

MORALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT

A CALL TO THE UK CHURCHES FROM PALESTINE

A Non-Violent Pro-active Response to the Israeli Occupation of Palestine

The Interfaith Group for Morally Responsible Investment

“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... If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.” (1 Corinthians 12:12-13; 26)

The Need for Morally Responsible Investment

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 as well as the Golan Heights from Syria. For nearly forty years, almost four million Palestinians have lived under Israeli military occupation. The ‘Green Line’ denotes the pre-1967 borders of the West Bank and Gaza, and is recognised internationally as the agreed boundary between Israel and Palestine.

During this period, Israel has consistently refused to implement over 60 United Nations Resolutions and remains in breach of International Law through the systematic violation of the basic human rights of Palestinians on a daily basis. Many Palestinians are deprived of food, water, education, access to natural resources, schools and hospitals, and the freedoms of expression, worship, and travel. This deprivation only intensifies as their lands and water sources are confiscated to build Israeli colonies (known as ‘Settlements’ these are new Jewish-only towns and villages) and the Separation Barrier (in parts an 8m+ high wall, in parts a high fence, often separating families and people from their farms).

International Humanitarian Law, (the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention), requires that people living under occupation must be protected until the occupation comes to an end. It is illegal to build on or confiscate their land. It is illegal to harm or kill innocent civilians. It is forbidden to employ collective punishments, degrading treatment and torture. It is illegal to transfer and settle civilians from the occupying power into the territory occupied. International Law also forbids the acquisition of territory through war.



The movement towards a resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict through non-violent means is now accelerating. There is a window of opportunity to reach a just settlement. In spite of past setbacks and much scepticism, many people on both sides of the conflict cling to the hope of peace and reject violence. 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 relating to the occupation still need to be addressed by people of faith. One of these is the challenge for churches to consider seriously the issue of morally responsible investment.

Christians must act responsibly before God who 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. We must disavow the financing of or profiting from, directly or indirectly, organisations complicit in violent, unethical, immoral, and illegal actions. Specifically, we need to re-evaluate:

1. Earning money through investment in companies whose products or 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] will judge the world in righteousness; he will govern the peoples with justice. The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble... For he who avenges blood remembers; he does not ignore the cry of the afflicted... The Lord is known by his justice; the wicked are ensnared by the work of their hand... But the needy will not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the afflicted ever perish.” (Psalm 9:8-9, 12, 18)

One of the companies that has been identified as complicit in violations of human rights is Caterpillar.

Caterpillar: A Case Study

Caterpillar is the world’s largest manufacturer of construction and mining equipment and the largest UK employer in the earth moving and construction industry. With 93,000 employees and 3,000 branches in 180 countries, its sales and revenue in 2004 amounted to \$30 billion. Caterpillar also markets a range of rugged boots, branded clothing and fashion accessories.



Caterpillar has a Code of Worldwide Business Conduct. In it they state that *“We avoid those who violate the law or fail to comply with the sound business practices we promote.”* Caterpillar bulldozers have been used by the Israeli military since 1967 to consolidate its illegal occupation and colonisation of the Palestinian Territories. Caterpillar bulldozers have been used by the Israeli military to demolish thousands of Palestinian homes, schools, farms, wells, roads, orchards and ancient olive groves. Their frequent use has come to international public attention following three major incidents: the destruction of the Jenin refugee camp in April 2002; the killing of peace activist Rachel Corrie in Gaza in March 2003; and the destruction of homes, roads and agricultural land in Rafah in May 2004. As a consequence, Caterpillar have been subjected to unprecedented criticism from the United Nations and international human rights groups.

The Israeli army has around 100 Caterpillar D9 bulldozers, each weighing over 53 tons. At nearly 4 metres high and over 8 metres long, with a powerful front-fitted blade and rear ‘ripper’ blade, the D9 bulldozer is as tall as a double decker bus and as heavy as a tank. Caterpillar bulldozers are further customised by the Israeli military adding machine gun mounts, smoke projectors and grenade launchers. In an interview in Yediot Aharonot, Israel’s most popular tabloid newspaper in May 2002, following the use of Caterpillar D9s causing widespread death and destruction in the Jenin refugee camp, Moshe Nissim, a bulldozer operator admitted,



“I had no mercy for anybody. I would erase anyone with the D9 ... when I was told to bring down a house, I took the opportunity to bring down some more houses ... They were warned by loudspeaker to get out of the house before I came, but I gave no one a chance. I didn’t wait. I didn’t give one blow and wait for them to come out. I would just ram the house with full power, to bring it down as fast as possible.”

According to War on Want, the bulldozer unit was cited for outstanding service for its role in the operation.

Following the devastation caused by Caterpillar D9s by the Israeli army during their assault on the Rafah refugee camp in May 2004, John Dugard, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, accused the Israeli military of grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention. In his report to the UN General Assembly Dugard noted:

“Homes have been destroyed in a purely purposeless manner. Bulldozers have savagely dug up roads, including electricity, sewage and water lines, in a brutal display of power ... The time has come for the international community to identify those responsible for this savage destruction of property and to take the necessary legal action against them.”

