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## Business

# Divestment of another sort

## Money manager offering 'terror-free' investments

By E.B. SOLOMONT Jerusalem Post correspondent



**MARK LANGERMAN.** 'Unless you pass the smell test, we won't participate in any of your securities offerings'

**N**EW YORK – For Arizona based money manager Mark Langerman, it all started with a client who had a conscience. Upon returning from a conference on divestment, the client informed Langerman he wanted to “put his money where his mouth was” and divest from companies doing business in countries that sponsor terrorism. As it turned out, Langerman had to dismantle and then reassemble the entire portfolio, but realized his client was on to something. “Both personally and professionally I did a lot of soul searching and realized this is something I need to do,” Langerman said recently.

Three years later, Langerman and Paul Seidman have launched Empowerment Financial Group to provide “terror free” investment products. With a portfolio launched in May, Langerman said investors could hold companies accountable for doing business in countries that

supported terrorism. “The importance here is on a large scale,” Langerman said. “Our goal is to help limit access to the US capital market for these companies. It’s an exclusionary model. We have a virtual electric fence. Unless you pass the smell test, we won’t participate in any of your securities offerings.” For Langerman, the “economic war on terror” started with one client but has grown. Mobilizing investors, he recognized, “could be a very, very powerful thing.”

Langerman’s goal is ultimately to have a mutual fund that is terrorfree. Currently, he has several million dollars in the portfolio, and every transaction is screened for involvement in terror-sponsoring nations. Once a quarter, the portfolio is certified terrorfree by an independent researcher. As of now, there are 586 companies on his exclusion list. Langerman is prohibited from discussing returns but said, “We don’t believe investors have to compromise return in order to invest based on their values.” In fact, one of his clients cited “good business” as a main factor driving his own terrorfree investment portfolio. “You can look at things from a religious standpoint, you can look at things from a moral standpoint, all of which are very important. But some people, when they’re investing, will look at things from an economic standpoint,” said the investor, a Michigan real estate developer. “It’s the right economic thing to do. When you have choices, why not invest in something that is promoting a terrorfree world, rather than invest in companies that are investing [in] or do business with countries or others that are invested in statesponsored terrorism?”

**For More Information:**  
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