

Opposition to Israeli Settlements in Palestinian Land (#6111, 2012 BOR)

General Conference

We join with Palestinian Christians as well as our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters in feeling a deep sense of rootedness to the land that has special meaning for our three religious traditions. We celebrate the diversity of religious customs and traditions throughout the Middle East.

Jerusalem is sacred to all the children of Abraham: Jews, Muslims, and Christians. We have a vision of a shared Jerusalem as a city of peace and reconciliation, where indigenous Palestinians and Israelis can live as neighbors and, along with visitors and tourists, have access to holy sites and exercise freedom of religious expression. The peaceful resolution of Jerusalem's status is crucial to the success of the whole process of making a just and lasting peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

We seek for all people in the Middle East an end to military occupation, freedom from violence, and full respect for the human rights of all under international law.

Whereas, the prophet Isaiah cautioned against coveting the lands and homes of one's neighbors: "Doom to those who acquire house after house, who annex field to field until there is no more space left and only you live alone in the land" (Isaiah 5:8); and

Whereas, the continuing confiscation of Palestinian land for construction of settlements and the building of a separation wall violates human rights, subverts the peace process, destroys the hope of both Israelis and Palestinians who are working for and longing for peace, and fosters a sense of desperation that can only lead to further violence; and
Whereas, continued and often intensified closures, curfews,

dehumanizing check points, home demolitions, uprooted trees, bulldozed fields, and confiscation of Palestinian land and water by the government of Israel have devastated economic infrastructure and development in the West Bank and Gaza, have caused a massive deterioration of the living standards of all Palestinians . . . and an increasing sense of hopelessness and frustration; and Whereas, targeted assassinations, suicide bombings, and attacks against civilians by both Israelis and Palestinians heighten the fear and suffering of all, and have led to many deaths of Palestinian and Israeli children; and

Whereas, people in the United States, through their taxes, provide several billion dollars in economic and military assistance to the State of Israel each year, which allows for the building of bypass roads and settlements that are illegal according to the Fourth Geneva Convention; and

Whereas, a number of Israeli and international companies profit from the building and maintaining of Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands in a variety of ways, and many churches and Christians have funds invested in some of these companies; and

Whereas human rights organizations have documented that private foreign donors, including Jewish and Christian individuals and nonprofit organizations, have provided financial support for settlements and that some of these donations are tax-deductible; and

Whereas, the church continues to work with ecumenical and interfaith bodies to advocate for Palestinian self-determination and an end to Israeli occupation; to affirm Israel's right to exist within secure borders; to affirm the right of return for Palestinian refugees under international law; to call for region-wide disarmament; to urge Israelis and Palestinians to stop human rights violations and attacks on

civilians, such as targeted assassinations and suicide bombings; and to urge the US government to initiate an arms embargo on the entire Middle East region;

Therefore, be it resolved, that The United Methodist Church opposes continued military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, the confiscation of Palestinian land and water resources, the destruction of Palestinian homes, the continued building of illegal Jewish settlements, and any vision of a “Greater Israel” that includes the occupied territories and the whole of Jerusalem and its surroundings.

In our call for an end to the Israeli occupation we affirm the church’s commitment to nonviolent responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and acknowledge the need to hear the voices of all those—Muslim, Christian and Jewish—harmed by the conflict, including the Palestinian Christians as voiced in the Kairos Palestine document.

Be it further resolved, that we urge the US government to end all military aid to the region, and second to redistribute the large amount of aid now given to Israel and Egypt; to support economic development efforts of nongovernmental organizations throughout the region, including religious institutions, human rights groups, labor unions, and professional groups within Palestinian communities.

The United Methodist Church requests that all governments, especially that of the United States, to work in cooperation with the United Nations to urge the State of Israel to:

- 1 cease the confiscation of Palestinian lands and water for any reason;
- 2 cease the building of new, or expansion of existing, settlements and/or bypass roads in the occupied territories including East Jerusalem;
- 3 lift the closures and curfews on all Palestinian towns by

completely withdrawing Israeli military forces to the Green Line (the 1948 ceasefire line between Israel and the West Bank);

4 dismantle that segment of the Wall of Separation constructed since May 2002 that is not being built on the Green Line but on Palestinian land that is separating Palestinian farmers from their fields. We also urge the Palestinian Authority and all Palestinian religious leaders to continue to publicly condemn violence against Israeli civilians and to use nonviolent acts of disobedience to resist the occupation and the illegal settlements.

We further call on all nations to prohibit:

- 1 any financial support by individuals or organizations for the construction and maintenance of settlements; and
- 2 the import of products made by companies in Israeli settlements on Palestinian land.

We ask all companies that profit from and/or support settlements through their business activities to examine these and stop any business that contributes to serious violations of international law, promotes systemic discrimination or otherwise supports ongoing military occupation.

The United Methodist Church does not support a boycott of products made in Israel. Our opposition is to products made by Israeli companies operating in occupied Palestinian territories.

We urge all United Methodists in the US to:

- 1 advocate with the US administration and Congress to implement the aforementioned steps;
- 2 urge the US government to examine the role played by donations from tax-exempt charities in support of

discriminatory and other illegal aspects of Israeli settlements, and develop recommendations to ensure that tax-exempt funds do not support illegal settlements and other violations of international law.

We urge all United Methodists to:

- 1 read about the suffering of Israelis and Palestinians and nonviolent ways of ending the Israeli/Palestinian conflict from the perspective of all faith communities including the “Kairos Palestine” document; and
- 2 encourage members of each congregation to study the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from all perspectives by inviting speakers to church events, reading books, using audiovisual resources in educational forums, and getting information from websites. We especially commend the 2010 British Methodist Church’s call “on the Methodist people to support and engage with [a] boycott of Israeli goods emanating from illegal settlements,” as well as a call for nonviolent actions issued by several annual conferences.
- 3 provide financial support to the Palestinian people through contributions to the General Board of Global Ministries;
- 4 support, and participate in, the work of international peace and human rights organizations, such as the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine & Israel and Christian Peacemaker Teams, to provide protection for Palestinians and Israelis seeking nonviolently to end the occupation; and
- 5 reach out to local synagogues, mosques, and Christian faith groups by engaging in interfaith and ecumenical dialogue on nonviolent ways to promote justice and peace in the Holy Land; and
- 6
- 7 That the General Board of Global Ministries, working together with the General Board of Church and Society and interfaith organizations, develop

advocacy packets for use in local congregations to promote a just and lasting peace and human rights for all in the region.

Adopted 2004
readopted 2008
amended and readopted 2012
resolution #6073, 2008 book of resolutions
Resolution #312, 2004 Book of Resolutions

See Social Principles, ¶ 165.