

Title: Extending Support for a Just Peace in Israel/Palestine

Originating Body: Chignecto Presbytery

Financial Implications if known:

Staffing Implications if known:

Source of Funding if known:

That the 42nd General Council 2015:

- 1. Affirm the work of the United Network for a Just Peace for Palestine and Israel and General Council staff in raising awareness of the United Church of Canada policy in support of a just peace for Palestine and Israel.**
- 2. Expand the current strategies and actions approved at the 41st General Council to provide additional resources for use in local mission units to deepen understandings for denominational members as to why Palestinians, cry out from their suffering under Israeli occupationⁱ by:**
 - a) Providing additional resources to allow UNJPPI and General Council staff to build and deepen relations with Canadian, American and British churches and church related NGO's in order to co-ordinate and share in the production of resources and programs focussed on supporting a just peace for Palestinians and Israelis,**
 - b) Developing a partnership with Independent Jewish Voices and deepening our relationship with that group in advocating for a just peace for Palestine and Israel,**
 - c) Dialoguing with other denominations and church related bodies about their research into companies that are complicit in or substantially benefit from violations of the 4th Geneva Conventionsⁱⁱ and/or the suppression of human rights and/or international humanitarian law from the illegal occupationⁱⁱⁱ ^{iv} and the conflict between Israel and Palestine.**
 - d) develop and implement an ethical divestment strategy from companies that derive substantial financial benefit or that contribute significantly to furthering the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and recommends to the United Church of Canada, its Pension Fund and Foundation and other related bodies including congregations to divest from companies that derive substantial financial benefit from the illegal Israeli occupation.**
 - e) Developing a program of education and advocacy relating to divestment from and economic sanctions against corporations and institutions complicit in or substantially benefitting from the illegal occupation. This would include education about nostalgia tourism which bolsters the oppression of Palestinians; and**
 - f) Encouraging all courts, bodies and members of The United Church of Canada to apply such divestment strategies and sanctions, until such time as the**

ongoing illegal occupation as defined within the parameters of the 4th Geneva Convention^v of Palestine ends.

Background

“A Moment of Truth: Kairos Palestine” issued in December 2009 by Christians in Palestine calls upon Christian Churches around the world “to stand alongside the oppressed and to preserve the word of God as good news for all.... not to offer a theological cover-up for the injustices we suffer, for the sin of the occupation imposed upon us.... We call on you to say a word of truth and to take a position of truth with regard to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land. As we have already said, we see boycott and divestment as tools of non-violence for justice, peace and security for all.” (A Moment of Truth: Kairos Palestine: Section 6).

Bishop Tutu has stated that “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

The report of the Working Group on Israel/Palestine policy and subsequent motion passed at the 41st General Council approved a number of strategies and actions by the United Church aimed at ending the occupation (numbered 1-11 in proposal GS3), including a boycott of products produced by Israeli companies and groups in the occupied territory (actually worded “products produced in the settlements”).

“For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their soul?” These words of Jesus have guided the United Church of Canada since our inception in regards to how we use our resources in standing for social justice.

Reports from UCC EAs, Partners, Israeli and Palestinian Peace Activists, NGO’s and the UN:

Since the last General Council all of the above named bodies have reported the situation for Palestinians has deteriorated significantly. Settlements continue to expand along with settler violence. The destruction of olive trees and other crops by settlers and Israeli forces continues in the occupied territories including an attack this year against UCC partner, the Tent of Nations, where over 1,500 trees were destroyed.^{vi}

Dr. Jeff Halper, co-founder of The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, on his cross Canada tour in 2015, spoke at length about the level of disruption of Palestinian lives through increasing levels of property confiscations and the demolitions of homes and other structures^{vii}.

Another UCC partner, Defense for Children Internal – Palestine (DCI-I), has launched the #Beituniaboys campaign^{viii}. It focuses on the killing of two innocent boys, Nadeem Siam Nawara and Mohammad Mahmoud by Israeli soldiers near Ofer Prison on Naka Day 2014. The murders were captured by video cameras. The Israeli soldier(s) who fired the shots were recorded on CNN footage. With overwhelming evidence there has still been no prosecution. The #Beituniaboys campaign is meant to focus attention on the impunity of Israeli soldiers from prosecution for war crimes.

