

Title: Implementation of Measures towards Peace in the Middle East

Originating Body: Montreal Presbytery

Proposal: That the 40<sup>th</sup> General Council (2009)

1. Record its convictions that a just peace in the Middle East will require:

- That the occupation and siege of Gaza by Israel cease, requiring the full withdrawal of Israel forces from Gaza;
- The denunciation of Human Rights abuses committed by Israel and Palestine, as documented by Amnesty International and the United Nations, that will result in Member States of the United Nations taking subsequent, appropriate actions;
- The withdrawal of Israeli military forces to pre-1967 borders and ending all forms of collective violence by the Israeli Government on the Palestinian people;
- Recognition that the West Bank and the Gaza Strip constitute an integral part of the territory occupied in 1967 and Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip must be dismantled;
- The recognition by the emergent State of Palestine of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state within safe and secure borders;
- The cessation of suicide bombings and other violent attacks directed towards Israeli civilians on the part of Palestinians;
- That the Government of Canada and Member States of the United Nations support international efforts to alleviate the humanitarian and economic situation in Gaza;
- The recognition by the Israeli Government and the emergent state of Palestine of equal citizenship rights, protections, privileges and responsibilities for all of their respective citizens regardless of religious or national origins.

2. Inform the Prime Minister of Canada and the Minister of External Affairs, in writing, of the above convictions and request that Canadian policy and commitments in the Middle East reflect this position.

3. Recommend that United Church Conferences, Presbyteries, congregations and community ministries study this proposal and be encouraged to take actions to make their views known to Government Members and in the public domain.

Background:

1. In the face of the long-term deepening crisis and suffering in the Middle East, the United Church has consistently been guided by our regional Partners in our understanding of the reality and roots of the conflict. As people of faith we are called to respond in our prayers for Peace and in our actions.

The Government of Canada has not shown by its words or its actions, a commitment to address the illegal occupation of Gaza, the ongoing development of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and other regions of Palestine, the devastating humanitarian needs of Gaza Strip civilians and the blatant Human Rights abuses leading to the deaths in the 2008-9 Gaza Strip invasion of approximately 1400 Palestinians (majority civilians) and 14 Israelis. It is urgent that we reaffirm our position as a church and witness to our commitment to Peace through requesting that our Prime Minister and Members of Parliament address our concerns in their words

and actions, as members of the International community who have an important role in the road to Peace in the Middle East.

The following information from United Church Statements and United Nations Resolution provide important background to developing our understanding and policy.

2. "Paths to Peace in Israel and Palestine" United Church of Canada (2003)

Excerpts:

... "WHEREAS the Executive of General Council has affirmed its conviction that "a necessary step towards true peace in the region will be through the implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions specifically 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (1948) and that these resolutions require... the withdrawal of Israel from the West Bank and Gaza including settlements; and

WHEREAS the World Council of Churches and global partners such as the Middle East Council of Churches have stated their clear understanding that an end to the illegal occupation of Palestine is necessary and required step for a lasting and just peace in the Middle East; ....

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 38th General Council record its conviction that a just peace in the Middle East will require:

- the recognition by Israel Government of a fully sovereign State of Palestine with secure borders, and territorial contiguity encompassing the West Bank and Gaza Strip;
  - the recognition by the emergent State of Palestine and other neighbouring Arab States of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state within safe and secure borders;
  - the dismantling of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip;
  - the ending of suicide bombings as well as other forms of violent attacks directed towards civilians on the part of Palestinians;
  - the withdrawal of Israeli military forces to pre-1967 borders and the ending of all forms of collective punishment and violence by Israeli Government on the Palestinian people;
  - the recognition by Israeli Government and the emergent state of Palestine of equal citizenship rights, protections, privileges and responsibilities for all of their respective citizens regardless of religious or national origins.
- 38th General Council, 2003 - Resolution approved

3. United Nations Resolution 1860 (2009),

Adopted by the Security Council on January 8, 2009

Excerpts:

"Stressing that the Gaza Strip constitutes an integral part of the territory occupied in 1967 and will be a part of the Palestinian state.

Recalling that a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can only be achieved by peaceful means....

2. Calls for the unimpeded provision and distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian assistance, including of food, fuel and medical treatment; ....
4. Calls on Member States to support international efforts to alleviate the humanitarian and economic situation in Gaza , including through urgently needed additional contributions to UNRWA and through the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee; ....
8. Calls for renewed and urgent efforts by the parties and the international community to achieve a comprehensive peace based on the vision of a region where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace

with secure and recognized borders, as envisaged in Security Council resolution 1850 (2008), and recalls also the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative.

3. United Church Moderator Calls for a Ceasefire in Gaza      January 5, 2009

Excerpts: "The United Church of Canada has consistently expressed its deep concern about the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territories, and about the violence committed by both Israelis and Palestinians," says the Moderator, the Right Rev. David Giuliano. The current crisis in Gaza is a tragic consequence of the hatred and hostility bred by the occupation. Peace cannot be achieved through violence. Instead, it leads to greater suffering and increased hatred and continues the cycle of violence.....

"I invite all religious leaders to join hearts to witness to those roots through prayer and action for peace.....

In condemning the violence that has led to death and suffering for both Palestinians and Israelis, the Moderator echoes the call for a ceasefire by the church's partners in Palestine and Israel....

The United Church stands together with our Israeli and Palestinian friends who continue to call for meaningful negotiations within the framework of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, leading to a just and lasting peace for Palestinians and Israelis.....

Since 2006, Gaza has been suffering a humanitarian catastrophe as a result of the economic blockade that is leaving people without water, food, electricity, fuel, shelter, or adequate health care.

As children, women, and men struggle for life under occupation, economic siege, and military action, an immediate ceasefire must be implemented and unrestricted access to humanitarian relief provided.

Recommended Court Action:

The Montreal Presbytery approve the proposal and transmit it to the Montreal & Ottawa Conference with a recommendation that it be transmitted with concurrence to General Council.