

RESOLUTION OF WITNESS REGARDING THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Based on the resolution text presented by the United Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network Steering Committee, modified at the request of the Central Atlantic Board to include calls for inter-religious dialogue

The psalmist celebrates, “How good it is when brothers and sisters dwell together in unity.”

(Psalm 133) Yet today the Middle East is torn by disunity between Semitic brothers and sisters separated by “dividing walls of hostility.” (Ephesians 2:14) We hear the call of the prophet Micah,
“And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8) As disciples of Jesus, we hear and seek to heed his call to be peacemakers: responding to violence with non-violence and extending love to all. In the words of the Kairos Palestine Document, “True Christian theology is a theology of love and solidarity with the oppressed, a call to justice and equality among peoples.” (*Kairos-Palestine 2009: A Moment of Truth*)¹

Therefore, in the spirit of the ancient prophets and the ministry of Jesus, we offer this resolution:

WHEREAS, in 1985 the Fifteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ committed itself to be a Just Peace Church;²

WHEREAS, historically the UCC has affirmed Israel’s right to exist within secure and internationally recognized boundaries (GS 16[1987]³ and GS 18[1991]⁴) and asserted the rights of Palestinians to enjoy sovereignty in an independent, contiguous, and viable state of their own, within secure and recognized boundaries (GS 16 [1987], GS 17[1989],⁵ and GS 18[1991];

WHEREAS, past General Synods have identified the Israeli Occupation of Palestinian land and its human rights abuses committed therein to be a major source of conflict and have called for the end of the construction and expansion of settlements (GS 18 [1991] and GS 21[1997]⁶);

WHEREAS, the UCC is deeply committed to interfaith relationships and General Synods have confessed to the sin of anti-Semitism and proclaimed its

renunciation (GS 23 [2001]);⁷ and have denounced actions against Islam or Muslims based on ignorance or fear (GS 28 [2011]);⁸

WHEREAS, as demonstrated through ongoing dialogue and partnerships, the UCC values and nurtures its relationships with Jewish groups in the US and Israel who seek justice, equality, and freedom for both peoples, including groups with differing perspectives on the conflict;

WHEREAS, Palestinians in the West Bank have lived since 1967 under Israeli military occupation that subjects them to many human rights abuses, including: loss of their land for the purpose of building Israeli settlements; limited access to their land and to each other on account of the route of the Separation Wall on Occupied Palestinian Territory; systematic displacement into small, non-contiguous geographic enclaves separated by barriers and checkpoints; gross inequality in the amount of water allocated to them; severe and arbitrary travel restrictions; limited access to holy sites; segregated roads; demolition of homes; destruction of their crops by settlers and the Israeli army; and arbitrary arrest, even of children;⁹

WHEREAS, the Israeli government has subjected Palestinians in Gaza to military attacks using deadly force beyond that necessary for Israel's acknowledged need for self-defense, has destroyed Gaza's infrastructure and economy, and has imposed: severe limits on personal entry and on the entry of products essential to Gazans' well-being; a six mile fishing limit in violation of international law and the Oslo accords; and strict control of electronic communications, as well as air and sea space;¹⁰

WHEREAS, Israel has annexed Palestinian East Jerusalem and separated it from the West Bank and Gaza and continues to appropriate Palestinian properties there for Jewish settlements and to deny building permits to Palestinians, as well as to revoke the residency rights of many of its Palestinian citizens there;¹¹

WHEREAS, Israel refuses to end, but instead has sought to solidify, its occupation of territory conquered in the 1967 War, leading to numerous illegal actions and human rights abuses there by the Israeli government and military in defiance of United Nations resolutions,¹² and refuses to respect the 4th Geneva Convention as called for by the International Court of Justice in its opinion concerning the Separation Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory;¹³

WHEREAS, our Palestinian Christian partners, seeking an alternative to violence born of hopelessness and despair, have authored *Kairos Palestine 2009-‘A Moment of Truth’: A Word of Faith, Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering* as a call and summons to their global partners to engage in non-violent measures that will pressure Israel to end its occupation;¹⁴

WHEREAS, the resolution “Concerning the Use of Economic Leverage in Promoting Peace in the Middle East,” passed by the General Synod in 2005, calls upon “the Covenanted Ministries, Pension Boards, United Church Foundation, local churches and members to use economic leverage, including, but not limited to: advocating the reallocation of US foreign aid so that the militarization of the Middle East is constrained; making positive contributions to groups and partners committed to the non-violent resolution of the conflict; challenging the practices of corporations that gain from the continuation of the conflict; and divesting from those companies that refuse to change their practice of gain from the perpetuation of violence, including the Occupation”;¹⁵

WHEREAS, despite years of corporate engagement and the submission of shareholder resolutions from United Church Funds¹⁶ and other religious and secular groups, few companies have withdrawn any of their operations that support the Occupation;

WHEREAS, Jewish groups in the US such as Jewish Voice for Peace¹⁷ and American Jews for a Just Peace-Boston,¹⁸ as well as Israeli groups such as the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions¹⁹ and Coalition of Women for Peace,²⁰ support using boycott and divestment strategies against the Israeli Occupation; and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ’s efforts to end the Occupation through economic leverage and advocacy for the protection of human rights of all Palestinians and Israelis are not aimed at isolating Israel or any other party but reflect the belief that engagement and communication among all affected by the current tragic situation in the Middle East are in the deepest interests of both Palestinians and Israelis;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2014 Annual Meeting of the Central Atlantic Conference of the United Church of Christ authorize the Board of Directors of the

Conference to submit a resolution to the 30th General Synod of the United Church of Christ meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, which:

CALLS upon the churches and church members to study the *Kairos Palestine* document and take heed of its call for non-violent measures pressuring Israel to end its occupation, in solidarity with the Palestinian people;²¹

CALLS upon the United Church of Christ Board, United Church of Christ Pension Boards, United Church Funds, Conferences, local churches, members, and other related United Church of Christ entities to divest any holdings in companies that, after careful consideration, are found to profit from the occupation of the Palestinian Territories by the state of Israel, including, but not limited to, Caterpillar Inc, Motorola Solutions, Hewlett-Packard Development Company LP, G4S, and Veolia Environnement and its subsidiaries;²²

CALLS upon all national entities of the church to boycott goods identified as produced in or using the facilities of illegal settlements located in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including, but not limited to, Ahava skin care products,²³ SodaStream products,²⁴ and Hadiklaim dates;²⁵ and upon church members to join boycotts of such goods in their local communities;

CALLS upon the United Church of Christ Collegium of Officers and church members to persist in the request to Congress, previously made by a number of religious leaders, to ensure that U.S. aid to Israel violates neither the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act, which prohibits assistance to any country that engages in a consistent pattern of human rights violations, nor the U.S. Arms Export Control Act, which limits the use of U.S. weapons to “internal security” or “legitimate self-defense”;²⁶

COMMENDS United Church of Christ leadership for continuing to dialogue with major Jewish organizations and calls for UCC-wide participation in a rigorous dialogue among the three Abrahamic faiths at all levels - in particular between local congregations – in order to identify ways in which groups of congregations of different faiths can work in concert to promote sacred reconciliation among all people who are affected by the conflict in the Middle East and to influence public policies in ways that will promote peace and social justice for Palestinians and Israelis;

CALLS upon the United Church of Christ Board to monitor the implementation of this resolution by all UCC national entities and to ensure that those who manage the United Church Board's own invested funds and who provide United Church Board employee health and pension benefits are in compliance with the resolution; and

ASKS the General Minister and President to provide an annual report to the whole church on the implementation of this resolution, including a summary of interfaith dialogue at various levels, along with examples of interfaith, congregation-to-congregation peace efforts.

IT IS UNDERSTOOD that with respect to any proposals for action contained in this resolution, the Collegium of Officers, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body; and that the funding for implementation will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

Approved by the delegates to the 50th Annual Meeting of the Central Atlantic Conference June 14, 2014

¹ <http://www.kairopalestine.ps/sites/default/Documents/English.pdf>

² "General Synod pronouncement and proposal for action on the United Church of Christ as a 'Just Peace Church,'" <http://www.ucc.org/beliefs/theology/general-synod-pronouncement.html>

³ "The Israeli Palestinian Conflict," <http://globalministries.org/mee/resolutions/ucc-resolutions-related-to-israelpalestine/1987-ip-resolution.html>

⁴ "Consequences of the Persian Gulf War for a Just Peace Church," <http://globalministries.org/mee/resolutions/ucc-resolutions-related-to-israelpalestine/1991-gulf-war-resolution.html>

⁵ "The Middle East," <http://globalministries.org/mee/resolutions/ucc-resolutions-related-to-israelpalestine/1989-mid-east-resolution.html>

⁶ "Palestine/Israel," <http://globalministries.org/mee/resolutions/ucc-resolutions-related-to-israelpalestine/1997-palestine-israel-resol.html>

⁷ Minutes of the Twenty-third General Synod, "Resolution: Anti-Semitism," pp. 11-12, <http://www.ucc.org/assets/pdfs/synod/gs23.pdf>

⁸ <http://uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/Resolution-On-Actions-of-Hostility-Against-Islam.pdf> (2011)

⁹ Annual Report, B'Tselem, "*Human Rights in the Occupied Territories 2011*," http://www.btselem.org/annual_report_2011 and UN Human Rights Council Session 12, "*Human Rights in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories*," <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/12session/A-HRC-12-48.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en/>

¹¹ "Background on East Jerusalem," B'Tselem, www.btselem.org/jerusalem

¹² <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/study-israel-leads-in-ignoring-security-council-resolutions-1.31971> and <http://www.ifamericansknew.org/stat/un.html>

¹³ Advisory Opinion, International Court of Justice, 9 July 2004, "*Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*," <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?pr=71&code=mwp&p1=3&p2=4&p3=6>

¹⁴ <http://www.kairopalestine.ps/sites/default/Documents/English.pdf>

¹⁵ <http://globalministries.org/mee/resolutions/ucc-resolutions-related-to-israel-palestine/2005-economic-leverage.html>

¹⁶ United Church Funds, "*UCF Mideast Engagements*," <http://ucfunds.org/social-responsibility/corporate-engagement/economic-leverage/promoting-peace/united-church-funds-engagements/>

¹⁷ www.jvp.org

¹⁸ www.ajjpboston.org

¹⁹ <http://icahdusa.org/an-open-letter-from-jeff-halper/>

²⁰ <http://www.coalitionofwomen.org/>

²¹ <http://www.kairopalestine.ps/sites/default/Documents/English.pdf>

²² www.whoprofits.org and <https://wedivest.org/>

²³ <http://www.codepink4peace.org/section.php?id=415>

²⁴ <http://sodastreamboycott.org>

²⁵ <http://whoprofits.org/company/hadiklaim-israel-date-growers-cooperative>

²⁶ Letter from religious leaders asking Congress to condition Israel military aid on human rights compliance, dated October 2012.
<http://globalministries.org/news/mee/pdfs/Military-aid-to-Israel-Oct-1-Final.pdf>