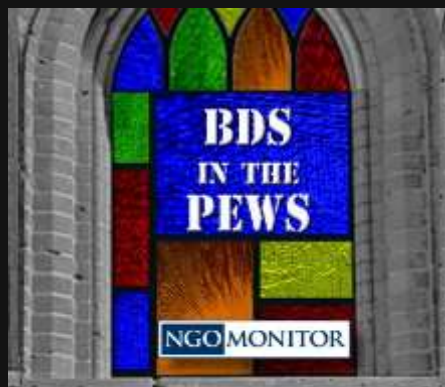




United Church of Christ

How Missing Facts and Half-Truths are Informing the 30th General Synod's Resolutions on Israel

June 2015



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NGO Monitor's mission is to provide information and analysis, promote accountability, and support discussion on the reports and activities of NGOs claiming to advance human rights and humanitarian agendas.

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Introduction

This NGO Monitor report examines the background of the United Church of Christ's [Thirtieth General Synod](#) (June 26-30, 2015), at which three resolutions will address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Two call for the UCC "to divest any holdings" in companies that have been found to "profit from the occupation of the Palestinian territories by the state of Israel." The second would have the church "recognize the actions of Israel against the Palestinians as apartheid." In this year's docket of resolutions none covers contemporary human rights issues on any other Middle East country (nor of any other state).¹

This report illustrates how the resolutions overwhelmingly rely on "evidence" and materials provided by a narrow group of political advocacy non-governmental organizations (NGOs), most of which support BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) campaigns against Israel. The consequence is a highly distorted approach in UCC deliberations on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Leading this intense campaign against Israel within the denomination is a number of highly politicized UCC sub-groups including Global Ministries and the Palestine Israel Network (UCC PIN). These groups hold a virtual monopoly on the parameters of the discussion about Israeli-Palestinian issues within the UCC, and providing church members with selective and biased information.

The message and materials presented by the UCC sub-groups promote the central dimensions of the political warfare strategy against Israel adopted at the 2001 Durban NGO Forum. This strategy seeks to delegitimize Israel as an "apartheid regime," demonizes and dehumanizes Israelis, and calls for Israel to be completely "isolated."

The main tool of this "Durban Strategy" is the global, NGO-led campaign for BDS against Israel. BDS activists are fully aware of the role churches can and do play in amplifying and legitimizing their radical anti-Israel message. The [BDS Movement's website](#) states:

"Religious institutions are seen in many communities as embodying important moral and ethical principles... Divestment campaigns that target companies such as Caterpillar have been initiated in a number of major Christian churches. Not only will successful divestment campaigns financially weaken the Occupation, but will raise both the public profile and legitimacy of the BDS campaign."

¹ The other two resolutions address the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide and Korea.

Further, Global Ministries provides a list of thirteen [“Israel/Palestine” projects and partners](#), with only one of these (B’Tselem) being Israeli. B’Tselem maintains its own political bias and has faced [serious criticism](#) for its misrepresentations of international law, inaccurate research, and skewed statistics. Of the other groups with which Global Ministries is partnered, a large number support BDS campaigns against Israel as well as oppose a two-state formula.

This consistently biased campaign conducted by Global Ministries and the UCC PIN paved the road to the current efforts to pass resolutions at the General Synod, which accuses Israel of “apartheid” and call for divestment from that country.

Background

- The United Church of Christ [defines](#) itself as “a distinct and diverse community of Christians that come together as one church to join faith and action.”
- Across the United States, the UCC has 5,100 churches, [1.1 million members](#), and 200 mission partners.
- Rev. Peter Makari is the current [“Area Executive”](#) for UCC’s Middle East Global Ministries.
- From 1967, the UCC passed [19 General Resolutions](#) on “Israel/Palestine.” In 2005, UCC’s General Synod passed the church’s [current policy on divestment](#), [“Concerning Use of Economic Leverage in Promoting Peace in the Middle East.”](#) This is [echoed](#) by the [United Church Fund](#) (UCF), the portfolio management branch of UCC investment: “While the option to divest remains on the table, UCF believes divestment effectively removes us from the conversation and therefore from the opportunity to serve as a persistent voice for justice...As our ecumenical partners have found, the progress of divestment actions can be fraught and can even undermine the effort to use economic leverage.”
- In 2005, UCF [established](#) a Social Action Fund with its own discretionary funds to “ensure its ability to engage with companies most obviously profiting from the Occupation, that fund holds shares in Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard and Motorola.” UCF continues to retain ownership of these shares in order to maintain its impact on these companies.

- Despite the current UCC stance on “pro-investment,” church leaders and regional conferences often call for BDS, including passing divestment resolutions on a local level. See below, “UCC’s Political Advocacy” section, for further information.