Caterpillar bulldozers are also being used in the construction of Israel’s controversial Separation Barrier, encroaching deep inside the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The route of the Separation Barrier, with imposing watchtowers and sniper positions built every few hundred metres, is clearly intended to incorporate

Israel's illegal Settlement Blocks, annexe significant portions of the Palestinian Territories such as the Jordan Valley and imprison Palestinians within a series of isolated Bantustans (see later for definition). Deprived of their land and denied access to employment, schools and hospitals, the impact of the Separation Barrier is deeply traumatic and will further exacerbate the exodus of Palestinians from their homeland.

In July 2004 the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the UN's highest judicial body, ruled the Barrier illegal, demanding construction be halted, dismantled and compensation paid to Palestinians affected by it. The UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to demand Israel abide by the ICJ's ruling. All countries which are party to the Fourth Geneva Convention are obliged to ensure Israel's compliance with the Convention, and to restrain corporations such as Caterpillar from participating in the Barrier's construction.

The Caterpillar D9 is now an indispensable weapon used by the Israeli military against the civilian Palestinian population, largely funded by the US government's Foreign Military Sales Programme. Jewish Voice for Peace insist "*Caterpillar bulldozers are not given to Israel as construction equipment but explicitly as weapons.*" In the words of Robert Fisk, the Middle East analyst, the Caterpillar bulldozer that killed Rachel Corrie "*was part of the regular US aid to Israel.*"

The uses of Caterpillar D9's by the Israeli military in the Palestinian Occupied Territories is in violation of Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and this constitute war crimes under international law. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch both urge Caterpillar to take a closer look at the UN Norms on business and human rights. As HRW point out, "*The UN standards exist for the behaviour of companies. Caterpillar has every reason to know that the D9 is being used to destroy homes illegally, and it is therefore complicit in these facts.*"

Position of the Church of England's Ethical Investment Advisory Group

In May 2005 the Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) gave consideration to the Church of England's investment in Caterpillar Inc. and in September 2005 determined not to advocate disinvestment from Caterpillar. Nevertheless they have stated:



"EIAG is concerned at the uses to which the Israeli authorities have put Caterpillar machines in the past. It will therefore actively monitor the situation, and review this decision rigorously if further sales are made that appear likely to result in the destruction of infrastructure or to place lives or livelihoods at risk."

Canon Naim Ateek of the Sabeel Ecumenical Centre in Jerusalem together with the Right Revd Riah Abu El Assal, Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, have both extended an invitation to the members of the EIAG to visit Palestine urgently and see first hand the wholesale destruction of Palestinian homes, businesses and farms caused by the 100 Caterpillar bulldozers the Israeli army already owns. Canon Ateek and Bishop Riah have both called for disinvestment.

Bringing an End to Israel's Illegal Occupation

The Interfaith Group for Morally Responsible Investment now call upon UK churches directly to exert pressure on companies and corporations to discontinue business activities that:

1. Provide products, services or technology that sustain, support or maintain the occupation of the Palestinian Territories;
2. Provide products, services, or financial support for the establishment, expansion, or maintenance of settlements on occupied land;
3. Provide products, services or financial backing to groups that commit violence against innocent civilians;
4. Provide finances or assist in the construction of Israel's Separation Barrier.

Disinvestment is a non-violent option that brings attention to the issues, and promotes peaceful change.

“Non violence is a powerful and just weapon. It is a weapon unique in history, which cuts without wounding... It is a sword that heals.” Revd. Martin Luther King

Four things you can do to make a difference

1. Boycott Caterpillar

Caterpillar doesn't just produce construction equipment; it also sells footwear and clothing in the UK, as well as other merchandise such as miniature Caterpillar vehicles, watches, mugs, bags and stationery. Don't buy these products – and tell your friends and family to do the same.

2. Tell Caterpillar to stop supplying its bulldozers to the Israeli military

Write to Jim Owens, Chairman and CEO of Caterpillar, calling him to suspend all sales of Caterpillar D9s, and their spare parts, to Israel for as long as they are employed in the violation of Palestinian human rights. His address is James W Owens, Caterpillar Inc. 100 NE Adams Street, Peoria, Illinois, 61629-1425, USA.

3. Ask your PCC, Deanery and Diocesan Synod to endorse MRI

Obtain copies of the Sabeel Document, *“A Call for Morally Responsible Investment”* and the War on Want *“Alternative Report on Caterpillar”*. Explain how you might show solidarity with the Church in Palestine and help achieve a non-violent withdrawal of the illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories.

4. Ask your PCC to withdraw your church investments from the Central Board of Finance until it divests from Caterpillar It is immoral for churches to profit from Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem and the destruction not only of Palestinian society but also of the indigenous Church of Palestine. It is recommended that church investments are deposited with banks and institutions with a clear and consistent ethical stance such as the Cooperative Bank.

Any divestment must be done from moral obligation – the same moral obligation that obliges us to struggle against and separate ourselves from antisemitism. 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.



“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... 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

“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.” Canon Naim Ateek

Further Reading & Sources

Sabeel, *“A Call for Morally Responsible Investment: A Nonviolent Response to the Occupation”* (Jerusalem, Sabeel, 2005). See www.sabeel.org and www.sabeel.ca

Joe Zacune & Clare Fauset, *Caterpillar, The Alternative Report*, (London, War on Want, 2005). See www.waronwant.org

Photos taken from Jewish Voice for Peace, www.catdestroyshomes.org and www.caterkiller.org

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