

## Call to Boycott Products from Israeli Settlements: 220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2012)

1. **Call upon all nations to prohibit the import of products made by enterprises in Israeli settlements on Palestinian land.**
2. **Call for the boycott of all Israeli products coming from the occupied Palestinian Territories, including AHAVA Dead Sea Laboratories Beauty Products, and all date products of Hadiklaim, The Israel Date Growers Co-Operative Ltd, often marked by the brand names: King Solomon Dates and Jordan River (not Israeli products from Israel.)**
3. **Direct the Stated Clerk to communicate this action to all other PC (USA) councils and entities and invite and strongly encourage those groups and organizations to endorse this boycott until significant progress toward Palestinian rights and independence can be reported to the General Assembly or the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board (note: formerly General Assembly Mission Council.)**
4. **Direct the Stated Clerk to inform our ecumenical partners of this action, both nationally and globally, and call upon them to join in the boycott of these companies.**

### RATIONALE

Since the occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1967, Israel has used its military rule to the advantage of Israeli corporations and economic interests, many times to the detriment of the Palestinian economy under its control.

All Palestinian imports and exports have been controlled, restricting the competition with Israeli producers, and making the Palestinian consumer market into a captive market for Israeli goods. Severe restrictions on movement of Palestinian labor and products inside the occupied territories and to neighboring areas have further increased the dependency of the Palestinian economy on Israeli companies as employers and retailers. The growing network of checkpoints and walls has all but destroyed Palestinian local production and the Palestinian labor bargaining power.

Israeli companies have a relatively high concentration of capital, freedom of movement, and favorable legal conditions. When operating in the occupied territories they also enjoy special governmental support, access to cheap resources, tax incentives, and a very lax enforcement of labor laws and environmental protection laws. These advantages often result in the exploitation of Palestinian labor, Palestinian natural resources, and the Palestinian consumer market (<http://www.whoprofits.org/involvement/economic-exploitation>).

1. *What is AHAVA, what international laws does AHAVA violate and why are we calling for a boycott?*

Ahava Dead Sea Laboratories ([www.ahava.co.il](http://www.ahava.co.il)) is a privately held Israeli cosmetics company that manufactures products using minerals and mud from the Dead Sea. Ahava's products—such as Grape & Avocado Body Wash, Dead Sea Mineral Mud, and Mineral Foot Cream—are widely available in high-end department stores and pharmacies throughout the United States and in Europe. The Hebrew word "Ahava" means love, but there is nothing loving about what the company is doing in the Occupied Palestinian territory of the West Bank. The company's practices are against international law.

The company's main factory and its visitors' center are located in the Israeli settlement of Mitzpe Shalem in the Occupied West Bank. Ahava products are labeled as of "Israeli origin," but according to international public law,

the West Bank cannot be considered to be part of the State of Israel. Ahava uses in its products mud from the Dead Sea, excavated in an occupied area, and thus it exploits occupied natural resources for profit, which is a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention (<http://www.stolenbeauty.org/article.php?id=5015>).

## 2. *What is Hadiklaim and why are we calling for a boycott?*

Hadiklaim is an Israel date growers cooperative that deals with several major supermarkets internationally. Hadiklaim exports under the “King Solomon Dates” and “Jordan River” brand names. Their products are exported by the Israeli company, Almog Tradex Ltd, which claims to export 10,000 tons of Israeli fruits annually. Hadiklaim boasts that Hadiklaim growers and packing houses have approvals from international standard setting bodies (including Bio USDA), as well as the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture and the Bio-Organic Agriculture Association. Hadiklaim packages dates under U.S. supermarket labels, the Hadiklaim name may not show up on the label, yet the fact that the USDA is involved makes it clear that their dates are getting here under some form of packaging.