Funding

- In [2012](#), UCC donated \$10,000 for “Gaza & West Bank: humanitarian assistance during internal conflict” and \$2,500 for “Palestine: emergency livelihood assistance.”
- In its [2013 annual report](#), UCC included funding amounts allocated to its projects, but does not provide information on grantees or sources.
- According to the denomination’s [financial report](#), the majority of UCC’s income, 77.34%, was obtained through UCC members and congregations (OCWM – national basic support & special support) and return on investments; 5.61% of their income was received from trusts and gifts. There is a lack of transparency as no names of individuals, corporations or foundations that provided the trusts and gift are provided. UCC does not receive government funding.
- UCC provides an opportunity for constituents to donate to “Israel/Palestine” [partners](#) on individual partner pages.
- Most of UCC’s “Israel/Palestine” partners are not transparent and do not provide information regarding grant sources.

Partner Organization	UCC donations to these NGOs
Middle East Council of Churches (WCC) ²	\$49,955 (2013)
Sabeel	Undisclosed (2014)
B’Tselem	Undisclosed (2014)
YWCA Palestine ³	Below \$50,000 (2012)

UCC Promoting BDS and Anti-Israel Activism

The UCC has a long history of one-sided political advocacy that almost exclusively relies on biased politicized NGO publications, reflecting an ideologically driven agenda. The current resolutions before the General Synod are a reflection of this unbalanced focus. Although BDS has not been adopted as official church policy nationwide, there have been several

² Also listed as a financial contributor in the WCC [2013 annual report](#).

³ See Appendix V

specific instances in which local UCC regions and national UCC bodies expressed support for BDS, both explicitly and implicitly.

- In 2012, a Pastoral [letter](#) from the National Officers was published by the UCC, encouraging readers to visit the pro-BDS website of [Who Profits](#).
- In 2014, the UCC's [Central Atlantic Conference](#) and [New York Conference](#) passed the "[Resolution of Witness Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#)" that calls for divestment, study of the Kairos Palestine document, and encourages lobbying of the U.S. government to retract Israeli aid. The resolution cites many anti-Israel, pro-BDS NGOs including [Jewish Voice for Peace](#), [American Jews for a Just Peace-Boston](#), [Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions](#), [Coalition of Women for Peace](#), [Kairos Palestine](#), [CodePink](#), [WhoProfits](#), and [IfAmericansKnew](#).
- In a [statement](#) released during the 2014 Gaza War, the UCC failed to mention Hamas terrorism as a major factor that precipitated that war.
- The UCC [encourages](#) participating in the Tree of Life Educational Fund (TOLEF) conference. The 2014 conference [opening statement](#) made by Rev. David Good included egregious statements such as, "...Is that Vision a Dream or a Nightmare or perhaps I should say, a 'Nakba?'... Is this the kind of Vision in which Jim Crow would feel right at home?"
 - The board of TOLEF consists of anti-Zionist activist Mark Braverman of [Kairos USA](#), [Friends of Sabeel North America](#) (see Appendix V), and [ICHAD](#); Hassan Fouda of [ICHAD](#); Susanne Hoder of United Methodist Kairos Response; Alli McCracken of [CODEPINK](#); and Liz Viering of [IfAmericansKnew](#).
- In 2006, UCC became a partner in the [Ecumenical Action Group for a Just Peace in Israel-Palestine](#) (EAG) and "worked to coordinate engagements with US corporations profiting from the Israeli Occupation of the Palestinian Territories." The EAG focuses on shareholder resolutions and other forms of corporate engagement "to [end complicity](#) in Israel's occupation."
- A [historical overview](#) produced by the United Church Funds' (UCF) Mideast Engagements for Social Responsibility Investments compares Israel to South African apartheid, framing its social investment strategy as inclined toward Israel demonization. The UCF states:

"The South African anti-apartheid movement required decades of action to bring about change, despite a less complex domestic and geo-political

situation. And ultimately, that change required both government sanctions (unlikely given the US-Israel relationship) and a critical mass of corporate defections from the South African economy.”

UCC Bodies Promoting BDS and Anti-Israel Activism

There are two bodies connected to the UCC’s internal decision-making on the Middle East: Global Ministries and the Palestine Israel Network (UCC PIN). Both aim to influence the UCC by seeking to develop church policy.

Global Ministries and Its Bias Against Israel

- UCC’s General Minister and President Rev. Geoffrey A. Black and Co-Executives of the Global Ministries Rev. Dr. James A. Moos and Rev. Julia Brown Karimu signed a [2012 statement](#) that dismissed Israel’s right to self-defense and failed to mention Hamas or its classification as a terror organization by the [United States](#) and the [EU](#).
- Conducts politicized mission trips for the [purpose](#) of “provid[ing] travelers an opportunity to be an eyewitness to the current situation in Israel/Palestine.”
- In April/May 2015, [Global Ministries led a delegation of church leaders](#) on a “Leadership Pilgrimage to the Middle East.” The group toured Jordan, the West Bank, and predominantly Arab “East Jerusalem.” According to a blog kept by group members, the delegation did not visit Israel (including predominantly Jewish western Jerusalem) nor did they meet with any Israeli Jews.⁴ One blogger spoke approvingly of their meeting with “Omar Barghouti, the co-founder of BDS Palestine.”⁵

⁴ This lack of contact with Israelis is likely what led to two bloggers reporting about “a 17 year old boy [who] had been shot 10 times at point blank range” by Israeli police a week before their visit. The bloggers failed to note that this incident was reported [in the media as follows](#): “17-year-old Palestinian Ali Abu Ghannam attacked Israeli border police with a cleaver at a checkpoint in East Jerusalem... Reaching a second checkpoint, Abu Ghannam drew another knife and ran toward security guards there. They shot him dead when he ignored their warnings to stop.”

