society whose underpinnings are equality of gender and ethnicity and universal human rights.

New Profile: Movement for the Civilization of Israeli Society

A CALL FOR MORALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT: A Nonviolent Response to the Occupation

The movement towards 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.

Political Background

The State of Israel was established in 1948 on 78% of historic Palestine leading to the displacement of most of its Palestinian inhabitants, who became refugees. Since 1967, Israel has occupied the Palestinian territories – the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. This area constitutes approximately 22% of historic Palestine and has a population of almost four million people. During this period, Israel has consistently refused to implement United Nations Resolutions and International Law. Israel stands in violation of over 60 UN resolutions and has been protected by a United States veto over 30 times.

For many years the Palestinians rejected the establishment of the state of Israel because it was founded on the denial and violation of Palestinians' rights. In 1988, and 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 the occupied territories.

Similarly, in 2002 the Beirut Arab League Summit officially extended full recognition to Israel on condition that it withdraw from all occupied Arab land. Israel rejected the offer without even considering it officially

We believe that peace is not only possible but within reach. The peace we are talking about guarantees the security and territorial integrity of the state of Israel within its 1967 borders and allows the Palestinians to establish their own independent and sovereign state on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Jerusalem will have to be shared and all other issues can find appropriate solutions based on international law.

Moral Reasons for Responsible Investment

Sabeel is a Christian organization. As such, it emphasizes the importance of faithfulness to God – the God of love, justice, mercy, and peace. All people are created in God’s image and are loved equally and unconditionally. We also believe that the creator God has sanctified humanity through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. The dignity of every human being is precious in the eyes of God.

Furthermore, God in Christ has given us life. “...in him was life, and the life was the light of all people” (John 1:4). God’s will for all people is, therefore, to have life and to have it “more abundantly.” Jesus said, “I have come in order that you might have life – life in all its fullness” (John 10:10). For people to enjoy life in its fullness, they must live in peace and justice, in dignity and harmony with each other. Their God-given human worth must be respected. We must do everything we can to remove any obstacles that prevent human beings from achieving life in its fullness. God must be sovereign over all aspects of our lives including our politics, work, and investments.

From this faith perspective, we call attention to the ethical and moral imperatives that must guard and guide all people and institutions including governments. As people of faith we see them expressed in biblical injunctions such as “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31) and “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you”(Matthew 7:12). We also believe that the best embodiments of such principles as they apply in the international arena are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, which includes the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as other universally accepted principles of international law protecting human rights and human dignity.

There are multiple examples of violations of human rights in the Israel-Palestine conflict. International Humanitarian Law specifies that people living under occupation (like the Palestinians on the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem) 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 (whether Palestinian or Israeli). It is forbidden to employ collective punishment, degrading treatment and torture. It is illegal to transfer parts of an occupying powers’ civilian population into occupied territories. International Law also forbids the acquisition of territory through war.

From the standpoint of faith, we believe that we must recognize and name the evils that are facing the peoples of Israel-Palestine on both sides of the conflict. We must act responsibly under God. God calls us to value all people and stand up for all who are suffering and oppressed regardless of their nationality. Such a stand leads us to responsible stewardship in the investments we make as individuals, churches, institutions and corporations. As Christians we object to all those

Resources for further study:

Christian Statements:

- World Council of Churches Central Committee minute: www.oikoumene.org/GEN_PUB_5_Second_report_o.779.0.html#1573
- Episcopal Church in the United States of America: www.episcopalchurch.org*
- Global Ministries [the Common Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ] document "The Palestinians, Israel, and the Churches' Economic Leverage": <http://www.globalministries.org/>
- Presbyterian Church (USA) Statements on Ending the Occupation and Divestment: www.pcusa.org/israelandjewishrelations/divestment.htm
- HOPP Campaign for a Just Peace in the Middle East, End the Occupation of Palestine, Sweden. www.svenskakyrkan.se/HOPP. **
- The Network of Christian Organizations in Bethlehem district (NCOB) Statement (www.holylandtrust.org)

Jewish Statements:

- Israel Coalition against House Demolition Call for Sanctions: www.icahd.org
- Not in My Name Statement in support of Selective Divestment: www.nimn.org
- Jewish Voice for Peace in support of divestment: www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org
- European Jews for a Just Peace statement on illegality of settlement products: www.ejpp.org
- New Profile: Movement for the Civilization of Israeli Society: www.newprofile.org***

