



MIDDLE EAST

Selective Purchasing Guide

The economic impact of the conflict in Israel and Palestine on the Palestinian people can scarcely be understated. Already stagnant due to multiple factors, the economy in Palestine has been catastrophically affected since the Hamas attacks in southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, and Israel's declaration of war against Hamas; [poverty levels soared](#) in the wake of renewed conflict.

The ELCA is involved in Palestine through its companion church in the Holy Land, the [Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land](#) (ELCJHL), and together with the ELCJHL in the [Lutheran World Federation](#) (LWF). The LWF is a global communion whose vital Jerusalem-area program has pursued projects related to health, education and humanitarian aid in the occupied Palestinian territories for over 65 years.

Sumud, the ELCA's program for accompaniment, awareness-raising and advocacy for justice in Palestine and Israel, provides many resources to introduce members to ELCA engagement in and for the Holy Land:

- Introductory video and study guide, www.elca.org/Resources/Sumud
- Webinar series on advocacy and awareness, www.elca.org/our-work/publicly-engaged-church/sumud

ELCA ENGAGEMENT

Freed by the transformative life of Christ, the ELCA is committed to accompaniment, advocacy and awareness-raising with our partners in the Holy Land and in the United States. For the past two decades, that work was organized through the ELCA Peace Not Walls campaign. In October 2023, the ELCA announced that, following an in-depth review by ELCA staff and leadership from the ELCJHL, Peace Not Walls would be renamed and reconfigured as a new initiative, Sumud: For Justice in Palestine and Israel.

Our engagement in the Middle East has informed and shaped the development of our social teaching.

ELCA SOCIAL TEACHING

Broadly speaking, ELCA social teaching in [For Peace in God's World](#) (1995) identifies economic justice as integral to a culture of peace (Page 16), and its social

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.

statement on economic life, *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* (1999), discusses poverty at length (Pages 4-6) and commits this church to address the complex causes of poverty.

The ELCA Churchwide Assembly has taken specific actions with regard to economic need in Israel and Palestine:

- In 2005, it adopted the Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine, which calls for stewarding economic resources in ways that support the quest for peace in the region. See [Recommendations: Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine](#).
- In 2007, it elaborated on these economic measures with the following action: “To call upon the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to underscore the call for economic initiatives by this church and its members in the ‘Peace, Not Walls’ campaign. Such initiatives, in consultation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, could include:
 - purchasing of products from Palestinian providers and
 - exploration of the feasibility of refusing to buy products produced in Israeli settlements.” (See 2007 Churchwide Assembly Minutes, Page 333: elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/CWA2007.pdf)
- In 2016, it encouraged ELCA members, congregations, synods, agencies and institutions to increase positive investment in Palestine and other underresourced areas where human rights abuses materially impact the well-being of all people: elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/Justice_for_Holy_LandSPR16.pdf
- In 2016, it encouraged the ELCA to promote the economic empowerment of Palestinians, including investment in Palestinian projects and businesses: download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/For_Peace_in_Holy_LandSPR16.pdf

PRODUCTS TELL A STORY

Palestinian products have a story to tell. They are one way for Palestinians to speak their history, tell the story of their culture and maintain their dignity. Purchasing Palestinian products empowers the Palestinian people to make a difference in their communities. Despite the Israeli occupation, Palestinians live lives full of beauty and of pride in their heritage and tradition.

Purchasing from certain Palestinian projects contributes directly to the Palestinian economy, bringing security and stability to Palestinian families.

TRAVEL

If you travel to the Holy Land, choosing a company that hires Palestinians as

Christian guides will give you a different perspective. Many Christian guides can travel to the West Bank and Israel.

OLIVE OIL AND OLIVE WOOD

“To this day,” the [Arab News reports](#), “between 80,000 and 100,000 families in the Palestinian territories rely on olives and their oil as primary or secondary sources of income. The industry accounts for about 70 percent of local fruit production and contributes about 14 percent to the local economy.

“It is perhaps no surprise, then, that these hardy trees feature so prominently in Palestinian art and literature, even in the far-flung diaspora, as symbols of rootedness in an age of displacement, self-sufficiency in times of hardship, and peace in periods of war.”

Olive oil

Olive oil is a symbol of persistence to the Palestinian people. Indeed the ELCA’s program of accompaniment in the Middle East has been named Sumud, or “perseverance” in Arabic, to reflect how meaningful that concept is to Palestinians. Olive oil can be ordered from the Lutheran World Federation (information below) or from Palestinian companies.

- Oil from the 800 olive trees on Lutheran World Federation property, on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, is used in the kitchen of Augusta Victoria Hospital and provides income to offset the hospital’s operational costs. The olives are produced without pesticides or chemical fertilizer. Local workers and volunteers harvest the olives by hand every fall, and most of the fruit is pressed in Beit Jala. The olive oil is available with a glass bottle specially made in Hebron. For more information, visit jerusalem.lutheranworld.org/content/olive-oil-91

Olive wood

Working with olive wood is a tradition passed down from generation to generation. Olive wood is sold throughout the Holy Land, and you can purchase olive wood handicrafts from Palestinian artisans (remember to look for fair-trade products).

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN JORDAN AND THE HOLY LAND

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) has ministries throughout the Holy Land. Consider donating to the ELCJHL [here](#).