⁵ Omar Barghouti (co-founder of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel) is quoted as saying, “Definitely, most definitely we oppose a Jewish state in any part of Palestine. No Palestinian, rational Palestinian, not a sell-out Palestinian, will ever accept a Jewish state in Palestine.” (Speech given at the Dag Hammarskjöldprogrammet on Transformational Justice, Oslo, Norway, September 14, 2013, video available at: <https://vimeo.com/75201955> at 5:30). Barghouti also supports the “euthanasia” of Zionism, meaning Israel: “The current phase has all the emblematic properties of what may be considered the final chapter of the Zionist project. We are witnessing the rapid demise of Zionism, and nothing can be done to save it, for Zionism is intent on killing itself. I, for one, support *euthanasia*.” (emphasis in original). See

- In 2014, a nine-person Global Ministries [delegation](#)⁶ visited “Israel/Palestine” for five days to meet with UCC partners including YWCA Palestine, Kairos Palestine, [B’Tselem](#), and [ELCHL](#). Four of those days were spent in the Palestinian Authority, while only one day was spent in Israel. The delegation met with representatives from the PLO but not the Israeli government.
- The Global Ministries lists its [Israel/Palestine project and partners](#) as: [B’Tselem](#), [Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem](#), [Diyar Consortium](#), [East Jerusalem YMCA \(Palestine\)](#), [Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel](#), [Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem](#), [Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land](#), [Friends Meeting in Ramallah](#), [Kairos Palestine](#), [Rawdat el-Zuhur \(Palestine\)](#), [Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center \(Jerusalem\)](#), [Tantur Ecumenical Institute](#), [YWCA of Palestine \(Palestine\)](#)
- Global Ministries “[responded](#)” to the 2009 Kairos Document (see Appendix IV), describing it as a “powerful statement” and called on UCC members to “read, study, and reflect” on this document, and to “commit” to political advocacy with the U.S. government.
- Global Ministries publishes numerous articles, statements, and reports of its partners including:
 - Sabeel “Wave of Prayer” series, including “[UN Security Council and Remembering the Nakba](#),” “[Israeli High Court and the International Criminal Court](#),” and “[Israel’s nation-state bill and Gaza](#).”
 - Kairos Palestine’s “[The Bethlehem Call](#),” which applauded the fact that “delegitimization and criminalization of the Israeli government and its local and international support base is gaining unstoppable momentum...”
 - A YWCA Palestine [statement](#) declaring, “The Israel military occupation with its ongoing policies of colonialism, apartheid, and now genocide in Gaza, ‘shoot to kill’ policies in Jerusalem, and attacks on Al Aqsa Mosque have severely violated the Palestinian people’s human rights, sense of dignity, freedom, and security.”

<http://electronicintifada.net/content/relative-humanity-fundamental-obstacle-one-state-solution-historic-palestine-12/4939>.

⁶ The delegation included Peter Makari, area executive of the Middle East and Europe for Global Ministries; the Rev. Linda Jaramillo, executive minister of UCC Justice and Witness Ministries; and the Rev. Julia Brown Karimu, co-executive of Global Ministries

- [“JAI: Eye on Palestine--February 2014,”](#) which promotes false themes of “water apartheid”⁷ and BDS.

UCC Missionaries sent to Palestinian NGOs

- In “common witness in mission of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ,” Global Ministries currently supports [34 missionaries](#) under the [Division of Overseas Ministries](#) (DOM), founded for the purpose of providing “a witness for wholeness in those places of deepest need, [the UCC] strives to provide Critical Presence and accompaniment.”
- Three of these missionaries are currently stationed in “Israel/Palestine” including Sara and Victor Makari at the Diyar Consortium and Loren McGrail at the YWCA of Palestine. Global Missionaries also partners with two “long term volunteers,” Faye and John Buttrick, who work with the Kairos Palestine movement. Each missionary (or volunteer) provides a detailed question and answer interview on the UCC website to explain who they are, what they do, and what they believe in.

⁷ See [“Myths Vs. Facts: NGOs And The Destructive Water Campaign Against Israel”](#) for more information

Diyar Consortium

Missionary: Rev. Victor Makari

- Jointly appointed to the Diyar Consortium of the [Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land](#) (ELJHL) by the Global Ministries, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), and the Presbyterian Church (USA). Makari acts as a “Regional Consultant for the Religion and State in the Middle East.”
- Makari previously worked for the Presbyterian Church (USA) as its Middle East Area Coordinator of World Mission.
- In this position, Makari [publicly supported divestment](#), saying, “If nothing else seems to have changed the policy of Israel toward Palestinians, we need to send a clear and strong message.”
- In 2004, Makari made a [statement](#) implying PCUSA’s complaints about Israeli policies were only taken seriously when the denomination targeted Israel financially, “The Church’s appeals, for over five decades, to the convictions of faith, to the biblical mandate of justice, and to moral consciousness have fallen largely on deaf ears. **But when Mammon was aroused, flood gates of anger broke loose.**” (emphasis added)

