



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 12, 2014

Largest Mainline Protestant Church in U.S. Divests from Company Involved in Israeli Occupation

Amid concerns raised by church justice advocates, United Methodist Church Pensions sells all stocks in G4S, a supplier of security services and equipment for Israeli prisons, settlements, checkpoints and Separation Wall.

Los Angeles - The General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBPHB) of The United Methodist Church, which manages an investment portfolio of over \$20 billion, has instructed its investment manager to sell immediately all shares in G4S, due in part to concerns about the company's involvement in human rights violations in the Israeli prison system and the military occupation of Palestinian territories.

According to David Wildman, United Methodist Executive Secretary for Human Rights and Racial Justice at the General Board of Global Ministries, "This is the first time that a United Methodist general agency has included human rights violations related to Israel's illegal settlements and military occupation in a decision to divest from a company. We celebrate this strong human rights message both to G4S specifically and to other companies whose business operations support longstanding human rights abuses against Palestinians."

In addition, the church agency has placed a moratorium on any future purchases of G4S, the world's largest security company with operations in over 120 countries, until a new investment screen is implemented that addresses human rights violations such as those by the Israeli Defense Forces against Palestinians.

A top executive of GBPHB contacted [United Methodist Kairos Response](#) (UMKR) leaders this week about the sale of G4S stocks, informing them that this decision was due in large part to the serious concerns about G4S activities raised by United Methodists seeking a just and peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

UMKR, a [church-wide advocacy movement](#) focused on Israel-Palestine issues, has raised questions within the church for several years about companies in the denomination's investment portfolio, including G4S, that are involved in the Israeli occupation. "We greatly appreciate the news and we commend the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits for taking this groundbreaking action to address the concerns of many United Methodists about human rights violations in Israel and the occupied territories," said Rev. John Wagner, UMKR Convener and a church pastor in Ohio.

G4S contracts with the Israeli Prison Service to provide management of security systems at prisons within Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. According to Amnesty International, B'Tselem an Israeli human rights organization, and Defence for Children International-Palestine, Palestinians held in these prisons, including hundreds of child detainees, are routinely subjected to [abuse and torture](#). G4S also provides equipment and services for Israeli settlements and checkpoints in the West Bank and for the Separation Wall, constructed in [violation of international law](#) in Palestinian territory.

Last month, under mounting pressure from an international advocacy campaign, the Gates Foundation also made a decision to [sell its holdings in G4S](#).

UMKR welcomes the church's landmark divestment action as part of a larger and long-term process in which United Methodists seek to address human rights issues, including the 47-year-old Israeli occupation, more comprehensively in the denomination's investment decisions.

For more information visit UMKR's website at www.kairosresponse.org or contact:

M. Theresa Basile: info@kairosresponse.org, 323-253-9087

Rev. John Wagner, Convener, United Methodist Kairos Response: johnwagnerumkr@gmail.com, 937-269-1661

David Wildman, Executive Secretary for Human Rights and Racial Justice, General Board of Global Ministries,
UMC: dwildman@umcmision.org, 212-870-3735

###