For a complete list of products manufactured in illegal Israeli settlements:

www.gush-shalom.org

For additional information on the struggle against the occupation:

www.endtheoccupation.org

*Episcopal Church in the United States has stated the following:

It is the intent of the Social Responsibility in Investments Committee to undertake the following:

- Over the next twelve months, SRI will investigate what corporate actions (including corporate dialogues and shareholder resolutions) might be appropriate with (1) companies that contribute to the infrastructure of Israel's ongoing occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and (2) companies that have connections to organizations responsible for violence against Israel.
- In doing this work, SRI will work in partnership with the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East and with the Anglican Peace and Justice Network, the latter of which is preparing a report for the Anglican Consultative Council in June 2005. It will also seek dioceses and congregations that may be interested in being partners in corporate actions designed to promote peace in the Middle East.
- In doing this work, SRI will also seek input from the wider church, from ecumenical and interfaith partners (including the American Jewish community), and from Jewish and Palestinian groups in the Middle East.
- SRI will report back to the Executive Council with recommendations on this work at its October 2005 meeting.

The Social Responsibility in Investments Committee—which while monitoring what other church bodies like the Presbyterian Church (USA) are doing, understands that its primary responsibility is to implement existing Episcopal Church policies—will interact with as many groups as possible to better understand the underlying issues and how corporate actions in the Middle East may be impediments to peace. Further, the emphasis of this process is not likely to be divestment from companies whose actions are morally questionable, but rather engagement with them. In so doing, the Episcopal Church

- *For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body* (1Corinthians 12:12-13).
- *If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it* (1Corinthians 12:26).
- We are called by God to work for justice: *He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* (Micah 6:8).
- We are called by Christ to work for peace: *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God* (Matthew 5:9).

We are, therefore, pleading with our brothers and sisters all over the world to invest their God-given material resources in morally responsible activities that would contribute to the achievement of a just peace in Israel-Palestine. Furthermore, we ask them to continue to pray for all the inhabitants of our land so that peace will be achieved and the way for reconciliation will be opened. We are reminded of the words of the Latin American theologian, Leonardo Boff: “If we want to serve the true God, we must break out of the circle of self-absorption and pay heed to the bloodied faces of our fellow *human beings*. *If we do not share life with the oppressed, we do not share life with God.*”

A Closing Prayer for Guidance

Almighty God, who created us in your own image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

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who carry out violent, unethical, immoral, and illegal actions. We 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, therefore, we need to consider the following:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Investment in such companies enables the government of Israel to sustain the ongoing violation of human rights of innocent civilians.
4. Continuing such investments, once the facts are brought to our attention, constitutes deliberate condoning of the evil practices.

*[God] judges the nations with justice.
 The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed
 a place of safety in times of trouble...
 God remembers those who suffer;
 He does not forget their cry,
 and he punishes those who wrong them...
 The needy will not always be neglected;
 the hope of the poor will not be crushed forever”
 (Psalm 9:8-9, 12, 18).*

The Legal Call for Morally Responsible Investment

Harm against all innocent civilians is unjustified and a serious violation of human rights. According to International Law countries are not allowed to cause harm to populations under their control. The de-development, impoverishment, and hardships inflicted on the Palestinians as an occupied people cannot be ignored. Our goal is to insist on Israel’s compliance with international and humanitarian law. Morally responsible investment is a means of enacting our obligation to prevent any assistance or participation in the violations of these basic human rights. All those who believe in a just resolution to the conflict also have an ethical duty to prevent unlawful harm to civilians.

- It is clearly demonstrated that Israel, in its continued occupation and the practices associated with the occupation, is in open

violation of International Law and specifically the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Violations of these articles, specifically the grave breaches (Art. 147) have been defined as war crimes.

Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 (to which Israel is a signatory) states:

Article 1: The High Contracting Parties undertake to respect and to ensure respect for the present Convention in all circumstances.

Article 27: Protected persons are entitled, in all circumstances, to respect for their persons, their honour, their family rights, their religious convictions and practices, and their manners and customs. They shall at all times be humanely treated, and shall be protected especially against all acts of violence or threats thereof and against insults and public curiosity.

