



HUMAN RIGHTS

Social Criteria Investment Screen

AUTHORITY

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has consistently affirmed its support for human rights as “a common universal standard of justice for living with our differences.”¹ The social statement *For Peace in God’s World* (1995) is grounded in the understanding that God desires Shalom for all human beings and commits the ELCA to “defend the human rights of groups most susceptible to violations.”²

Several ELCA statements, such as *Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective* (1991) and *Sufficient Sustainable Livelihood for All* (1999), also name the defense of human rights as a task for this church and its members. The social message “Human Rights” (2017) affirms, on the basis of these and other ELCA teachings, six broad categories on human rights as a middle link between the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights³ and specific actions. These six categories encompass religious expression, communication and education, communal relationships, political and civic rights, economic rights, and physical goods. The message also expresses that this church’s witness includes exercising financial power as an investor and shareholder prudently to focus attention on egregious violations of human rights, and to encourage corporations to take responsibility to respect human rights.

“Justice for Holy Land Through Responsible Investment” (ELCA social policy resolution 16.06.31)⁴ directed development of “a human rights social criteria investment screen based on the social teachings of this church and, in the case of Israel and Palestine, specifically based on the concerns raised in “Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine,” including the management of collective or personal investments “with concern for their impact on the lives of all Holy Land peoples who suffer from the ongoing conflict.”

1 “Human Rights” (ELCA social message, 2017), 5, www.elca.org/faith/faith-and-society/social-messages/human-rights

2 *For Peace in God’s World* (ELCA social statement, 1995), 14, www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Peace.

3 See www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/.

4 “Justice for Holy Land Through Responsible Investment” (ELCA social policy resolution, 2016), CA16.06.31, elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/Justice_for_Holy_LandSPR16.pdf

Corporate Social Responsibility in the ELCA uses the tools of screening of investments, shareholder advocacy and community investing to work with corporations, calling them to ensure that people are treated fairly and with dignity and to create sustainable communities.

More at ELCA.org/CSR.

WORDING OF SCREEN

The ELCA recommends not investing in corporations benefiting from the most egregious denials of human rights.

DEFINITION OF PROBLEM

The ELCA's social message "Human Rights" affirms six broad categories of human rights that the ELCA seeks to nurture, as described in its history of social teaching.

1. Humans have been created for divine relationship and have the right to engage in that relationship through such means as worship and devotional practices.
2. Humans are creatures and creators of symbol and meaning and have the right to think and communicate freely and to be educated.
3. Humans are communal beings and have the right to the protection of foundational relationships, such as marriage and family. No one has the right to sunder or violate fundamental communal relationships or turn them into a commodity.
4. Humans are political and civic beings and have the right to equal access and participation in legal, civic and political decisions affecting them.
5. Humans are economic beings and have the right to participate fully in an economy where resources are justly allocated with a view to sustainability. Humans may not be treated as commodities.
6. Humans are physical beings and have the right to sufficient and sustainable levels of physical goods such as water, food, shelter and health care. This includes treating creation sustainably so the next generation has sufficient physical goods.

Recognizing that so many and such broad categories of rights could represent an infinite number of possibilities, this screen focuses on egregious denials of human rights taking place in occupied or controlled territories, given the specific authorization in "Justice for Holy Land Through Responsible Investment." Access to rights takes place in the context of both physical realities and social systems.⁵ Conflict makes equal access and participation in legal and political decisions difficult to ensure. In disputed or occupied territories, these rights are rarely guaranteed.

The engagement strategy "Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine," named in the ELCA social policy resolution 16.06.31, gives priority to working toward "Israelis and Palestinians co-existing in justice and peace, as citizens of viable and secure Israeli and Palestinian states"⁶ as foundational to building a just peace for all. Such citizenship is possible only when the rights of humans as political and civic beings are upheld. The violation of rights in any of the categories can inhibit the pursuit of a just peace, not just in the Holy Land but also in any disputed or occupied territories.

5 "Human Rights," 11.

6 "Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine" (2005), 51, elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/PNW_Strategy.pdf

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Recognizing that various investors will implement this along a continuum, for the purpose of this screen, investments might include screening companies supporting and benefiting from occupation. It could also include investments that promote positive economic development in such regions.

SOCIAL POLICY AND STUDIES

For Peace in God's World (ELCA social statement, 1995), www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Peace

Sufficient Sustainable Livelihood for All (ELCA social statement, 1999), www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Economic-Life

"Human Rights" (ELCA social message, 2017), www.elca.org/faith/faith-and-society/social-messages/human-rights

"Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine" (ELCA pre-assembly report, 2005), elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/PNW_Strategy.pdf

Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO) Strategy (ELCA strategy statement, 2016), elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/AMMPARO_Strategy_Final_042616.pdf