

Resolution on The Least of These: Speaking Up for the Children of Gaza

Submitted by: Israel /Palestine Task Force

Number of Members: 9 Members present when voting: 9

Members voting for: 9 Members voting against: 0 Members abstaining: 0

Date adopted: May 1, 2019

Contact person: Patricia Daugherty

Fiscal Impact: None

Parliamentary Procedure

Section C — Number of Votes For 87; Number of Votes Against 1 [CC]

Action:

Section C recommends that Item 20 be approved.

Resolution:

- 1 Be it resolved that the California-Nevada Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church strongly
- 2 recommend that members share and discuss this resolution, in its entirety, with their congregations and,
- 3 Be it further resolved that the conference encourage members to be in conversation with policymakers, urging
- 4 them to apply the standards of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children and the Universal
- 5 Declaration of Human Rights, as endorsed by the United Methodist Church, especially as those documents
- 6 relate to the besieged children of Gaza; and,
- 7 Be it further resolved that this annual conference urge every congregation to engage with Advance # 629001,
- 8 [Augmenting Food Production and Income in Times of Siege: Urban Gardens](#), and/or Advance # 14908A,
- 9 [Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees – Middle East Council of Churches](#), as means of involving
- 10 Conference children and adults in assisting the children of Gaza.

Background:

After five decades of Israeli military occupation, instability and violence define much of life for Palestinian children in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. Additionally, the Gaza Strip has been subjected to a brutal blockade for over 12 years which, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, constitutes “a collective punishment imposed in clear violation of Israel’s obligations under international humanitarian law.”¹

Over half of the 2 million people in Gaza are children, locked inside a land mass the size of Portland where over 70 percent of the population is facing food insecurity.

Continued military assaults to infrastructure, including water and sanitation, schools, medical centers and tens of thousands of homes, causes further uncertainty for Gaza’s children. This prompted a 2012 UN report stating that Gaza could be “uninhabitable by 2020.” In 2017, the UN updated its prediction, stating “conditions are deteriorating there even faster than it forecast.”²

Supplies needed to repair bombed out infrastructure are severely restricted or prohibited and projects to provide clean water are hindered when Israel only allows fuel and electricity supplies enough for four hours of operation a day.³

In an attempt to call attention to their plight, Gazans launched the “Great March of Return” in March 2018. This weekly nonviolent civil protest has been met with violent, indiscriminate and disproportionate response by Israeli military, killing 43 children during a seven-month period, injuring over 2,200, hundreds due to live ammunition. Many children now live with life altering injuries, including amputations. The killings and injuries have not stopped.⁴

Overwhelmed with 31,000 injuries in the past year, the health infrastructure in Gaza is depleted. Hospitals simply lack supplies, beds, medicines, doctors and a steady supply of electricity to treat everyone injured.

The Israel/Palestine Task Force has made advocating for the rights of Palestinian children a central focus of their work. While all children deserve our interest, the plight of the children of Gaza deserve our particular attention, not only because of the severity of the situation but the lack of attention that allows it to continue.

For the children of Gaza, like 13 year old Fares, who was shot and killed by Israeli soldiers on Friday, October 5, 2018, Gaza has been under Israeli blockade their entire childhood. They have witnessed three prolonged military bombardments (2009, 2012, 2014) and their daily lives are punctuated by Israeli military tanks, airstrikes, and gunfire.⁵

It is reported that two thirds of all Gaza children suffer from ongoing traumatic stress disorder.⁶

While highly educated, 40% are unemployed and youth unemployment is 60-70%. Many volunteer in order to keep their skills.⁷

Adding to the increasingly desperate situation, this past year the current administration cancelled all U.S. funding for United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). UNRWA is charged with providing assistance, such as health care, education, and housing resources, to Palestinian refugees.⁸

Humanitarian aid is critically needed, but it is clearly not enough. The human rights of these children must be upheld for them to realize the kind of future we wish for our own.

Footnotes:

¹ <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/update/palestine-update-140610.htm>

² https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/gaza_10_years_later_-_11_july_2017.pdf

³ <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/water-crisis-may-make-gaza-strip-uninhabitable-by-2020>

⁴ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/more-casualties-sustained-during-great-march-return-gaza>

⁵ https://www.btselem.org/gaza_strip/20181128_minors_killed_in_gaza_protests

⁶ <https://www.nrc.no/news/2019/march/gaza-childrens-mental-health-rapidly-deteriorating/>

⁷ <https://www.anera.org/blog/anera-environment-empower-palestine/>

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/31/trump-to-cut-all-us-funding-for-uns-main-palestinian-refugee-programme>