YWCA of Palestine

Missionary: Loren McGrail

- [Loren McGrail](#) serves as the Communications/Advocacy and Church Relations officer for YWCA of Palestine where she provides reports and materials written in English and outreach to faith based groups who are interested in supporting the work of the YWCA. She also conducts advocacy work for the World Council of Churches’ Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI), including their newsletter the “Eye on Palestine.” McGrail previously volunteered for the [Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel](#) (EAPPI.)
- On her [Facebook page on March 1, 2015](#), McGrail used theologically charged language demonizing Israel’s founding as an “original sin.”

- McGrail [wrote](#) YMCA’s Action Alerts during the 2014 Gaza war, in which she asserted numerous legal and military allegations despite her lack of expertise in these areas.⁸ In one example, despite no indication that Israel carried out any of these acts, she nonetheless accused Israel of “genocide” and of using “banned weapons and gases” without providing evidence or stating what these “banned weapons and gases” might be. She [stated](#),

It is criminal to use banned weapons and gases that blow up bodies beyond recognition. These are crimes against humanity and violate humanitarian and international law... [People] are calling for an end to genocide---the killing of children and the bombing of civilians.

- Through the UCC in 2014, McGrail [coordinated](#) a fundraiser for the YMCA to sell Palestinian refugee dolls “created to raise awareness of refugee rights...[and] educate people on the period in Palestinian history known as al-Nakba.” The dolls are [based](#) on real refugee women such as the ‘Mariam’ doll: “Mariam was 16 when she left her village. They left because a ‘rain of bullets was falling on them. They were being shot at by the Israelis and the British,’ McGrail said.”

UCC Palestine-Israel Network

- The UCC Palestine Israel Network ([UCC PIN](#)) was [founded](#) in January 2012 as a “network through which to organize and educate our members and churches across the country” and as a leadership organization to create resolutions at the General Synods.
- [UCC PIN](#) “seek(s) to educate and motivate our churches on the issues within Palestine/Israel. Our actions are guided by General Synod Resolutions, consultation reports, engagement with the Kairos Palestine Document and our personal experiences.”
- UCC PIN’s [network steering committee](#) consists of 21 representatives from 8 regional “conferences.” A steering committee member also acts as a [liaison](#) to the United Church Funds and the Ecumenical Action Group (EAG).
- UCC PIN collects [donations](#) through the Massachusetts Conference of the UCC.

⁸ NGOs often utilize international legal rhetoric in their campaigns to add a veneer of credibility and expertise to their political objectives. They routinely distort existing international law and try to invent new standards in order to portray Israel as an illegal aggressor that is guilty of war crimes. See [here](#) for more.

- UCC PIN [initially submitted](#) the resolution “[A Call For The United Church Of Christ To Take Actions Toward A Just Peace In The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#)” at the 2014 General Synod. Although it did not pass, UCC PIN is resubmitting it to be reviewed again at the 2015 Synod.
- UCC PIN’s website, “A Resource Guide for Resolution #4 UCC General Synod 30,” provides an explanation of the 2015 resolutions and offers a [theological rationale](#) for its work:

... Israel has taken on for many a quasi-religious and moral character that often distorts history, corrupts the meaning of ancient texts, and legitimizes oppression and suffering in ways that bear little or no relationship to the ethical principles of either Judaism or Christianity... Boycotts and divestment are a witness to a costly obedience to bear one another’s burdens.

- UCC PIN [is a member](#) of the US Campaign to End the Occupation and [endorsed](#) the *Kairos Palestine Document* and the *Call to Action* of Kairos USA. It [advocates](#) divesting from Soda Stream, Hewlett Packard, Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, Group 4 Securicor (G4S), Veolia, Ahava, and Hadiklaim.
- [Advertises](#) the booklet *Zionism Unsettled*, published by the [Israel Palestine Mission Network](#)⁹ (IPMN) of the Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA). The booklet attacks the “pathology inherent in Zionism.”
- [Supports](#) the fringe group [Jewish Voice for Peace](#), which is an integral part in the anti-Israel BDS campaign and provides a façade of Jewish support for efforts such as the Presbyterian Church’s divestment vote.
- Allots a section of its website to “[Videos and DVDs available online](#),” listing numerous clips that use demonizing rhetoric against Israel including “Dr. [Mads Gilbert](#): ‘Eyes in Gaza’; a [clip](#) from the Iranian-government owned Press TV¹⁰; Rev. Naim Ateek and Jeff Halper present “[Is a Two State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Still Possible?](#)”

⁹ The IPMN is a main advocate within the church on behalf of BDS. NGO Monitor documented clear evidence of a strong undercurrent of overt anti-Jewish bigotry within the IPMN as expressed on the group’s Facebook page. This included numerous postings uploaded to this site by IPMN members over a period of two years, which demonstrates an ongoing pattern of expressions of antisemitism. See the full report at http://ngo-monitor.org/data/images/File/NGOM_IPMN_June_2014.pdf

¹⁰ Press TV often spreads Iranian regime propaganda and antisemitic messages.

