

Consultation on Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions

Consultation Questions

1 Submitting a response to this consultation

The background to this consultation is outlined here www.methodist.org.uk/media/946418/bdsconsultation-background-0913.pdf.

The Methodist Church in Britain invites responses from individuals, NGOs, faith groups and governmental organisations in the UK, in Israel/Palestine and beyond. Respondents are encouraged to submit responses to this consultation through the online form. See www.methodist.org.uk/BDSBriefing Responses are required by **08.00am, Monday 4 November 2013**. Early responses would be appreciated.

Use of the online form will enable your response to be processed more easily. If you wish to offer additional material – or for other reasons, cannot submit a response through the online form – please contact Peter Tidey at tideyp@methodistchurch.org.uk.

Respondents should not feel obliged to address all the questions. We appreciate that some respondents may have one or two key observations that they wish to make in which case they may leave many of the consultation questions unaddressed.

Responses to this consultation will be treated confidentially. Any verbatim quotes in the briefing from responses received will be published anonymously. The exception will be where responses are provided on behalf of organisations (or individuals representing organisations) and where the organisation concerned would appreciate attribution.

2 Working definitions

Boycott

The broad term 'Boycott' refers to an economic, cultural and academic boycott. Unless stated otherwise (eg "boycott of settlement products"), 'boycott' refers to the avoidance of all Israeli goods in line with the stated call of the BDS Movement.

Consumer boycott

'Consumer boycott' refers to the call on members of the public and institutions to avoid purchase of Israeli products. The call is focused on the international community as it is almost impossible to implement within the West Bank or within Israel.

Divestment

For the purposes of this paper the terms 'Divestment' and 'Disinvestment' are considered to be synonymous. Divestment is the term used here as this is the term most frequently used with respect to BDS, although the Methodist Church in Britain prefers 'disinvestment' which is more commonly used and understood in the UK. The approach of the Methodist Church in Britain to ethical investment is centred on corporate engagement, using our position as an institutional investor to bring ethical concerns to the attention of senior management and

members of Board of major UK companies. Divestment is only considered as an option once engagement has failed.

Sanctions

The terms ‘Sanctions’ is used as an overarching term to cover any state initiated economic restriction on Israel. The term carries the connotation of ‘punitive’ measures and the BDS Movement takes the view that sanctions should be applied as Israel is in breach of its obligation under international law. However, some economic measures proposed, such as the restriction on the award of government grants to projects based in Israeli settlements within the occupied Palestinian territories, are not necessarily punitive in nature but might be based on a desire to see greater consistency in foreign policy. For an account of possible economic measures see Chapter 5 of [Trading Away Peace](#). Restrictions on defence co-operation or diplomatic sanctions have also been proposed.

3 Consultation Questions

The wider context around Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)

1. What do you understand to be the motivation/inspiration behind the call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions in relation to Israel? ¹
2. In your view, what would be the essential elements of any peace agreement in Israel/Palestine? ²

Boycotts

3. Do you support a boycott of products produced within Israeli settlements? ³
4. Do you support the call for a wider consumer boycott of all Israeli products? ⁴
5. If you answer ‘Yes’ to Question 4, what changes would you need to see to be content to end your boycott? ⁵
6. What are the arguments against a consumer boycott of all Israeli products? What are the risks? ⁶
7. If you do not support the call for boycott, divestment and sanctions, could you ever see yourself supporting such a call in the future? Under what circumstances? ⁷
8. What message does the call for a consumer boycott of Israel communicate to the general public? (please specify whether you are answering with reference to the public in the UK, in Israel, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, or elsewhere) ⁸
9. Do you support an academic boycott of Israel? Please explain your reasoning. ⁹
10. Do you support a cultural boycott of Israel? Please explain your reasoning. ¹⁰

Divestment

11. Under what circumstances, if any, should the Methodist Church divest from companies operating in Israel? ¹¹

Sanctions

12. Should the UK government or European Union impose trade or other restrictions on economic relationships with Israel or alternatively limited restrictions on economic engagement with settlements? If so what form should such sanctions take? ¹²

Further Comment

13. What actions other than BDS might members of the Methodist Church take to encourage a political process that could deliver a just and sustainable resolution in Israel and Palestine? ¹³
14. Is there any further theological or other comment that you would like to make in relation to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions or are there papers or other resources that you would highlight?

Notes on the Consultation questions

- 1 There is no universal agreement on what may be behind the motivations of those calling for boycotts. Are there common motivations/intentions among those calling for boycotts? Are there some differing intentions? If so, does it matter?
- 2 This question is asked in order to locate responses on boycott within the context of the respondent's hopes for a desirable/achievable outcome to the conflict in Israel/Palestine.
- 3 Some organisations and individual support a limited boycott of settlement products but would be unhappy with a wide boycott of Israel.
- 4 The call of the BDS Movement is a call for a boycott of all Israeli products.
- 5 The BDS movement is very specific on this point, listing three conditions, whereas the Kairos Palestine document, *A Moment of Truth*, would appear less explicit.
- 6 We hope that both those who support boycotts and those who do not might both be able to address this question.
- 7 Some may be opposed in principle to the use of boycotts while others could be sympathetic to the boycott call but uncomfortable with its use at this point in time.
- 8 Boycotts serve as a media/communication tool. Is the message that is heard the same message that those supporting boycotts would like to communicate? How is the message of boycott heard in different national contexts? Arguments backed by evidence would be appreciated.
- 9 The Palestinian Campaign for an Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel is a part of the BDS movement (www.pacbi.org/).
- 10 The Palestinian Campaign for an Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel is a part of the BDS movement (www.pacbi.org/).
- 11 Respondents may find it useful to be aware of the existing policy of the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church with regard to investment in Israel. Nevertheless responses do not need to be provided in the form of a critique of this policy and we anticipate that this question is likely to be addressed more broadly.
- 12 What would be the likely impact and risks associated with the imposition of economic measures?
- 13 Respondents are invited to address this question by recommending other actions instead of, or supplementary to, BDS