

ANOTHER FIRM JOINS THE 'BOYCOTT LIST'

October 8, 2009 at 7:07 am ([Boycott Israel](#), [Divestment](#), [Israel](#), [Palestine](#))

*In its Code of Conduct, the Volvo Group commits itself to support and respect the protection of human rights and to ensure that it is not complicit in human rights abuses. **However**, by providing construction and transportation equipment that facilitates Israel's occupation, the company violates this Code of Conduct on a daily basis.*

With increasing calls for boycott of and divestment from companies that support Israel's occupation, Volvo Group can expect activists around the world to put pressure on responsible investors to divest from the company and to call on public bus companies not to buy Volvo buses.

Volvo providing armored buses for Israeli settlements

Adri Nieuwhof

Following reports published by The Electronic Intifada on the use of Volvo equipment in the demolition of Palestinian houses in 2007, the Volvo Group stated that it did not condone the use of its equipment for such purposes. Claiming to have no control over the use of its products, [Volvo affirmed that its Code of Conduct decries unethical behavior](#). In spite of these claims, The Electronic Intifada has found that through its Volvo Buses branch, the Volvo Group is providing armored buses to transport Israeli settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).

Volvo Buses is co-owner of Merkavim Ltd., an Israeli transport technology company. Another shareholder in the company is Mayer's Cars and Trucks, the exclusive Israeli representative of companies from the Volvo Group. According to Merkavim's website, the company was chosen by Volvo as "its major body builder in the Middle East." However, the Who Profits from the Occupation? project recently reported that Merkavim manufactures an armored version of Volvo's Mars Defender bus for the Israeli public transport company Egged. Egged uses the Mars Defender to provide bus services for illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Merkavim proudly announced on its website that the Mars Defender offers protection and ultimate comfort when traveling through war zones or routes susceptible to terrorist attacks. In a promotional video the armored bus is shown driving along Israel's wall in the West Bank and crossing checkpoints (

<http://www.merkavim.co.il/upload/defender.wmv>, accessed 6 October). In another video on Merkavim's homepage, Volvo's Senior Vice-President of Business Region Europe, Lars Blom, declares that "Three core values that are very important to us are quality, environmental care and safety. ... [T]he products we are developing with Merkavim also deliver these three core values plus reliability" (http://www.merkavim.co.il/movies_library/merkavim.wmv, accessed 7 October 2009)

According to Merkavim, in the video promoting the bus, the Mars Defender "looks like any other modern bus," but it is "the world's most armored bus." Indeed, the company calls it "the bus that saves lives!" As the narrator explains that the bus is "designed to safeguard the most precious cargo," the camera pans over Israeli soldiers lining up to board the bus and on patrol with their



Merkavim's promotional video shows Israeli soldiers boarding an armored bus.

machine guns at the ready. The video explains that Israel has "adapted its world renowned expertise in military and defense technologies to deal with" the "growing threat" of "terrorists and hostile forces." It adds that Merkavim "blends this state of the art know-how with its own expertise" to produce the Mars Defender. Built on a Volvo chassis, the Mars Defender's sides, front, roof and floor are shielded with steel armored panels and it is fitted with bullet- and explosion-proof armored glass windows as well as "run-flat" tires. According to the company, these safety measures allow the bus to withstand "grenades, car bombs, roadside charges and 7.62 caliber armor-piercing bullets." Merkavim claims that these features are needed because "people trust this bus with their lives."

The 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on Israel's wall in the West Bank confirmed that settlements violate Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Article 49 explicitly states that the Occupying Power is not allowed to deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies. Bus services with Volvo subsidiary's Mars Defender armored buses facilitate the maintaining of illegal settlements in the OPT.

In its Code of Conduct, the Volvo Group commits itself to support and respect the protection of human rights and to ensure that it is not complicit in human rights abuses. However, by providing construction and transportation equipment that facilitates Israel's occupation, the company violates this Code of Conduct on a daily basis. With increasing calls for boycott of and divestment from companies that support Israel's occupation, Volvo Group can expect activists around the world to put pressure on responsible investors to divest from the company and to call on public bus companies not to buy Volvo buses.

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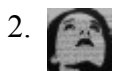
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