- [Recommends](#) politicized “tours which will show you the holy sites as well as connect you to what is happening to the people in the Holy Land.”
- Uses its [Facebook page](#) to share articles encouraging BDS. In February 2015 alone, the UCC PIN shared at least 10 related BDS articles, and in April 2015, UCC PIN posted 9 BDS related articles to its Facebook page.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Conclusion

The influence of BDS activists within the United Church of Christ threatens to draw the UCC away from their peacemaker responsibility and towards becoming active participants in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These activists have brought the UCC into partnership with highly politicized NGOs. As such, UCC membership hears only one side of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The need is great for reasoned discussions within the UCC that highlight and support the best intentions and efforts of Israelis and Palestinians to resolve the difficult issues. Actions, policies, and statements would best originate from balanced dialogues with the broadest possible diversity of Israelis and Palestinians. Actions taken by the UCC that are informed by a narrow political perspective do not reflect the generally respected historical commitment of the UCC to fair-minded and balanced discourse.

BDS does not seek peace with Israel, but rather total victory over Israel. This is a zero-sum, winner-take-all strategy which enflames conflict, polarizes communities, and hardens hearts. As such, it is immoral and distorts the prophetic voice.

As a denomination, the UCC has a stark choice to make: embrace the agenda of the BDS campaign, thereby sending a message that the denomination is unsympathetic to the right of the Jewish people to sovereign equality, or stand with all people of good will who seek to engage in constructive actions that are more likely to bring peace to Israelis and Palestinians alike in the framework of two states for two peoples.

Recommendations

1. Due to the influence of highly politicized internal church bodies pushing biased anti-Israel agendas, the UCC should defer its deliberations on the resolutions addressing Israeli-Palestinian issues and widen the discussion to include numerous voices that offer a range of perspectives.

2. The UCC should examine the current narrow ideological alliances of its various bodies and external NGO partners that are informing the UCC membership on the Israeli-Palestinian dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict.
3. Global Ministries should broaden its spectrum of missionary partnerships in Israel to represent a broader spectrum of mainstream Israeli civil society. As it currently stands, UCC's missionary partners represent but one narrow set of perspectives.
4. The UCC should clarify its relationship with the UCC PIN and clarify that it does not speak for the church.
5. UCC laity should take a more interested oversight role for the actions taken by their national leadership.

Appendix I: UCC General Synod Resolutions on the Middle East

- UCC's 2015 General Synod will [take place](#) June 26-30. Of [16 resolutions](#) to be considered, 5 address international affairs. Of these 5, 3 address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one addresses the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, and another calls for "[Peace, Justice and Reunification in the Korean Peninsula](#)" without addressing the grave human rights issues committed by the North Korean government. The resolutions on "Israel-Palestine" likewise present a distorted, one-sided, simplistic account of the conflict.
- There are no resolutions on any other Middle East state, and none addresses human rights in any other country. This includes, among many other issues, a failure to present resolutions on the massacre of Christians in the Middle East; Christian refugees from Syria and Iraq; massacres against minorities such as the Yazidis by the "Islamic State" (ISIS); Iran's ongoing drive for nuclear weapons and its funding of proxy wars in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen that are causing massive civilian casualties and millions of refugees.
- The resolution, "[Calling on the United Church of Christ To Recognize The Actions Of Israel Against The Palestinians As Apartheid](#)," is the most extreme. The motion, utilizing demonizing rhetoric, provides a litany of allegations against Israel including:
 - *"...recognize[ing] the Israeli government's domination system inside the West Bank and on the borders of the Gaza Strip as having met the International Criminal Court's definition of the crime apartheid."*
 - *"...establishing preferential treatment for Israeli Jews and providing an excuse to demolish Palestinian homes that are built without permits, forcing the Palestinians to leave."*
 - *"...the allocation of water resources from the West Bank privileges Israelis over Palestinians."*
 - *"[the] destruction of Palestinian fruit trees and olive trees for 'security purposes' or because the settlers want the land, or because Israel wants land for military activities."*
 - *"Palestinians are increasingly being ghettoized."*
 - *"...upon withdrawing its settlers from the Gaza Strip, Israel retained the 'right' to attack Gaza at any time and to control the Gaza...maintaining its occupation of Gaza, which became a Bantustan."*

