

Oslo Bishop urges Norway churches to join boycott of Israel

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Oslo, May 25 (RHC)-- More voices are joining the chorus of international denunciation of Israeli atrocities against Palestinians, particularly in the wake of the latest bloodshed committed by Israel forces against the besieged people of Gaza.

One of the newest faces raising her voice against such hostilities is Oslo Bishop Kari Veiteberg. Bishop Veiteberg believes a general boycott of Israel is the best means of non-violent resistance to the occupation of Palestine.

"We have both a moral and an obligation under international law not to support the occupation of Palestine financially. We urge the churches in Norway to support boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) as solutions for a lasting and just peace," Veiteberg wrote on Facebook after the recent Israeli

aggression on Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip.

She also shared a picture originally published by the YMCA-YWCA (Young Men's Christian Organization and Young Women's Christian Organization), which advocates a broad economic boycott of Israel.

Her call sparked some criticism, with national-conservative Progress Party heavyweight and Oslo MP Christian Tybring-Gjedde accusing her of anti-Semitism. "I don't think Oslo Bishop Kari Veiteberg belongs in the Church of Norway," Tybring-Gjedde said.

Preses Olav Fykse Tveit, who leads the Bishops' Conference of the Church of Norway, rose in defense of Veiteberg, stressing that the church has for many years worked for justice and peace in collaboration with other churches across the world.

"The Church of Norway has, together with these churches, called for a boycott of goods from the occupied territories, which under international law have been illegally produced and sold. The Bishop of Oslo, the Episcopal Conference and the bishops are engaged based on the church's mission in important societal issues for peace and justice in the world," Fykse Tveit emphasized.

The Israeli aggression on Gaza, which began on May 10, killed 253 Palestinians and wounded more than 1,900 others, before a ceasefire came into effect on May 21st. The aggression followed weeks of Israeli harassment of Palestinians in Jerusalem al-Quds and attempts to steal Palestinian lands in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of the city.

Also last week, Norway's sovereign wealth fund excluded two Israeli companies for constructing and letting out buildings in settlements in the occupied West Bank. The world's largest sovereign wealth fund said on Wednesday that it had sold out of Shapir Engineering and Industry as well as Mivne Real Estate and barred them from its portfolio "due to unacceptable risk that the companies contribute to systematic violations of individuals' rights in situations of war or conflict."

Norway's central bank said in a statement that "The Council on Ethics has recommended Norges Bank to exclude the companies based on the companies' activities associated with Israeli settlements on the West Bank."

Shapir is involved in building homes in Israeli settlements, while Mivne holds a role in renting industrial premises linked to the settlements, according to the Council of Ethics, the independent body that advises the fund on possible exclusions. More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem al-Quds. All Israeli settlements are illegal under international law as they are built on occupied land. The United Nations Security Council has condemned Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions.

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