

## Summary of recent PC(USA) policies and actions on Israel-Palestine



## On violations of human rights and international law

*In 2010 at the 219th General Assembly, the church expressed the following statements and concerns about Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza*

from Part One of *Breaking Down the Walls*

- ◆ The Israeli occupation leads to the denial of human rights for Palestinians and violation of international laws.
- ◆ One of the hopes of the Oslo interim agreement was settlement growth would cease. The opposite has occurred, however, resulting in the current [Israeli Jewish] population of 285,000 in the West Bank and 198,700 in East Jerusalem.
- ◆ The growth of the number of settlements and settlers is perceived by many as an attempt by Israel to prevent the establishment of an economically viable Palestinian State.
- ◆ The number of housing demolitions is alarming and shocks the human conscience. It is estimated that some 24,145 Palestinian homes have been demolished in the occupied territory since 1967.
- ◆ Another concern about the occupation is the numerous “Israeli-only” bypass roads that carve up the Palestinian homeland and connect one settlement to another. This has a devastating effect on the ability of normal Palestinians to live out a normal life—by visiting family, working farmland, seeking medical treatment, securing employment; and traveling freely in one’s own country.
- ◆ While few would deny the right of a government to put a barrier on its own property line, three quarters of this barrier is inside the West Bank on Palestinian land. Based on experience, this is often understood by Palestinians as an effort to secure an illegal settlement, claim water resources, and annex Palestinian land. The location of the barrier is a violation of international law and is thus perceived as a means to pre-empt a just peace.
- ◆ The overwhelming consensus of all (Middle East Study) committee members was that Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is a sin against God and other fellow human beings.

## 219th GA actions reaffirming historical PC(USA) positions on Israel-Palestine

*The PC(USA) 219th General Assembly (2010) reaffirmed “Israel’s right to exist as a sovereign nation within secure and internationally recognized borders in accordance with United Nations resolutions.”*

*The General Assembly also recognized the daunting and mounting obstacles to the viability of a “two-state solution,” and affirmed with great urgency the historic Presbyterian stances with specific regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and called for:*

- ◆ An immediate cessation of all violence, whether perpetrated by Israelis or Palestinians
- ◆ The end of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and diversion of water resources
- ◆ An immediate freeze both on the establishment or expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and on the Israeli acquisition of Palestinian land and buildings in East Jerusalem
- ◆ The relocation by Israel of the Separation Barrier to the 1967 border
- ◆ The withholding of US government aid to the state of Israel as long as Israel persists in creating new West Bank settlements
- ◆ Continuing corporate engagement through the Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) with companies profiting from the sale and use of their products for non-peaceful purposes and/or the violation of human rights
- ◆ A shared status for Jerusalem
- ◆ Equal rights for Palestinian citizens of the state of Israel
- ◆ The cessation of systematic violation of human rights by any party, specifically, practices of administrative detention, collective punishment, the torture of prisoners and suspects, home demolitions and evictions, and the deportation of dissidents
- ◆ The immediate resumption by Israel and Palestine of negotiations toward a two-state solution



## Also approved by the 219th General Assembly

*In addition to reaffirming historical PC(USA) positions, the 219th GA adopted the following policies or calls for action:*

- ◆ Strongly denounces Caterpillar’s continued profit-making from non-peaceful uses of its products and presses Caterpillar to review carefully its involvement in obstacles to a just and lasting peace in Israel-Palestine and to take affirmative steps to end its complicity in the violation of human rights.
- ◆ Calls on the Israeli and Egyptian governments to limit their blockade of Gaza solely to military equipment/devices and to guarantee adequate levels of food, medicine, building supplies, and other humanitarian items, and to allow free commercial exchange in and out of Gaza, and calls on the US government to end any support for the blockade that interferes with the adequacy of such items or such exchange.
- ◆ Commends for study the *Kairos Palestine* document (“**A Moment of Truth**”), and endorses the document’s emphases on hope for liberation, nonviolence, love of enemy, and reconciliation. We lift up for study the often neglected voice of Palestinian Christians. We direct the monitoring group for the Middle East to create a study guide for the document.
- ◆ Urges the government of Israel to honor family reunification of Christians and others, to provide permits for home construction and improvement without discrimination for all its citizens and those Christians and Muslims under its occupation.
- ◆ Calls for the allocation of US military aid funds to be contingent on compliance with: (A) the **US Foreign Assistance Act of 1961**, which prohibits giving assistance to the government of any country which engages in a consistent pattern of human rights violations; (B) the **US Arms Export Control Act of 1976**, which prohibits using US weapons against civilians and civilian infrastructure; and (C) the US