- *“responded to occasional, imprecise rocket fire from Gaza with major military operations attacking Gaza.”*
 - *“frequently tortures Palestinians in custody, including children.”*
 - *“force the Palestinians into submission to Israel’s designs for the land has resulted in the denial of the Palestinians’ basic human rights.”*
- The majority of its supporting evidence is provided by NGOs that lack credibility. With one exception (Gisha) they support BDS in one form or another and, in some instances, the dismantling of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. These NGOs include [ICAHD](#), [Al Haq](#), [Badiil](#), and [International Solidarity Movement](#). Other organizations referenced promote the delegitimization of Israel and include, [Gisha](#), [Amnesty International](#), and [Addameer](#).
- Comparing Israel to South African apartheid falsely portrays the Arab-Israeli conflict as a dispute motivated by alleged Israeli Jewish racial supremacy over Arabs, rather than one based on competing national and territorial claims.
- Referring to Israel as an apartheid state is the latest manifestation of the 1975 Soviet-sponsored UN “Zionism is Racism” resolution, eventually repealed in 1991 with the end of the Cold War. The goal of this rhetoric is to generate international boycotts similar to those that were implemented against apartheid South Africa and condemn Israel as a pariah state.
- Heavy reliance on evidence provided by NGOs that utilize international legal rhetoric in their campaigns adds a veneer of credibility and expertise to the political objectives. However, this tactic only distorts existing international law and invents new standards in order to portray Israel as an illegal aggressor that is guilty of war crimes.
- The two divestment resolutions, “[created](#)” by the UCC Palestine Israel Network, (UCC PIN), share a common title and content: “[A Call for the United Church of Christ To Take Actions Toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#).” Its “strategy” is based on four steps, three of which encourage UCC to participate in:
 1. “Educational empowerment (“study of Kairos Palestine 2009 – ‘A Moment of Truth’: A Word of Faith, Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering”).

2. “Economic leverage (divestment from companies that profit from the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and boycott of products produced in such territories by Israeli companies).”
 3. “Political pressure (petition to Congress to ensure that aid to Israel violates neither the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act nor the U.S. Arms Export Control Act).”
- The overwhelming majority of the “evidence” supporting the motion is provided by highly politicized NGOs that promote the demonization of Israel. These include anti-Zionist groups that promote BDS such as [ICHAD](#), [American Jews for a Just Peace](#), [Jewish Voice for Peace](#), [Coalition of Women for Peace](#), [Who Profits](#), and [Code Pink](#).
 - Churches that pursue BDS are empowered by their connections to Palestinian co-religionists that share the same agenda. The Kairos Palestine document, drafted by a small group of Palestinian Christian clergy, which calls for BDS against Israel and denies the Jewish historical connection to Israel, is an example of this solidarity which is then employed by churches such as UCC.
 - Referring to “economic leverage” is a tactic that hinges on the ability of these NGOs to exploit the concept of ethical investing, falsely accusing companies that conduct business in Israel of involvement in war crimes and violations of international law.
 - Generating international pressure against Israel is a central component of the anti-Israeli agenda. The emphasis on “political pressure” reveals UCC’s primary purpose as political, even at the expense of humanitarian achievements.

Appendix II: The NGO-led Global BDS Campaign against Israel and the Interconnection with the UCC

Origins of BDS

The boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign (BDS) has its origins in the NGO Forum of the UN's [2001 World Conference Against Racism](#) in Durban, South Africa. Using demonizing language, some 1,500 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) crystallized a strategy of delegitimizing Israel, explicitly calling for the "complete and total isolation of Israel as an apartheid state" through the "imposition of mandatory and comprehensive sanctions and embargoes, [and] the full cessation of all links (diplomatic, economic, social, aid, military cooperation and training) between all states and Israel." The BDS campaign is the implementation of this strategy to quarantine Israel from the rest of the international community.

The UCC's and other denomination's pro-BDS efforts are driven by BDS activists within the church. It is necessary to recognize that the BDS campaigns that they promote are anti-peace, as BDS creates polarization and ultimately promotes conflict.

The BDS goal is extreme, as it opposes a negotiated peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. This is made clear by many of its leaders and proponents who have declared that the purpose of BDS is to bring about "the upending of the Jewish state [of Israel]"¹¹ since "justice and freedom for the Palestinians are incompatible with the existence of the state of Israel."¹² As stated by one of BDS's leading representatives Omar Barghouti, "Definitely, most definitely we oppose a Jewish state in any part of Palestine. No Palestinian, rational Palestinian, not a sell-out Palestinian, will ever accept a Jewish state in Palestine."¹³

Among the accredited NGOs at the Durban NGO Forum were 35 Christian religious institutions representing a number of churches, [including](#) the United Church of Christ (UCC). In the last decade, most mainline U.S. denominations, including UCC, repeatedly rejected pro-divestment resolutions brought to national votes. This changed when the 2014 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) passed a divestment resolution. Frequent efforts to encourage divestment throughout Christian institutions have provided a vehicle to amplify one-sided messages within the churches.

Numerous NGOs are currently influencing UCC's policies. These include its "Israel/Palestine" [partner organizations](#) comprising of YWCA of Palestine, Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation

¹¹ [Ahmed Moor](#), BDS activist and author

¹² [As'ad Abu Khalil](#), BDS activist and author

¹³ Op. cit.

Theology Center, Kairos Palestine, Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, B'Tselem, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. Other than B'Tselem, these organizations selectively use the rhetoric of religious and moral authority to condemn Israel in sermons, essays, press releases, reports, and other publications. Palestinians are portrayed as the weaker and suffering party that must be defended against injustice.