Article 47: Protected persons who are in occupied territory shall not be deprived, in any case or in any manner whatsoever, of the benefits of the present Convention by any change introduced, as the result of the occupation of a territory, into the institutions or government of the said territory, nor by any agreement concluded between the authorities of the occupied territories and the Occupying Power, nor by any annexation by the latter of the whole or part of the occupied territory.

Article 147: Grave breaches to which the preceding Article relates shall be those involving any of the following acts, if committed against persons or property protected by the present Convention: willful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, including biological experiments, willfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, unlawful deportation or transfer or unlawful confinement of a protected person, compelling a protected person to serve in the forces of a hostile Power, or willfully depriving a protected person of the rights of fair and regular trial prescribed in the present Convention, taking of hostages and extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly.

- Out of this follows the concept of Ownership Responsibility. Within the structure of corporations, shareholders are

- **encourage** member churches to work for peace in new ways and to give serious consideration to economic measures that are equitable, transparent and non-violent;
- **persuade** member churches to keep in good contact with sister churches embarking on such initiatives with a view to support and counsel one another;
- **urge** the establishment of more and wider avenues of engagement between Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities pursuing peace;
- **remind** churches with investment funds that they have an opportunity to use those funds responsibly in support of peaceful solutions to conflict. Economic pressure, appropriately and openly applied, is one such means of action.

“The end of apartheid stands as one of the crowning accomplishments of the past century, but we would not have succeeded without the help of international pressure – in particular the divestment movement of the 1980s. Divestment from apartheid South Africa was fought by ordinary people at the grassroots. Faith-based leaders informed their followers, union members pressured their companies’ stockholders and consumers questioned their store owners. Students played an especially important role by compelling universities to change their portfolios. Eventually, institutions pulled the financial plug, and the South African government thought twice about its policies. Similar moral and financial pressures on Israel are being mustered one person at a time. If apartheid ended, so can this occupation, but the moral force and international pressure will have to be just as determined. The current divestment effort is the first, though certainly not the only, necessary move in that direction.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

A Call from Palestinian Christians

The Palestinian Christian community in Palestine is very small in number. We are less than 2% of the population. Although we are fully Palestinian and an integral part of the Palestinian people, we are distinctly Christian.

Since the inception of the conflict one hundred years ago, the Christian community has been playing a very active role in championing justice for all the people of the land. In fact, some of the main advocates for peace have been Palestinian Christians. We continue to take a stand on behalf of our brothers and sisters in Palestine so that all of us can enjoy freedom.

Although we work for peace alongside our Muslim and Jewish brothers and sisters, we are blessed by our links and partnership with a “great cloud of witnesses” throughout the world that, like us, are members of the Body of Christ. Biblically and theologically we stand together:

Occupied Territories and not in Israel itself.

Sabeel believes that any divestment must be done from moral obligation – the same moral obligation that obliges us to struggle against and separate ourselves from anti-Semitism. The blessing that is promised in the Sermon on the Mount is for those who are *falsely accused*. We must be sure that we are acting solely as a result of moral constraints.

A Call to the Churches

“In the center stands faith, on the periphery you have works; in the center the gospel, politics on the periphery; in the center salvation, on the periphery the well being of our neighbor. Between the center and the periphery our human life revolves, on the periphery is decided and revealed what has happened at the center.”

Helmut Gollwitzer

The mainline churches in the West have, by and large, maintained a very balanced position vis-à-vis the Palestine/Israel conflict. On the one hand, they have always affirmed Israel’s right to exist. On the other hand, they have been clear that Israel must withdraw from all territories that it occupied in the 1967 war and allow the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

The churches repeatedly and categorically have stood on the side of a just peace for the Palestinians in accordance with UN resolutions and International Law. International, regional, and national councils of churches around the world have asserted this same position. Through their statements and representations, the churches were encouraging their national governments to pressure Israel to implement International Law, all to no avail. Indeed, the international community has been helpless to prevail upon Israel to halt its oppression of the Palestinians.