A recent report by UNICEF confirms several of the concerns elucidated by DCI-P around this and other violations of the rights of children such as underage arrests, illegal detention, forced confessions, confessions written in Hebrew rather than Arabic, use of children as human shields by Israeli military and settlers, forcing children to inform on other Palestinians, harassment of children, violence against Palestinian children and killing of Palestinian children by Israeli military forces.^{ix}

Amnesty International in its 2013 report, “Trigger Happy”, documents Israeli abuse of power in the West Bank in provoking responses from Palestinians, illegal arrests including those of under-aged children, illegal detentions, Israeli military court abuses including a conviction rate in excess of 99% against Palestinians, use of excessive force up to and including deadly force against the Palestinian population in the West Bank.^x

The World Council of Churches in July 2014 issued the, “Statement on Economic Measures and Christian Responsibility toward Israel and Palestine”. In the document, the WCC commends the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Methodist Church for their recent economic actions in support of peace. It noted that boycotts are, “bearing fruit especially with the European Union.” The statement reminded members that, “We are called to take action in support of peaceful solutions to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Economic pressure, appropriately and openly applied, is one such means of action.”^{xi} Ethical investing and divesting from certain companies and industries has been a hallmark of our United Church since inception.

The disproportionate level of violence launched in 2014 by Israel against Palestinians and especially those living in Gaza requires deeper levels of commitment and action if a just peace is to emerge.

In the summer of 2014 Israel broke the existing cease fire with Gaza and then launched attacks for 50 days. The Israel Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) published the following detailed statistical information on the 50 days:

People

- 2,147 Palestinians were killed, including 530 children and 302 women. 81% were civilians, compared to 9% of the 70 Israelis killed.
- Among the dead were 16 journalists, 23 health care personnel and 11 UNRWA employees.
- 10,870 Palestinians were wounded, including 3,303 children and 2,101 women. A third of the injured children (around 3,000) will suffer permanent disabilities.
- 100,000 Palestinians were evacuated from their homes either because of Israeli threats or because their homes were destroyed or seriously damaged. They have found refuge in UN facilities or with other families, with dozens of people housed in the same home.

Buildings and equipment

- The total number of homes partially or completely destroyed since the start of this latest war on Gaza reached 17,132: 2,465 homes were completely destroyed and 13,644 homes seriously damaged. Tens of thousands of additional homes suffered less- severe damage.
- The number of mosques targeted totaled 171; 62 mosques were totally destroyed.
- 10 churches were damaged.
- 222 schools were destroyed, including 141 government, 76 UNRWA and five private institutions. In addition, six universities were demolished.
- 29 hospitals and primary health care clinics were damaged, along with 36 ambulances.
- 55 fishing boats also were destroyed affecting 3,000 individuals dependent on them for a living, along with 48 NGO’s that provide the civilians with services.
- 372 businesses, factories and other industrial or commercial operations were damaged, as well as 19 financial institutions.

Economic impact

- The direct and indirect economic losses from the war are estimated to be \$3.6 billion.^{xii}

Each United Church Ecumenical Accompanier has reported and documented breaches of the 4th Geneva Convention, violations of international human rights and humanitarian laws. Their experience of living in the West Bank gives them a unique vantage point. Certainly these eye witness accounts bear faithful and credible witness to the reality of the oppression and the loss of human dignity suffered by Palestinians in the West Bank. ^{xiii}

It is helpful for Commissioners to recognize certain information not widely reported in the mainstream media in Canada or the US.

- A ten year statistical analysis shows a disproportionate level of violence against Palestinians. ^{xiv} The last three years have been even more devastating. ^{xv}
- According to UN documentation, since the end of the devastating conflict between Israel and Gaza this summer Israel was responsible for 94 of the 95 recorded cease fire violations between the end of Aug and Dec. 21, 2014 ^{xvi}.
- Five Gazan children have frozen to death this winter because of lack of adequate shelter created by the devastation of Israel's assault this past summer. ^{xvii xviii} The situation in Gaza is not improving because of the continuing Israeli blockade.