The General Synod 2015's passing of a divestment resolution will advance the aim of the global BDS campaign to coopt the ethical voices of churches toward the goal of delegitimizing Israel in global public opinion, leading to political isolation and Israel's eventual demise. The Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 2014 divestment decision laid the framework for advancing a campaign against Israel in liberal Western churches. A UCC decision to support one or both of the proposed resolutions will further the global BDS campaign's efforts to turn the world's only Jewish state into an international pariah.

Appendix III: The Kairos Palestine Document

Assessing “A Moment of Truth”

Rev. Peter A. Pettit¹⁴ and Prof. Bruce Chilton¹⁵

Excerpts:¹⁶

On December 15, 2009, a dozen Christian patriarchs and heads of churches in Jerusalem welcomed the Kairos Palestine 2009 document promulgated four days earlier...

Kairos Palestine 2009 sets out a program for the churches in North America and elsewhere in the world: (1) to repent of “fundamentalist theological positions” that support Israeli oppression of the Palestinians; (2) to help recover the Palestinians’ freedom; (3) to “come and see”; and, (4) to use boycott and “disinvestment” as tools by which to “take a position of truth with regard to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land.

Each of these familiar themes makes a seductive appeal to the mainline Western churches to support a non-violent version of the Palestinian cause, yet each also embodies the kind of faulty analysis that only prolongs conflict...

In the first case, we agree that Christian support of Israel can turn uncritical and harmful when wedded to an ideological or theological agenda that overrules evidence with programmatic postures. But the document ignores serious, faithful Christian assessments of the Jewish relationship to land that do not distort scripture and do not support an unjust occupation...

... the invitation to “come and see” allegedly includes “Palestinians and Israelis alike,” but the authors’ portrait of Israel offers no reassurance that Palestinian Christian guides will help the pilgrim to understand Israeli realities.

Finally, the call for boycott and divestment by the churches, coupled with “a system of economic sanctions...against Israel” by the international community, evokes the effective anti-apartheid action of the world community in South Africa. This attempted parallel brings us up squarely against shortcomings in the Kairos Palestine 2009 document...

¹⁴ Rev. Peter Pettit, Ph.D. wrote this article while director of the Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding and Associate Professor of Religion Studies at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania

¹⁵ Prof. Bruce Chilton is Bernard Iddings Bell Professor of Religion at Bard College; Chaplain of the College and Executive Director, Institute of Advanced Theology

¹⁶ For the full text see

<http://www.muhlenberg.edu/cultural/ijcu/Responseto2009KairosPalestineDocument.pdf>

Resolution on Kairos Palestine: Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform)

April 15, 2010

Excerpts:¹⁷

Careful consideration of what [Kairos Palestine] says and what it does not say, of the history it paints and the history it obfuscates, and of the moral yardstick it applies to Israel yet compromises in the face of Palestinian violence, reveals a morally inconsistent and theologically suspect document that speaks only part of the truth, and not always that...

Sadly, this document also rejects or ignores more than a half a century of Jewish-Christian rapprochement and takes its place among other Christian documents which, throughout history, have intended to delegitimize the Jewish people's continuing Covenant with God, particularly by arguing that our Covenant has been superseded by Jesus and Christianity.

Like the Kairos authors, the [CCAR] is deeply concerned about the welfare of the Palestinian people, as our record indicates. Our strenuous objections to Kairos do not diminish our commitment to a two-state solution as the only avenue to achieve a just and lasting peace, preserving a secure Jewish State of Israel and facilitating for the first time the realization of the Palestinian people's nationhood.

Among its many failings, Kairos:

- *Echoes supersessionist language of the Christian past, since rejected by most mainstream Christian denominations, referring to the Torah absent Christian revelation as, in the words of the Christian Scriptures, "a dead letter."*
- *While opposing and negating the applicability of scriptural texts, historical presence, and theological discourse to justify the existence of a Jewish state, does exactly that in making its case for a Palestinian State...*
- *Purports to promote non-violent resistance as the only legitimate Christian response to the Israeli occupation, yet expresses "respect" and "high esteem for those who have given their life for our nation," thereby implicitly condoning, even praising, suicide bombers.*
- *Attempts to neutralize the concept of terrorism through the euphemistic reference to "terrorism," implying that the deliberate Palestinian targeting of Israeli civilians with the aim of killing as many as possible in order to strike fear and terror is not terrorism at all, but a form of "legal resistance."*

¹⁷ For full text of this resolution see: <http://ccarnet.org/rabbis-speak/resolutions/all/ccar-resolution-2009-kairos-document/>

Appendix IV: Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center

As a Palestinian Christian group, Sabeel plays a central theological and ideological role for pro-Palestinian campaigners active in non-evangelical Protestant churches in North America, Europe, Australia, and elsewhere. The organization is also a major actor in the effort to convince Christian churches to support BDS ([boycotts, divestment and sanctions](#)) against Israel.

Sabeel's influence is widespread, having successfully deployed Palestinian liberation theology in churches worldwide. This theology fuses ancient Christian teachings with Palestinian nationalist ideology. The theological construct interprets Christian texts to depict Palestinians as the wholly innocent victims of Israeli aggression and attempts to establish a religious obligation to promote a pro-Palestinian nationalist agenda.

