

PROPOSAL 1

Title: Pledging to Become an Apartheid-Free Community

Originating Body:

The Just Peace Working Group of the Justice, Mission and Outreach Committee of Bermuda-Nova Scotia and Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regions

What is the issue? Why is this issue important?

For decades, Palestinians living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza have experienced military occupation, displacement, restrictions on movement, and unequal access to resources. Within Israel, Palestinian citizens also face systemic inequalities.

The term “apartheid,” once associated primarily with South Africa, is now used in international law to describe systems of institutionalized racial domination and oppression. In 2022, following years of first-hand experience, extensive research and documentation, several international human rights organizations such as [Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), the Israeli human rights organization [B’Tselem](#) as well as the International Commission of Jurists, applied this term to the situation in Israel and the occupied territories. They were followed by nations such as South Africa and Ireland that concluded that the current system experienced by Palestinians amounts to apartheid.

[The International Court of Justice](#) addressed the issue of Israeli apartheid under [Article 3 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination \(CERD\)](#), which obligates states to prevent and eradicate all forms of segregation and apartheid in an [Advisory Opinion issued in 2024](#). In a historic ruling the International Court of Justice found multiple and serious international law violations by Israel towards Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories, including finding Israel responsible for apartheid.

Palestinians have reached out to the international community to support them in becoming free of Israel’s apartheid. As followers of the Gospel, we are called to seek justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. The situation in Palestine and Israel raises urgent theological and moral questions about human dignity, equality, and the use of power.

The United Church of Canada has a long history of prophetic witness in matters of justice, including opposition to apartheid in South Africa. This proposal invites the Bermuda Nova Scotia Region to continue that legacy by responding in our own context to present-day realities with courage and integrity.

Theologically, the United Church of Canada affirms that all people are created in the image of God (*imago Dei*) and are deserving of dignity, justice, and peace. The biblical witness consistently calls for the protection of the oppressed and the pursuit of justice.

We believe that God is calling us to respond to this unjust treatment of God’s children by recognizing and responding to the reality of apartheid including systemic discrimination and

segregation faced by Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories and in Israel, and committing to concrete actions that resist complicity in these systems as our faith demands of us. God loves all people and calls us to liberate the oppressed (which also liberates the oppressor).

At this Kairos moment, we must accompany the Palestinians who are on the verge of total annihilation of Christians in the land of Jesus where our Christian faith began. Our silence would only contribute to their destruction. Our faith demands truth-telling, courageous action, and solidarity. Silence, delay or cautious diplomacy while people are knowingly being killed and abused would be a betrayal of our faith and humanity.

All of us have seen horrific, heartbreaking scenes of death, destruction, and inhumane treatment of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank - on TV, our computers and cell phones. We are called and we long to do more towards a just and sustainable peace for Palestine/Israel.

The Just Peace Working Group of JMOC (Justice, Mission and Outreach Committee) has been educating United Church Communities of Faith and others in our regions about the unjust oppression, 59-year military occupation, and conditions amounting to apartheid. We have done this through leading many Communities of Faith in the Palestine Land Exercise, modeled after the KAIROS Blanket Exercise, in the B-NS Region and in the FSLDW Region. Many Communities of Faith in both regions have learned of the injustices and oppression of Israel over Palestinians from personal witness accounts of returned Ecumenical Accompaniers Bill Chambre and Steve Berube, from others who have visited the West Bank and Jerusalem, and from local neighbours whose families are still in danger in Gaza and/or in other parts of the occupied Palestinian territories.

As people have learned about these injustices, we have shared resources for them to learn more and to take action against apartheid and for international law and equal human rights for Palestinians. Actions we've encouraged have been: signing petitions; writing letters to federal government representatives; and joining the BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement supported by the United Church of Canada. In October 2024, following GC44 affirmation of the Justice Principles for advocacy work, the Moderator of the United Church of Canada wrote a pastoral letter to those of us of the United Church of Canada encouraging participation in strategies including: the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction movement; the Apartheid-Free Communities movement; and the international human rights community in recognizing and rejecting Israel's apartheid system of laws and legal procedures towards the Palestinian people.

The Apartheid-Free network is a coalition of communities who pledge to work together to end Israeli apartheid. Originally created by faith groups in North America, the network currently includes congregations, faith communities, solidarity organizations, non-profits, campus groups, businesses, and more. This network is based with the American Friends Service Committee (Quakers). Over 1,000 communities have signed the pledge and joined the growing movement – including over 300 communities in Canada – church congregations and others. April 20, 2026, we sponsored and promoted a webinar, “Is it time to Become an Apartheid-Free Community?”

How might the Region respond to the issue?

1. **affirm** the educational work of the Just Peace Working Group of JMOC focused on recognizing and rejecting Israel's apartheid system towards the Palestinian people.
2. **endorse** the Just Peace Working Group of JMOC signing the Apartheid-Free Pledge:
“WE AFFIRM our commitment to freedom, justice, and equality for the Palestinian people and all people;
WE OPPOSE all forms of racism, bigotry, discrimination, and oppression; and
WE DECLARE ourselves an Apartheid-free community and to that end,
WE PLEDGE to join others in working to end all support to Israel's Apartheid regime, settler colonialism, and military occupation.”
3. **invite** Communities of Faith in its Region to sign the Apartheid-Free pledge to join others in working to end all support to Israel's Apartheid regime, settler colonialism and military occupation; or after engaging in further study if the Community of Faith deems such further study necessary.
4. **sign** the Apartheid-Free Pledge as a Region, to join other faith-based communities in working to end all support to Israel's Apartheid regime, settler colonialism and military occupation; and engage in further study and action as the Regional Executive deems necessary.
5. **request** that the Just Peace Working Group report back at the next Regional Annual Meeting.

What will be the impact? Palestinian Christians and our other church partners in Palestine/Israel will be strengthened by our public witness and costly solidarity.

How does this proposal help us live into the commitments on equity? It calls the Region to focus directly on recognizing and addressing an issue of inequity – Apartheid - in a way that calls us, Israelis, and Palestinians to live into equity. This is part of our commitment to freedom, justice and equality for all peoples.

For the body transmitting this proposal to the Region: The Just Peace Working Group and JMOC are ready and willing to assist the Region and its Communities of Faith in learning and in taking actions.

Who will speak to this proposal on behalf of the originating body? Audrey Louder