Hadiklaim signage is displayed on packing houses in the settlements of Beit Ha’Arava, close to the Dead Sea Coast, and Tomer, close to the Palestinian village of Fasayil. In October 2007, a group of campaigners from the Brighton Tubas Friendship and Solidarity Group ([www.brightonpalestine.org](http://www.brightonpalestine.org)) entered Tomer settlement in the occupied Jordan Valley and photographed Hadiklaim medjoul dates, packaged by Carmel Agrexco, labeled “Made in Israel” and marked as bound for Tesco stores (UK). Products exported as “Made in Israel” benefit from the preferential trade terms of the EU-Israel Association Agreement, which came into effect in 2000, when ITN (a British broadcaster) screened an expose in 2007 accusing supermarkets of misleading British consumers. Tesco admitted it had acted “in error” and stated that Israeli dates originating solely in the West Bank will (in the future) be labeled as such.

Date picking in the Jordan Valley is a hazardous business. Workers are hoisted into the trees with a cherry picker and are often left to work on a platform high above the ground for the duration of the working day without meal or toilet breaks. The majority of workers are Palestinian or Thai migrants—who are uniformly paid below the minimum wage. For more info on labor conditions for date pickers in the Jordan Valley see Kav’La Oved and UNISON’S 2009 film, *Bitter Dates* at <http://www.leedspsc.org.uk/?p=1671>.  
<http://corporateoccupation.wordpress.com/2010/08/12/hadiklaim-in-the-jordan-valley/>

## 3. *Why are AHAVA and Hadiklaim being singled out by the PC(USA)?*

There is a lengthy list of Israeli, U.S., and international companies involved in making a profit as the result of illegal occupation in the Palestinian territories. The AHAVA and Hadiklaim have been named because they are two of the most blatant violators of international law that prohibits exploitation of occupied natural resources for profit.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is no stranger to calling for boycotts, both nationally and internationally, because corporate practices violated the human rights, and even threatened the lives of peoples being exploited. In the early 1980s, it called for a boycott of the Swiss corporation, Nestle, because of its promotion of breast milk substitutes in less economically developed countries contributing to the unnecessary suffering and deaths of babies. In 2002 it called for the boycott of Taco Bell as a result of its parent company’s (Yum Brands Food) exploitation of farm workers from Immokalee, Florida. Both boycotts were successful and achieved their desired ends.

The boycott of AHAVA and Hadiklaim is especially relevant because these companies engage not only in the exploitation of Palestinian workers (along with others), but are also inextricably tied to Israel’s illegal occupation of the West Bank. This makes these company’s activities both illegal, according to international law, and immoral, in accordance with the witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in very recent history.

## 4. *Does boycotting the Israeli occupation harm Palestinians?*

Yes, it can have an economic impact. Any kind of economic pressure is bound to harm first and foremost the Palestinians, who are already economically vulnerable because of the restrictions that the Israeli occupation imposes on their ability to study, work, and move people or goods. Despite Israel's exploitation of Palestinian labor, Palestinian natural resources, and the captive Palestinian consumer market, Palestinians themselves have asked for boycotts, divestments, and sanctions because they see them as effective tools to express international solidarity to oppose the Israeli occupation.

We call upon the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to remain consistent in its historical witness against human exploitation for the sake of power and profit anywhere that may occur in the global community.

## COMMENTS

### Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns Advice and Counsel

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns advises that the 220th General Assembly (2012) approve Item 15-02 as amended:

"The Presbytery of San Francisco overtures the 220th General Assembly (2012) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to:

"1. Condemn the production and sale of Israeli products that come from the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

"2. Call for the boycott of [all Israeli products coming from the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including] AHAVA Dead Sea Laboratories Beauty Products, [and all date products of Hadiklaim, the Israel Date Growers Cooperative, Ltd., often marketed by the brand names: King Solomon Dates and Jordan River. (Not Israeli products from Israel).]

~~[3. Call for the boycott of all date products of Hadiklaim, the Israel Date Growers Cooperative, Ltd., often marketed by the brand names: King Solomon Dates and Jordan River.]~~

~~"[4.] [3.]~~ Direct the Stated Clerk to communicate this action to all other PC(USA) councils and entities and invite and strongly encourage those groups and organizations to endorse this boycott.