Recent visits to the occupied territory have shown that the rate of illegal settlement, demolition of Palestinian homes and farms, confiscation of land, restriction on Palestinians' movements, diversion and confiscation of water resources, and other illegal actions has not decreased since the General Council last met in 2012. There are now approximately 600,000 Israeli settlers in the occupied territory. In the month of January (2015) alone, 1700 additional Palestinians were made homeless by demolitions. Approximately 100,000 Palestinians are still homeless after the 2014 attack on Gaza. The level of violence directed toward Palestinians and suppression of human rights has only deepened since GC 41.

Many non-Jewish, Israeli citizens such as the Bedouin and Palestinian Christians are also being denied rights, services and privileges afforded to Jewish citizens. Legislation introduced in the Israeli Parliament (Knesset) has further entrenched these injustices in law.

The continued expansion of Jewish roads and settlements and takeover of Palestinian lands and resources has all but destroyed the possibility of a two-state solution. On March 16, 2015 Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu stated there would never be a Palestinian state while he was in power. This is a complete reversal of his Bar-Ilan two state speech in 2009.

Decisive and effective action is urgently needed from churches and civil society to push governments to create a long term solution.

Palestinian and Israeli peace activists, ecumenical and global partners continue to call for solidarity and ongoing supportive action in working toward a just and lasting peace for all who are suffering as a result of the ongoing conflict.

There is evidence that global pressure (including economic action) to end the occupation is beginning to have an impact. This is highlighted by SodaStreams decision to move its factory out of a West Bank settlement. ^{xix}

It is helpful to remember that the boycott campaign against apartheid in South Africa began in the 1960's and only gained minimal support in the 1970's and fuller support in the 1980's. Apartheid began to be dismantled in 1990.

It is time for the General Council and the United Church of Canada to follow the lead of several European churches to stand for justice for Palestinians. The Presbyterian (USA) church has bravely extended its boycott to include Hewlett Packard, Motorola and Caterpillar because of their complicity in the occupation. The WCC statement notes economic pressure is appropriate and it is beginning to show results. And, what will it profit us to not take a stand while our Palestinian

brothers and sisters continue to suffer the loss of dignity, heart and soul through an illegal occupation that is over 47 years old?

Intermediate Court Action:

Ross Bartlett / Sean Handcock moved that the 90th Annual Meeting of Maritime Conference transmit with concurrence Proposal #4 entitled “Extending Support for a Just Peace in Israel/Palestine” to the 42nd General Council of The United Church of Canada.

MOTION CARRIED

Ross Bartlett / Sean Handcock moved that the letter from Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek be appended to Proposal #4 entitled “Extending Support for a Just Peace in Israel/Palestine”.

MOTION CARRIED

Appendix A

My dear sisters and brothers in the United Church of Canada:

I thank you again for the decision of your last General Council to take action to support the end of the occupation of Palestine. Your Unsettling Goods campaign has helped to build awareness of the injustice of the occupation among Canadian Christians. The boycott of goods produced in illegal settlements by the United Church and other churches around the world has begun to bear fruit by bringing economic pressure on the Israeli government. Your commitment to a just peace has given us strength in the face of great adversity.

Since your last General Council the situation for Palestinians has deteriorated significantly. Settlements continue to expand as does settler violence and the theft of water and other natural resources. The destruction of olive trees and other crops by settlers and Israeli forces continues. There are increasing levels of abuses of power by the Israeli military including property confiscations, demolitions of homes and other structures, illegal arrests of under-aged children, illegal detentions, torturing prisoners, the use of excessive force up to and including deadly force against the Palestinian population. This is all backed by Israeli military courts with a conviction rate in excess of 99% against Palestinians. The injustice against Palestinians continues to deepen.

Beyond all of this was the horror of the war against Gaza last summer. Over 2,200 Palestinians were killed including over 500 children by Israeli forces. Current reports are stating that at the current pace it will take over 100 years to rebuild.

