



OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

THE REVEREND DR. J. HERBERT NELSON, II
STATED CLERK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Dear Presbyterian Sisters and Brothers,

As the impeachment trial of President Donald J. Trump continues, it seems the president has tried to change the subject by announcing his “deal of the century” for bringing to an end the long-standing struggle between Israelis and Palestinians in the “Holy Land.” This “deal” is little more than a cynical rephrasing of the conditions that have kept the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation for decades. It codifies Israel’s egregious theft of Palestinian land and would continue Israel’s military rule, even over the areas allocated to the so-called Palestinian state. It lacks any evidence of a true willingness to include the interests of the Palestinian community.

From the perspective of decades of Presbyterian General Assemblies, it is a consummate violation of the most basic principles required for peace in “The Holy Land.” Our church has consistently condemned the creeping encroachment by Israel on land recognized by the international community as Palestinian territory. Israel has confiscated massive swaths of this land in the establishment of illegal settlements and in the military occupation of Palestinian land throughout the West Bank of the Jordan River; moreover the Trump administration has embraced the will of Israeli leaders in declaring the Holy City of Jerusalem the unique, undivided capital of Israel and has relocated the U.S. Embassy there. The historic claim on the deep religious importance of this city to Christians and Muslims has been ignored, and damaged, if not destroyed by these unilateral acts.

We must speak out on behalf of the Palestinian community, residents of this land for generations. Their land has been stolen. Their holy sites have been denigrated. Their homes and businesses have been destroyed and they all live under the iron fist of Israel’s continuing military occupation. This would not change under this “deal” proposed. As Christians, concerned for our own roots in this “Holy Land,” we cry out in anguish and anger as a kind of social and religious “ethnic cleansing” is occurring under these efforts of current Israeli leadership and of our own president.

One of the deep ironies of the impact of the ongoing illegal taking of Palestinian land and the draconian control on the Palestinian community by Israel and its military is the potential for feeding the growing antisemitism in Europe and the U.S. that we so abhor. More violence is the inevitable fruit of a “deal” such as the one proposed. And the Israeli Jewish community should understand, better than anyone, the tragedies of sustained oppression.

I call on all Presbyterians who yearn for peace in The Holy Land to demand of our president a better “deal.” We must make clear to our political leaders that the “land of Israel” will never be at peace until justice is done for all her people, not just members of the Jewish community.

May God’s call “to do justice” motivate us to demand that our own politicians work toward an equitable future for Muslims, Christians, and people of other faiths or none, as well as our Jewish sisters and brothers.

In the Faith that we share,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "J. Herbert Nelson, II". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

The Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)