foreign policy, insofar as it pertains to recommendations for steps toward peace; in this instance, between Israelis and Palestinians. Expresses its extreme disappointment with the US government that while the state of Israel has been found not to comply with the above statutes, it continues to be the recipient of US military aid.

### Breaking Down the Walls

The report of the  
Middle East Study Committee

The 218th General Assembly (2008) created a Middle East Study Committee with a mandate to issue a report to the 219th GA (2010) and recommend appropriate steps which our church, our nation, and the parties involved in the conflict could take to bring peace and justice to this area.

The PC(USA) moderators of the 2004, 2006, and 2008 General Assemblies were each asked to nominate three people to serve on this committee.

The report of this committee, which was issued in 2010, was entitled “Breaking Down the Walls.”

The 219th General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted Part One of this report, entitled, **We Bear Witness**, and Part Two, entitled **Recommendations**, after accepting a few wording changes recommended by the 219th General Assembly’s Middle East Committee.

For full report as approved by 219th GA, see: [bitly.com/breakingwallsreport](http://bitly.com/breakingwallsreport) includes full General Assembly policy review in Appendix

## 220th General Assembly (2012) overwhelmingly approves boycott

The Presbyterian Church (USA) calls upon all nations to prohibit the import of products made by enterprises in Israeli settlements on Palestinian land. The church:

- ◆ Calls for the boycott of ALL Israeli products coming from the occupied Palestinian Territories, including AHAVA Dead Sea Laboratories Beauty Products, and all date products of Hadiklaim, The Israel Date Growers Co-Operative Ltd, often marked by the brand names King Solomon Dates and Jordan River Dates.
- ◆ Directs the Stated Clerk to communicate this action to all other PC(USA) councils and entities and invite and strongly encourage those groups and organizations to endorse this boycott until significant progress toward Palestinian rights and independence can be reported to the General Assembly or General Assembly Mission Agency Board.

Boycott of all  
Israeli settlement  
products  
approved  
by 220th GA

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For more information on Boycott  
and letter from Stated Clerk, Gradye Parsons see:  
[pcusa.org/boycott](http://pcusa.org/boycott)



221st GA  
approves  
divestment from  
three American  
Companies  
profiting from the  
Israeli  
Occupation of  
Palestine

## 221st General Assembly (2014)

- ◆ Instructs the Presbyterian Foundation and the Board of Pensions of the PC(USA) to divest from Caterpillar, Inc., Hewlett-Packard, and Motorola Solutions, in accord with our church's decades-long socially responsible investment (SRI) history, and not to reinvest in these companies until MRTI, the Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee of the PC(USA), is fully satisfied that product sales and services by these companies are no longer in conflict with our church investment policy. For full language see: [bitly.com/GA2014DivestLanguage](http://bitly.com/GA2014DivestLanguage)
- ◆ Reaffirms the commitment of the PC(USA) to the human rights of all children, particularly the children of Palestine and Israel.
- ◆ Reaffirms the support of the PC(USA) for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and affirms its support for the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement on children in armed conflict.
- ◆ Directs the Presbyterian Mission Agency to engage in advocacy and public witness for the human rights of children in Palestine and Israel in relation to widespread and systematic patterns of ill-treatment and torture within the Israeli military detention system.