~~"[5.] [4.]~~ Direct the Stated Clerk to inform our ecumenical partners of this action, both nationally and globally, and call upon them to join in the boycott of these companies."

### ***Rationale***

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns supports this overture because all Israeli companies operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are exploiting the natural resources of a people and territory that is under military occupation. These people have lost all power to assert their rights.

In light of the [overwhelming vote by our sisters and brothers at the United Methodist General Conference in April 2012](#) for a sweeping boycott of ALL goods from ALL Israeli companies operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, ACREC recommends widening this overture from two companies to all Israeli companies based in the illegal settlements (not Israeli products from Israel).

The ACREC believes that the call by Peter Beinart, to "boycott non-democratic Israel," meaning the settlements in the West Bank, is an effective non-violent way to protest the exploitation of Palestinian land and people. (See: [To Save Israel, Boycott the Settlements](#), By Peter Beinart, *The New York Times*, Op-Ed March 18, 2012 – Beinart self-identifies as an Orthodox Jewish Zionist).

The call of our Christian sisters and brothers in Palestine to support them by not buying products from companies in the settlements has parallels to the call for boycotts from the African American community during the civil rights movement. The companies in question profit from illegal exploitation of not only natural resources that belong to the rightful owners of the land, but also migrant workers from Thailand, The Philippines, and others.

#### Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy Advice and Counsel

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) advises that Item 15-02 be approved with amendments as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with brackets and a strike-through; text to be added is shown with brackets and with an underline.]

“1. ~~[Condemn the production and sale of Israeli products that come from the Occupied Palestinian Territories.]~~  
[Call upon all nations to prohibit the import of products made by enterprises in Israeli settlements on Palestinian land.] ...

“4. Direct the Stated Clerk to communicate this action to all other PC(USA) councils and entities and invite and strongly encourage those groups and organizations to endorse this boycott[, until significant progress toward Palestinian rights and independence can be reported to the General Assembly or General Assembly Mission Council].”

#### **Rationale**

The language of the first recommendation of Item 15-02 proposed here comes from the action of the United Methodist General Conference on May 2, 2012, and is a public policy position that would reflect the consistent call of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to end support for the forty-five-year-old military occupation of Palestine. The growth of settlements supported by the Israeli government has increased settler population to more than 500,000 persons, making a two-state solution virtually impossible. The new language proposed would be consistent with the intent of the original language and overall set of recommendations. Peter Beinart, author of *The Crisis of Zionism* and supporter of a general boycott of settlement products, maintains that “One of those simple truths is that holding territory in which one ethnic group enjoys citizenship, the right to vote, free movement and due process while another ethnic group is denied those rights is unjust and corrosive of a country’s democratic fiber” (*New York Times*, 4/29/12, Book Review, p. 6).

The second amendment proposed clarifies the purpose and potential duration of the boycott, in accordance with criteria suggested for Presbyterian engagement in such acts of advocacy outlined below. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) would continue to support commercial activity with enterprises in the State of Israel but not support the continuance of a military occupation and its attendant settlements and resource exploitation.

The item rationale correctly notes that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has approved boycott positions in the past, and notes two dealing with food products: the Nestle Boycott (concerning improperly marketed infant formula in countries lacking adequate clean water) and the Taco Bell Boycott (to increase farm worker wages).

The Presbyterian church’s history of “selective patronage” and consumer boycotts is presented more fully in the booklet commended for study by the General Assembly Mission Council in 1979: “[Boycotts: Policy and Criteria](http://www.pcusa.org/resource/boycotts-policy-analysis-and-criteria/)” (<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/boycotts-policy-analysis-and-criteria/>). That study notes that all “consumer spending reflects personal and group values,” and is thus broadly selective, while what it terms “selective patronage” is reflected in decisions not to patronize discriminatory businesses (such as in “Project Equality”) as well as alcohol, tobacco, and gambling enterprises.

