The PC (USA) 219th General Assembly (2010) deliberations regarding Israel-Palestine issues took place in Committee 14, the Middle East Peacemaking Committee. This committee spent about three-quarters of its two-day meeting on the Middle East Study Report and the rest of its time on nine different overtures regarding Israel’s occupation of Palestinian lands in the West Bank and Gaza.

The Middle East Study Report was produced by the Middle East Study Committee (MESC), an ad hoc committee of nine members appointed by the three moderators of the most recent General Assemblies. Its mandate was to issue a report to the 219th GA and recommend appropriate steps to be taken by our church, our nation, and the parties involved in the conflict to bring peace to this area. The 172-page report of the committee was entitled “Breaking Down the Walls” and the lengthiest segment was Part 3, “Study Materials.” Even before the GA met, there was a spirited debate about this report, mostly focused on Part 3, with some critics saying it was unbalanced in its treatment of Israeli and Palestinian narratives, and supporters defending its impartiality and integrity.

Before Committee 14 met at GA, most people predicted a very contentious discussion. However, in an elegant parliamentary maneuver, the committee voted to ask that Part 3 be re-drafted to include additional viewpoints, and then spent most of its time discussing and sometimes fine-tuning the recommendations in Part 2. Committee 14’s final action to approve the amended Parts 1 and 2 of the MESC report passed 53 to 0, a remarkable consensus. Committee 14 then discussed and took actions on the nine different overtures before it.

In this guide, page 2 summarizes the findings in approved Parts 1 and 2 of the MESC Report. Pages 3 & 4 summarize both the recommendations in Part 2 of the MESC Report as well as actions on all the overtures. The 219th General Assembly overwhelmingly approved Committee 14’s actions on the MESC Report as well as its recommendations to the plenary on the overtures. The summary here therefore represents the policy positions of the PC(USA). The text of all the materials approved by the 219th GA and a summary of their actions is at www.pcbiz.org.

Because some findings and recommendations reference Israeli settlements in the West Bank, bypass roads, the separation wall/barrier, the 1967 internationally recognized border between Israel and Palestine, and East Jerusalem, four maps are included for reference. It should be noted that the information on these maps was not a matter of contention at Committee 14 or the General Assembly in 2010.
Through action at the 219th General Assembly, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

- Affirms Israel’s right to exist as a sovereign nation within secure and internationally recognized borders in accordance with United Nations resolutions.
- States that the Israeli occupation leads to the denial of human rights for Palestinians and is a violation of international laws.
- Acknowledges with great concern the Israeli settlements with a current population of 285,000 in the West Bank and 198,700 in East Jerusalem.
- Notes that 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.
- Acknowledges the numerous “Israeli-only” bypass roads that carve up the Palestinian homeland and connect one settlement to another.

- Expresses concern that these roads have a devastating effect on the ability of Palestinians to live out a normal life – to visit family, farm, family property, to seek medical treatment, to secure employment, and to travel freely in one’s own country.
- Acknowledges that three quarters of the separation wall/barrier is inside the West Bank rather than on the 1967 internationally recognized border between Israel and Palestine.
- Notes that the location of the separation wall/barrier is in violation of international law, is perceived as an impediment to peace, and perceived as an effort to annex Palestinian land and water resources.
- States that it is estimated that 24,145 Palestinian homes have been demolished in the West Bank since 1967.
- States the overwhelming consensus of the committee was that “Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is a sin against God and other fellow human beings.”
PC(USA) Statements Acknowledging Israeli Human Rights Violations

In 2010, the 219th General Assembly of the PC(USA) 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 (GA) 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, calling for:

1. an immediate cessation of all violence, whether perpetrated by Israelis or Palestinians;
2. the end of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and diversion of water resources;
3. 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;
4. the relocation by Israel of the Separation Barrier to the 1967 border;
5. the withholding of U.S. government aid to the state of Israel as long as Israel persists in creating new West Bank settlements;
6. 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;
7. a shared status for Jerusalem;
8. equal rights for Palestinian citizens of the state of Israel;
9. 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;
10. the immediate resumption by Israel and Palestine of negotiations toward a two-state solution.

In addition, The PC(USA) adopted the following policies or calls for action:

The Presbyterian Church (USA)

- Calls on the U.S. government to exercise strategically its international influence, including making U.S. aid to Israel contingent upon Israel’s compliance with international law and peacemaking efforts
- Calls for the allocation of U.S. military aid funds to be contingent on compliance with (1) 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, (2) the U.S. Arms Export Control Act of 1976 which prohibits using U.S. weapons against civilians and civilian infrastructure, and (3) the U.S. foreign policy insofar as it pertains to recommendations for steps toward peace, in this instance, between Israelis and Palestinians.
- 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 Middle East Monitoring Group to create a study guide for the document.
- 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 U.S. government to end any support for the blockade that interferes with the adequacy of such items or such exchange.
- Acknowledges the facts on the ground that constitute the system of Israeli apartheid against the Palestinian people, but stops short of recognizing it as apartheid because “we believe that dialogue is hampered by words like “apartheid.”
- 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 U.S. government to eliminate existing loopholes in tax codes that permit its citizens to make donations to organizations that support human rights violations and breaches of international law and UN Security Council resolutions—particularly those loopholes that allow tax-deductible donations that financially support the Israeli settlement enterprise on occupied territory or Palestinian militant groups.

- Calls on the U.S. government to give a thorough accounting to its citizenry as to the amounts of its foreign aid to countries in the Middle East that have been used by the recipient nations to finance human rights violations, breaches of international law and UN Security Council Resolutions, and to redirect adequate allocations of aid toward (1) the rebuilding of Gaza and humanitarian assistance for its people, and (2) Palestinian reuse or dismantling of the remaining settlement infrastructure following the establishment of a Palestinian state.

- 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 on the U.S. government to exercise strategically its international influence and the withholding of financial, economic, and military aid to countries other than Israel, as we might with Israel, until such a time as the civil, religious, and other freedoms of their peoples are fully exercised; and to end U.S. taxpayer support for regimes that perpetuate inequality, and popular frustration.

**Bypass roads** linking settlement colonies in the West Bank with Israel allow unrestricted settler movement but allow limited or no access to Palestinians.