



Divestment:

A Guide for

Faith Communities

& Activists

DIVESTFROMWARMACHINE.ORG



This campaign guide was produced by CODEPINK in support of the Divest from the War Machine Campaign.

About CODEPINK

CODEPINK is a women-led grassroots organization working to end U.S. wars and militarism, support peace and human rights initiatives, and redirect our tax dollars into healthcare, education, green jobs and other life-affirming programs. Founded in fall 2002 as a grassroots effort to prevent the US war on Iraq, we continue to organize for justice for Iraqis and to hold war criminals accountable. We actively oppose the continuing U.S. war in Afghanistan, torture, the detention center at Guantanamo, weaponized and spy drones, the prosecution of whistleblowers, U.S. support for the Israeli occupation of Palestine and repressive regimes. Rooted in a network of local organizers, online supporters and generous donors, with an emphasis on joy and humor, our tactics include satire, street theatre, creative visuals, civil resistance, and directly challenging powerful decision-makers in government and corporations. And of course, wearing pink!

More information

For more information, latest updates and more on global efforts for peace and disarmament, visit divestfromwarmachine.org.

Please keep us informed about your actions and activities by emailing us at divest@codepink.org.



The Moral Imperative to Divest from the War Machine

Every major religious and ethical organization has taken a stand against war and violence as the solution to human conflict in the 21st Century. To move this position from theory to practice the Divest from the War Machine campaign invites faith communities to join cities and other institutions by divesting from the war machine. Faith communities must stand as the moral leaders in working to address the scourge of war by condemning and divesting from the companies that profit from selling the weapons that fuel violent conflicts around the world.

"It is an absurd contradiction to speak of peace, to negotiate peace, and at the same time promote or permit the global arms trade. Is this war or that war really a war to solve problems? Or is it a commercial war for selling weapons in illegal trade and so that the merchants of death can get rich?"

— Pope Francis

"We must not lose sight of the real problem, which is not the individual with a revolver but death and even genocide as big business ... It is this polite, massively organized white-collar murder machine that threatens the world with destruction."

— Thomas Merton *Essential Writings*

"A civilization that spends more money on war than on education and peace is anything but civilized."

— The Dalai Lama



Introduction

The Divest from the War Machine Campaign aims to encourage faith communities to examine their investments and to divest from the arms industry for moral reasons. Faith communities have an opportunity to take moral leadership in confronting and diluting the power of the arms industry. When considering whether or not divestment and reinvestment around armament and weapons manufacturers are the right choice for faith communities, consider that these are companies that perpetuate large scale, systematic harm and intractable opposition to change. Divestment offers faith communities the opportunity to lead in changing society's moral code.

Weapons companies profit from war and the exploitation of civilians and our natural resources. Our faith communities have an opportunity to highlight the overwhelming spread of militarism, both globally and domestically, by excluding weapons companies from their stock portfolios. Faith communities are an integral part of elevating the message that the U.S. should change its priorities, and focus on life-affirming investments that build a sustainable and peaceful economy.

Managed by financial advisors and treasurers, faith communities' investments provide security for countless working and retired members and enable the infrastructure and buildings of the faith community to be maintained and contribute to the mission of the faith in a wide variety of ways. Socially responsible investing (SRI) is not a new concept, and the faith community has led the way in highlighting issues that are facing our nation and our world. The intersection of militarism with other SRI priorities cannot be ignored, and is why the faith community's leadership is so important.

The U.S. war machine is impoverishing our people and depriving our social resources of desperately needed funds. This is a shared American problem. Weapons don't house us, don't clothe us, don't help us get to work and don't cure our diseases. This campaign is a tool to demand a transformation of American priorities away from building more and stronger bombs, and toward educating, feeding, housing, and healing our people and making the U.S. a more peaceful presence in the world. Faith communities' investments have the potential to be a major cultural and financial power in condemning the merchants of death that fuel and supply the war machine.



How to Use This Guide

The purpose of this Campaigner Guide is to provide tools, resources, lessons, and support for your campaign to persuade your faith community to divest from weapons manufacturers. Every action makes a difference, and we hope this Guide will inspire campaigners to take practical steps towards achieving an ethical dimension to all institutional investments and challenging the United States' role in arming the world.