As churches examine their own investment policies and show willingness to take moral and ethical investment decisions, they pick up where the political global community has failed to date. It is important to demonstrate by our own example that, just as we are prepared to bear burdens to maintain our own respect for international law, so Israel must accept these same burdens. Churches, by moving from statements to direct action and adopting appropriate financial policies that are in line with their moral and theological stance, create an example for the international community, even if it means incurring and absorbing some financial loss.

We applaud the decision of the World Council of Churches Central Committee, meeting in February 2005, which called on the churches to:

theoretically the true owners of a corporation and are ultimately responsible, legally, politically and morally, for the actions of the corporation, which are done on their behalf, for their benefit and in their name.

No shareholders can avoid legal or moral responsibility once the issue has been brought to their attention. If they cannot direct the management of a company to change its actions, they are still responsible for such actions as long as they own shares. When the church controls through its pension funds and investments large numbers of shares, its impact can be significant.

When the company is involved in violations of International Law -- child labor, pornography, apartheid practices, or settlement building -- the owners (shareholders) are morally responsible. To the extent they cannot prevail on the other shareholders and the management to end their evil practices, they must divest and seek other investments that are more in line with their beliefs. Even if such action is numerically insignificant, it is morally essential in terms of the witness of the church itself.

- In 2004, the International Court of Justice reaffirmed these requirements of humanitarian law and stated again that the building of the Wall violates international law, and has called on the international community to refrain from assisting these violations in any way.

Until the international community takes up its legal responsibility and its obligations to put an end to these violations, organizations and individuals are required, at a minimum, to refrain from giving any material or political support. Therefore the duty to withdraw any existing support becomes a legal obligation under the provisions of the law.

The International Court of Justice Ruling on the Wall (July 9, 2004) states:

Construction of the wall within the Occupied Territories severely impedes on the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination and is therefore a breach of Israel’s obligation to respect that right.

The International Court of Justice announced that all states are under an obligation:

- *not to recognize the illegal situation resulting from the Wall and not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by such construction. (Passed by a vote of 13 to 2)*
- *to ensure compliance by Israel with international humanitarian law as embodied in the Convention. (Passed by a vote of 13 to 2)*
- *to bring to an end the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the Wall and the associated régime, taking due account of the present Advisory Opinion. (Passed by a vote of 14 to 1)*

We are concerned about the delegitimization of International Law that Israel models when it ignores the International Court of Justice, the Geneva Conventions and United Nations resolutions. The potential for these institutions and laws to resolve conflicts is weakened globally when one party chooses to selectively ignore its rulings.

We recognize that regardless of our position on the political resolution, we should not permit ourselves to have any involvement to facilitate or provide resources that would be used to inflict unlawful harm on people. This is a general principle that we stand for universally.

Bringing an End to Israel’s Illegal and Immoral Behavior

African National Congress President Oliver Tambo said in 1987 at the height of the system of apartheid: “trade and foreign investment have bolstered the apartheid economy and added to the resources which apartheid State has recklessly wasted in the pursuit of inhuman schemes...Furthermore this trade and investment has enabled the apartheid economy to fund ever increasing expenditure on the State’s coercive machinery which is aimed at internal repression and external aggression; and the flow of technology from outside helps to refine that apartheid machinery and make it more efficient...These international connections have helped sustain, and continue to sustain the apartheid system.”

Currently a system of international economic support for the occupation exists as multinational corporations build franchises in the occupied territories, supply military goods, and provide material for the construction of the settlements and Separation Wall. Although numerous U.N. resolutions have been passed and many countries have pleaded with Israel to change its policies, the “facts on the ground” of occupation grow worse year by year. The goal to end the occupation has never seemed farther away.

At this point in time, having assessed the international community’s failure to persuade Israel to comply with the United Nations and the International Court of

Sabeel understands that within every denomination comes a wide variety of perspectives on the conflict. A decision like this can and will cause denominational disagreement. Yet, we encourage churches to use this process of discussing morally responsible investment to better understand both the history of the Israel-Palestine conflict and our obligation to live by ethical standards with our resources. The Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) has prepared an informational DVD that can be used as a congregational resource (see www.pcusa.org).

5. It is likely, due to the various types of pressure that will be placed on a church that takes this step, that most churches may be tempted to back down or dilute their divestment strategy to an extent that would make it ineffective.