I therefore commend you to carry on with and expand your Unsettling Goods campaign. I urge the United Church of Canada to join with other denominations around the globe who have decided to boycott and divest from companies that benefit from the occupation. Also I urge you to recognize your own country’s complicity in Palestinian suffering under occupation. Please read and study the proposals before you that advocating furthering boycotts and divestment.

As you have courageously done before, may you once again witness to the cause of Christ’s justice to free the oppressed and by so doing to liberate the oppressor so that these two peoples can finally be reconciled and live together in dignity, security and peace.

God bless you all, as you as a Church wrestle to discern what God requires of you in this hour.

Yours faithfully,
Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek

*An intro to Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek:

Canon Naim Ateek: Founder/Director, Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, Jerusalem

Born in 1937 in the Palestinian village of Beisan, Ateek moved to Nazareth after Israel's occupation of Beisan in 1948. He was ordained in the Anglican (Episcopal) Church in 1967, and earned degrees from Hardin-Simmons University and the Church Divinity School of the Pacific; he also holds a doctorate of divinity degree from the San Francisco Theological Seminary. Ateek established the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem in 1991. He is author and editor of numerous books, and has been called “the Desmond Tutu of Palestine” and the “Founder of Palestinian Liberation Theology”.

ⁱ Introduction Kairos Palestine document: <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/content/kairos-document>

ⁱⁱ www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/7c4d08d9b287a42141256739003e636b/6756482d86146898c125641e004aa3c5

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?pr=71&code=mwp&p1=3&p2=4&p3=6>

^{iv} Roberts, Adam. “Prolonged Military Occupation: The Israeli-Occupied Territories Since 1967”. *The American Journal of International Law* (American Society of International Law) **84** (1): 69. doi:10.2307/2203016. SC Res. 446 (Mar. 22, 1979), adopted by 12 votes to none, with 3 abstentions (Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States), reaffirmed the applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention, as well as opposing the establishment of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories.

^v <https://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law>

^{vi} <http://rabbibrant.com/2014/05/21/israeli-military-destroys-orchards-at-tent-of-nations-please-act-now/>

^{vii} <http://www.icahd.org/>

^{viii} <http://www.nomoreforgottenlives.com/>

^{ix} [http://www.unicef.org/oPt/Children_in_Israeli_Military_Detention - Observations and Recommendations - Bulletin No. 2 - February 2015.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/oPt/Children_in_Israeli_Military_Detention_-_Observations_and_Recommendations_-_Bulletin_No._2_-_February_2015.pdf)

^x <https://www.amnesty.org/en/articles/news/2014/02/trigger-happy-israeli-army-and-police-use-reckless-force-west-bank/>

^{xi} <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/geneva-2014/statement-on-economic-measures-and-christian-responsibility-toward-israel-and-palestine>

^{xii} <http://www.israelpalestinemissionnetwork.org/main/component/content/article/18/282-gaza-in-crisis>

^{xiii} The blog postings and letters from Ecumenical Accompaniers can be found at: <http://www.united-church.ca/getinvolved/global/returned>

^{xiv} Data collected from B'Tselem and UN agencies:

Fatalities	Palestinian	Israeli	Palestinian Youth	Israeli Youth
2005-2014	5921	252	1293	21

Ratios: 23.5 Palestinians: 1 Israeli

61.5 Palestinian youth: 1 Israeli youth

^{xv} Data collected from B'Tselem and UN agencies

Fatalities	Palestinian	Israeli	Palestinian Youth	Israeli Youth
2012	254	4	43	0
2013	38	1	5	0
2014	<u>2262</u>	<u>86</u>	<u>511</u>	<u>4</u>
	2554	91	559	4

Ratios: 61 Palestinians: 1 Israeli

112 Palestinian youth: 1 Israeli youth

^{xvi} <http://www.imemc.org/article/70072>

^{xvii} <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/middle-east-unrest/father-finds-five-month-old-son-frozen-death-gaza-n289371>

^{xviii} <http://mondoweiss.net/2015/01/exposure-freezing-temperatures>

^{xix} <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/oct/29/sodastream-move-factory-west-bank-israel-slash-forecast>