In parallel, Sabeel condemns Jewish nationalism (i.e. Zionism) as a "narrow" reading of Scripture and censures Jewish territorial claims and sovereignty as a "tribal" interpretation of the Biblical message. Paradoxically, Sabeel uses its own brand of theology to endorse Palestinian nationalist aspirations.

Sabeel's program is designed to maximize exposure of the Palestinian liberation theology in churches worldwide. The strategy is to build a critical mass of influential church leaders who will amplify the message that Israel is solely culpable for the origin and perpetuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and that pressure must be applied only on Israel – including through the instrument of BDS – to end the conflict.

In pursuit of its Palestinian nationalist agenda, Sabeel often uses intemperate language that rationalizes terrorism against Israeli civilians and promotes anti-Jewish theological teachings.

For instance, promoters of Palestinian liberation theology, including Sabeel founder and president Naim Ateek, often utilize overtly antisemitic language such as deicide imagery; replacement or supercessionist theology; and repeated disparagement of Judaism as "tribal," "primitive," and "exclusionary."

Ateek has stated:

- "[The establishment of Israel](#) was a relapse to the most primitive concepts of an exclusive, tribal God."

- “The tragedy of many Zionists today is that they have locked themselves into the nationalist concept of God. They are trapped in it and they will be freed only if they discard their primitive image of God for a more universal one...”¹⁸
- “[In this season of Lent](#), it seems to many of us that **Jesus is on the cross again with thousands of crucified Palestinians** around him. It only takes people of insight to see the hundreds of thousands of crosses throughout the land, Palestinian men, women, and children being crucified. Palestine has become one huge [G]olgotha. The **Israeli government crucifixion system** is operating daily. Palestine has become the place of the skull...” (emphasis added)
- In his book “A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation,” Ateek strips Jesus of his Jewish identity while providing an exclusionary Palestinian nationalist interpretation of Christian theology: “Palestinian liberation theology focuses on the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth, who was also a Palestinian living under an occupation.”¹⁹
- On July 20, 2014 Sabeel published a [speech](#) by Naim Ateek that denies Israel’s right to self-defense against Hamas attacks on Israeli civilians, while also justifying terrorism with a “unique” interpretation of international humanitarian law and the laws of war:
 - “One of the most common refrains repeated by President Obama and other western leaders since the beginning of Israel’s massive military offensive against Gaza is, ‘Israel has the right to defend itself’... First, we should **consider that there is no clear ‘self’ for Israel to defend...** In light of the fact that Israel has no defined borders and is occupying another state, it is not even possible to define the ‘self’ that Israel has a right to defend.”(emphasis added)
 - “International law unequivocally gives occupied people the right to shake off the yoke of the occupier through various **means including the armed struggle.**” (emphasis added)

¹⁸ [Naim Ateek](#), “Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation,” Orbis Books, 1989

¹⁹ Naim Ateek, “A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation,” (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), p. 11.

Appendix V: YWCA-Palestine

- Website: <http://www.ywca-palestine.org/>
- [Founded](#) in 1918, its [mission is to](#): “support and aspire to create women leadership, especially among young women and girls, to realize their full rights and capabilities, and to promote and advance their full participation in decision-making on equal footing with men and in all aspects of their lives as they contribute to building a democratic and free civil society.”
- In 2012, received [58.65%](#) of its income from international donors including
 - [Christian Aid](#)
 - [ICCO](#)
 - [NDC Development Center](#)
 - [Bread for the World-EED](#)
 - [Welfare Association](#)
 - [Oxfam](#) Quebec
 - United Methodist Church
 - Global Ministries- Women's Division
 - Global Ministries- OGHS
 - World YWCA-Power to Change
 - YMCA/YWCA Norway (KFUK-KFUM)
 - YWCA/YMCA Sweden
 - YWCA Japan
 - JAI - YMCA/YWCA
 - Y-Care International
 - UNDP
 - AVSI Foundation
 - PalCraft Aid
- Promotes demonizing rhetoric, [BDS campaigns](#), and the [Kairos Palestine document](#), which denies Jewish historical and religious links to the land of Israel. For instance,
- On the 2014 “United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People,” released a [statement](#) accusing Israel of colonialism, apartheid, and genocide.
- Published statements during the 2014 Gaza war including one that [made numerous legal and military allegations](#) despite a lack of expertise in these areas: “It is criminal to collectively punish a whole population, or to target civilians, journalists, and medical workers. It is criminal to use banned weapons and gases that blow up bodies beyond recognition. These are crimes against humanity and violate humanitarian and international law.”
- Jointly produced a 2013 [report](#) “Barriers to Female Labour Market Participation and Entrepreneurship in the Occupied Palestinian Territory” with Berziet University and Christian Aid that mentions “Hamas” and the “Palestinian Authority” once each while mentioning “Israel” forty times and the “occupation” twenty eight times. The report places sole blame on Israel “as a common denominator...devastating role of Israel’s occupation on women’s involvement in the labour market.”