Sabeel’s response:

As Christians we have to ask ourselves if statements are all that we can give as help to resolve this conflict. It is time to take a clear stand for human rights and dignity. If the rules of International Law were adopted by Israel, there would be an automatic resolution to the conflict and a just settlement would emerge. While we understand the political dimension, our clear stand as Christians comes from our belief in the dignity and well-being of all people. Too many precious children of God, Palestinians and Israelis, have been lost due to our unwillingness to forthrightly address the moral issues.

6. Many will ask, “Why target divestment of firms actively engaged in violations of International Law in Israel rather than of firms actively engaged in violations of International Law in China or Saudi Arabia?”

Sabeel’s response:

If, for example, a firm is complicit in violation of child or prison labor, U.S. and E.U. law boycotts those firms. If a firm violates standards for trade, they are subject to countermeasures by governments. When the U.S. or the E.U. is not diligent, then movements of conscience step in and press for such action, while carrying out their own citizen actions – boycotting or targeting firms that are especially complicit. To some degree, these other countries are being acknowledged and pressured for their human rights violations by the U.S. and the international community already. Unlike Israel, they are not being protected or insulated from the application of International Law. The Security Council has been prevented, again and again through the U.S. veto, from taking action against the acknowledged violations by Israel of International Law.

We at Sabeel encourage churches to put pressure on and/or divest from any and all companies and corporations that are involved in practices that violate human rights. It is important to note that our call for morally responsible investment is specifically focused on companies directly involved in illegal practices in the

“clean hands” and to stop supporting proven violations of International Law that have been well-documented by both Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations in the last 38 years. (www.btselem.org; www.hamoked.org.il; www.alhaq.org; www.pchrgaza.org)

Learning the facts is important. Engaging in dialogue is useful – but the best dialogue is done from an informed perspective with a goal of bringing the suffering to an end. Sabeel provides opportunities to visit and learn first-hand about the impact of the occupation on the daily life of the Palestinians. (www.sabeel.org)

3. Apologists will bring up the question of Palestinian violence. They claim that if the Palestinians would stop their “terrorism,” there could be peace and security.

Sabeel’s response:

The use of violence against civilians represents the problematic proliferation of contempt for the basic tenets of International Law in the area. Putting an end to violence against civilians requires addressing both the state and individual violence in the region and all responsible parties.

Sabeel decries all violent acts against civilians and has made that clear in previous statements that are available on line (www.sabeel.org). At the same time both Palestinian and Israeli civilians have the same human rights to security as all people and Sabeel stands by and for their inherent rights. Our call for morally responsible investment includes divesting from any organization or corporation that supports or promotes in any way violence against civilians.

The government of Israel has shown no intention or effort to date of complying with International Law. The international community and the leading powers, for their own political reasons, have been unwilling to enforce International Humanitarian Law. Therefore, it is left for us as faith communities to do what our political representatives are not doing on our behalf. Violations of human rights can never be justified.

4. Apologists, in all probability, will use the Christian Zionist voice against the mainline churches in an attempt to discredit them and to show that millions of Christians accept and approve of Israel’s actions which violate International Law.

Sabeel’s response:

Standing alone for justice is not new for Christians. We may be a voice in the wilderness but when we act out of the conviction of our faith then mountains can be moved.

Justice, we must look at other options. Around the world people are beginning to speak of selective divestment from Israel as a method of creating the change that is needed. One Israeli human rights lawyer, Shama Leibovitz, put it succinctly: “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 peace and security to 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.”

Sabeel believes that the divestment issue opens up a larger conversation about the immorality of occupation that has not been emphasized enough in the past. In its statement, the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) calls for sanctions: “The moral dimension led to a delegitimization of the very apartheid system that left no room for ‘reform’. Carried over to Israel’s Occupation, the moral element in a larger political condemnation of Israel’s policies could delegitimize the Occupation to the point where only its complete end is acceptable. A campaign of sanctions which highlights the moral unacceptability of Israel’s Occupation could have a great impact, eventually impelling governments to impose economic sanctions while creating a climate difficult for businesses (beginning with Caterpillar) to continue function.” (www.icahd.org)

As responsible owners and investors, the churches have multiple economic options. The dictionary defines divestment as “to free of,” “to sell off,” “to dispossess”. Today, there are many methods of investment and divestment including these five strategies:

1. Avoidance strategy, i.e. avoiding investment in companies on moral grounds.
2. Involvement strategy, i.e. exercising influence and pressure on companies and corporations in shareholder meetings to actively promote moral and social responsibility and accountability.
3. Alternative strategy or selective investment, i.e. establishing alternative investment funds that promote justice and peace.
4. Withdrawal strategy, i.e. simply pulling investments on moral grounds.
5. Reinvestment strategy, i.e. moving the money on moral grounds from investments in corporations complicit of wrongdoing to organizations that engage in morally responsible business, or to reinvest in the organization or company after positive change occurs.

What Methods Does Sabeel Recommend?

As the next logical step, we encourage morally responsible investment along the lines of the above mentioned points, which basically translates into selective divestment -- the model that has been advocated by the World Council of Churches, the Presbyterian Church USA, the Episcopal Church (USA), as well as other organizations working for a just peace in the region. As the U.S.-based organization, Jewish Voice for Peace, states: "At JVP, we fully support selective divestment from companies that profit from Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. This includes American companies like Caterpillar who profit from the wholesale destruction of Palestinian homes and orchards. It also includes Israeli companies who depend on settlements for materials or labor or who produce military equipment used to violate Palestinian human rights." (www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org)

1. Therefore, Sabeel calls on churches to exert pressure on companies and corporations to discontinue business activities that:

- a. provide products, services or technology that sustain, support or maintain the occupation;
- b. have established facilities or operations on occupied land
- c. provide products, services, or financial support for the establishment, expansion, or maintenance of settlements on occupied land or settlement related infrastructure;
- d. provide products, services or financial backing to groups that commit violence against innocent civilians; or
- e. provide finances or assist in the construction of Israel's separation wall or settlement infrastructure.

(adapted from the criteria set by the Presbyterian Church USA)

2. When such pressures fail to yield positive results, Sabeel calls on churches to divest/disinvest from companies and corporations that do not respond and comply with morally responsible investment and business practices.

"We do not believe that such investment plans are, by their very nature either anti-Semitic or anti-Israeli. On the contrary, the Occupation is destroying Israeli society by increasing poverty, violence, and insecurity. Therefore actions that oppose the Occupation are, in fact, pro-Israeli. Furthermore, we believe that such actions are in keeping with our vision of a Judaism that is based on the principle of justice."

Not in My Name Statement of Support for Selective Divestment (<http://www.nimn.org>)

Obstacles and Challenges Facing the Churches

Blessed are you when people revile you and speak all manner of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad for great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way were the prophets persecuted before you (Matthew 5:11-12).

There are obstacles that make it difficult for some churches to carry out divestment even when it is particular to companies operating in, benefiting from or financing the occupation, companies that are aiding and abetting activities prohibited by the Geneva Conventions.

Supporters of Israel's illegal practices will offer several challenges to the churches to which Sabeel offers the following responses:

1. Apologists will argue that historical, psychological, biblical, theological, and even social reasons make it difficult for many western Christians to confront the unjust policies of the government of Israel. The evil of anti-Semitism, which has marred Christian-Jewish relations, still looms strong and the tragedy of the Holocaust remains a source of guilt for many Christians.

Sabeel's response:

We are promoting the same values as those who struggle against anti-Semitism. No group of people, simply due to their ethnicity or nationality, should be excluded from the protections of International Law. Morally responsible investment is a Christian imperative and a nonviolent method aimed at ending the illegal occupation. We are calling for divestment from targeted companies that benefit from the violation of human rights and refuse to alter their behavior once confronted. This pressure must continue until the occupation ends.

We must advocate for upholding International Law specifically because these laws were designed to protect all civilians. It is precisely because we care about the legacy of the Holocaust and other international violations of human rights that we strongly believe that when we see indiscriminate violations of International Law, we must take a moral stand.

2. Apologists will ask church officials who are critical of Israel's violations of International Law to enter with them into dialogue that drags on and on. All kinds of justifications, excuses, and rationales are presented which can create fear and reluctance within Christians and result in undermining their initial commitment.

Sabeel's response:

Sabeel takes this stand for morally responsible investment in an effort to create a real dialogue about peace with justice. We ask churches to have