How you use it will depend on your area of interest as well as the usual constraints of time and energy. Inside, you'll find information that will be useful no matter your level of interest and experience. The arms trade is deeply entrenched and it will be a long road to divesting from the war machine. It is important that we take a long view, recognizing that the changes we are working to achieve will not occur overnight. But we can build upon each other's work and victories. Success on one campaign may give others the encouragement to take their campaign a step further.

Why Divestment?

Divestment is a direct tool that provides a clear means of organizing to target the war machine by stigmatizing those companies that profit from war-making. Divestment is a focused, targeted, empowering, and effective organizing technique that enables campaigners to target different financial institutions. These campaigns can target universities, religious institutions, pension funds, banks, and more. With so many possible angles for action, divestment is an accessible tool that allows for individuals and organizations to take concrete action. The fossil fuel divestment movement has resulted in over 5 trillion dollars being taken away from the fossil fuel industry and reinvested in more clean, sustainable, and ethical ways. This shows divestment is a great tactic for taking on a strong, established industry and for moving money away from the unethical and unsustainable systems and into other life-affirming sectors.

Divestment will serve as a major tool for public education and mobilization. Divestment is an opportunity to educate people on the connections between the militarization of our streets at home and our government's assaults on human rights and sovereignty around the world. It will also cast a light on the companies making billions from the unrestrained spread of militarism.

Divestment can also help shape a national conversation. While the arms industry maintains its stranglehold over Congress and U.S. foreign policy, divestment is a strong method for a unified public to cast a light on the profit-driven merchants of death that are making a killing on killing and stealing our futures. While our government continues to treat the arms trade as a legitimate and ordinary industry, the public can express that we want our assets, and our country, to divest from the war machine and to invest in the health of our people and planet.



How to do It

Our ultimate aim is for faith institutions to commit to full divestment from weapons companies. Local faith communities can show their support by making a commitment to divest (or, for those without existing weapons investments, committing not to invest in weapons in the future) and writing to national and regional investors from their community, calling on them to do the same. Here are the steps your faith community must take:

Step 1: Commit. Make a commitment to divest from weapons companies.

Step 2: Communicate. Write to national/regional investors to communicate the decision.

Step 3: Reinvest. Move the investments and/or switch to a weapons-free fund or account.

Commit

By making a commitment to divest from weapons, your local faith community can make a big difference in supporting the campaign for national religious institutions to divest from weapons companies. First of all, you will need to find out how your faith community's finances are managed. Your faith community may just have a bank account or it may hold investments as well. Either way, your community can commit to divest.

In most cases, investment decisions are made by a governing body or treasurer. You could ask your faith community leader who makes these decisions and how you could put forward a proposal on divestment. By working with at least one other person, you can encourage each other and show broader support for divestment in your faith community. Please let us know if your faith community makes a divestment commitment! By making a public commitment, your local faith community can have a broader impact on those who share your faith and for others in your local community.

In order to make a divestment commitment, we are asking that faith communities:

1. Make no new investments in nuclear and conventional weapons producers.

Institutions should develop policies that exclude all financial links with companies involved in the production of nuclear and conventional weapons. Investment makes production possible. This means that no exceptions should be made for any type of financial product or activity.

2. Sell existing investments tied to these companies within 1-2 years.

Religious institutions should get rid of stocks, bonds, or investment funds that are invested in major arms producers. New requests for investment should also be declined. They should apply their divestment policy to all their activities: commercial banking, investment banking and asset management. All of these activities actively assist a company in the production of weapons.



3. Reinvest in clean, life-affirming solutions such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable agriculture, water efficiency, and more.

When reinvesting assets, churches should make deliberate choices about how money is invested – and should make those choices represent values of sustainability, community empowerment, action on climate, establishment of a renewable energy economy, etc.

Communicate

Write to national/regional bodies to communicate your local institution’s decision. As a local institution, you can now increase your impact by encouraging your community, both nationally and regionally, to make further steps to divest from nuclear and conventional weapons producers.

Reinvest

Move investments and/or switch to a weapons-free fund

As well as divesting from weapons companies, your institution can play a key role in supporting the transition to a peace economy by investing in clean, ethical sectors other socially responsible areas.

The objectives of reinvestment can include;

- increasing community empowerment and prosperity
- shifting economic control,
- driving social equity, and
- promoting ecological well-being
- And so much more!

The Future of Life Institute has compiled a list of weapons free funds, and you can find it here: <https://futureoflife.org/invest/>. It may be helpful to share this list with those in charge of your Church’s investments and will bolster your argument that ethical and peaceful alternative investments are available.