

Israel divestment resolution rejected by Episcopal body, tabled by Mennonites

by [Lauren Markoe](#) in the [August 5, 2015](#) issue

While the United Church of Christ passed a resolution for divestment from companies working in Israel's occupied territory at its General Synod in June, a similar measure failed at the Episcopal Church convention.

Episcopal News Service reported that the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church "sent a strong and clear message July 2 that divestment from companies and corporations engaged in certain business related to the State of Israel is not in the best interests of the Episcopal Church, its partners in the Holy Land, interreligious relations, and the lives of Palestinians on the ground."

The resolution had asked denominational leaders to monitor "U.S. and foreign corporations that provide goods and services that support the infrastructure of Israel's occupation," ENS reported.

Episcopalians passed two resolutions that affirm peacemaking, including interfaith dialogue, nonviolence training, and advocacy for Palestinian rights.

Meanwhile, delegates to the convention of the 100,000-member Mennonite Church USA tabled a resolution that included an encouragement to review investments by Mennonite agencies in companies connected to Israel's occupation of Palestine. The measure, which will be reworked for the next delegate assembly in 2017, also urges a boycott by individuals and congregations of products connected to the occupation, "including items produced in Israeli settlements."

Mitri Raheb, a Christian Palestinian pastor in Jordan and the Holy Land, who traveled to Cleveland for the UCC synod, said of that resolution, "For Palestinians living under occupation or facing systematic discrimination as citizens of Israel, enduring the destruction of their homes and businesses, the theft of their land for settlements, and living under blockade and siege in Gaza, this action sends a strong signal that they are not alone, and that there are churches who still dare to speak truth to power and stand with the oppressed."

Though the group Jewish Voices for Peace has actively promoted divestment, mainstream Jewish groups overwhelmingly blast divestment as one-sided.

“Blatantly absent from the 2015 UCC resolutions is any mention of Hamas, the terrorist group that still controls Gaza and instigated last summer’s war with Israel by firing thousands of rockets and missiles and building an extensive tunnel network to infiltrate Israel to harm and kill Israeli civilians,” said Noam Marans, the American Jewish Committee’s director of interreligious and intergroup relations.

The 1.8-million-member Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) voted last summer to divest church funds from three American companies involved in Israel’s occupation—Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard, and Motorola Solutions—making it the largest American church to embrace divestment. —Religion News Service; added sources