The basic moral logic of not supporting or profiting from activities contrary to Christian values comes through in a General Assembly action in 1937: “We favor the adoption by the Congress of legislation ... which forbids the shipments of Child Labor goods in interstate commerce, and which requires informative labels to be attached to Child Labor goods” (such labels would assist boycotting).

The language of the principle-based first recommendation would also make it clear that the two Israeli companies in question, Ahava and Hadiklaim, are being named due to their salience in the U.S. marketplace, but are not being focused on in isolation from other enterprises taking advantage of the conditions of occupation. Purchasers would be encouraged to look carefully at all settlement products. This is a position taken not only by U.S. Methodists but also the General Council of the United Church of Canada, meeting this August, which has received a twenty-six-page report recommending that its members:

take concrete actions to support the end of the occupation by:

- a. encouraging members of the United Church to avoid any and all products produced in the settlements;
- b. directing the Executive of the General Council to give high priority to establishing a church-wide campaign of economic action directed against one or more settlement products that can be identified as produced in or related to the settlements or the occupied territories
- c. identifying the goal of the campaign as building awareness of United Church members of the illegal settlements’ unjust continuation of the occupation and its impact on the lives of Palestinians and Israelis. ([www.gc41.ca/sites/default/files/israel-palestine-report.pdf](http://www.gc41.ca/sites/default/files/israel-palestine-report.pdf))

The *Canadian Jewish News* reported the chair of the study committee, former Moderator David Giuliano: “To buy settlement products is the same as buying stolen goods; in other words, benefiting from the crime,” Giuliano said. He added, however, that “this is not a call for a boycott of Israel or Israeli products” (<http://www.cjnews.com/?q=node/89927>).

The 1979 study provides criteria for engaging in boycotts and some theological reflection on how the church takes moral stands. In terms of criteria, these include: consistency with church policy, lack of other alternative means of influence (such as shareholding and U.S. legislation), timeliness, effectiveness, impact on other aspects of our mission, and provision for review. The ACSWP finds that these criteria are generally met by the boycott of Ahava and Hadiklaim products, as such nonviolent economic pressure is called for by both Palestinian civil society and broad ecumenical and evangelical groups of Palestinian Christians (in the Kairos Palestine document and more recent “Christ at the checkpoint” conference).

In terms of effectiveness, the Israeli government has passed various measures to prevent or hamper the boycott of settlement products (<http://articles.latimes.com/2011/jul/12/world/la-fg-israel-boycott-20110712>; [http://www.thejewishweek.com/editorial\\_opinion/opinion/why\\_anti\\_boycott\\_laws\\_are\\_democratic](http://www.thejewishweek.com/editorial_opinion/opinion/why_anti_boycott_laws_are_democratic)). It has also been argued that both the Gaza blockade by Israel and the restrictions on East Jerusalem and the West Bank constitute boycott and sanctions against Palestinian goods (<http://972mag.com/are-israelis-boycotting-palestinian-goods/37117/>). Thus, while there is little doubt that the boycott action would be timely, its effectiveness needs to be seen in a context where there is little likelihood of negotiations with the current Israeli government. In fact, all words-only efforts have not deterred the Israeli government from expanding settlements, including the purported “legalization” of three once “illegal” settlements in late April. Thus the boycott strategy may be an effective and very participatory way to support greater justice for the Palestinians, and seems to be regarded by the Israeli government and its supporters as a danger to their control.

At this relatively early stage in the Ahava and Hadiklaim boycott efforts, the strictly financial impact seems unclear. Yet even when companies do not lose major market share, they are concerned about damage to their reputation and its influence on retailers who carry their products. The principle behind the boycott would continue to hold: purchasing these products helps support a military occupation that deprives Palestinians of their land and freedom. Thus *not* purchasing those products is a form of practical integrity that applies moral standards to market relationships.