

Resolution on Supporting Palestine

Background

A group of Christian leaders from the United States and South Africa, who represent over 55 million worshippers collectively, condemned Israel for its treatment of Palestinians and called for economic pressure to be applied, following a 10-day trip to the country.

The leaders visited Israel and the Palestinian territories “on a religious pilgrimage as a joint delegation of leaders from historic black denominations of the National Council of Churches (NCCC) in the United States of America, and heads of South African church denominations of the South African Council of Churches (SACC)” between February 21 and March 1, 2019.

While on the trip, the group said they “came to visit Israel and the Palestinian Territories in the hope of meeting Israeli and Palestinian citizens.” The group said that Israel’s “draconian security measures” were stoked by a “thick density of fear” that begets hatred.

They also witnessed similarities between South African Apartheid, Jim Crow segregation and the suffering of the Palestinians under occupation.

“We admit that silence in the face of injustice is complicity,” the leaders highlighted. “Indeed, there were many Christians that were silent and closed their ears against the sound of the deadly apartheid jackboot in the lives of South African blacks.

The Christian leaders said they came seeking a better understanding of the realities on the ground, “particularly related to the Occupied Palestinian Territories [East Jerusalem, West Bank and the Gaza Strip],” adding that they came as people “with a shared history of racial segregation; victims of injustice, people who have been dehumanized and marginalized... and as people who stand against racism, against antisemitism, against Islamophobia.”

The delegation expressed their shocked at the seizure of Palestinian lands to render the proposed two-state solution unworkable. They witnessed the misery of families in Palestine, particularly those living in overcrowded refugee camps and called for the return of refugees and exiles.

The South African and American African Christian leaders witnessed patterns, which seemed to have been “borrowed and perfected” from other previous oppressive regimes. They compared the security barrier to the Berlin Wall, and discussed the roads built through occupied Palestinian villages on which Palestinians are not permitted to drive. They said the “heavy militarization of the West Bank, [was] reminiscent of the military occupation of Namibia by apartheid South Africa” and decried the “laws of segregation that allow one thing for the Jewish people and another for the Palestinians.”

The delegation also insisted that they had witnessed “evidence of forced removals” in which they saw “homes abandoned, olive trees uprooted or confiscated and taken over, and shops and businesses bolted with doors welded to close out any commercial activities.”

Despite their heavy criticism of Israel, the Christian leaders were also critical of the Palestinian leadership, saying that they are “disheartened by the patent divisions among the Palestinian political leaders that make it almost impossible for them to come to a common position and vision of the way to justice, peace and security for all... We hope for elections soon in the Palestinian territories and that these will be peaceful and without disputes, in order to enhance the unity of the Palestinian people and their positions on a peaceful and prosperous future for all.

“We support a two-state solution in which a safe and secure State of Israel will reside next to a safe, secure, viable and contiguous state of Palestine,” they said. “Based on our own histories and struggles as South Africans and African Americans, we are keenly aware of the need to preserve the option of utilizing economic pressure as a means of bringing recalcitrant dominant forces to the negotiating table.”

Among the Christian leaders from South Africa were Bishop Zipho Siwa, Malusi Mpumlwana, Bishop Mosa Sono, Bishop George Crenshaw and Pastor M.G. Mahlobo.

Coming from the United States were Jim Winkler, Reverend Tyrone Pitts, Bishop Darin Moore and Senior Pastor Dr. Cassandra Gould, among others.

We stand with our South African brothers and sisters in condemning the illegal and immoral Israeli occupation of Palestine and militarization of the West Bank which is reminiscent of the apartheid system of South Africa.

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,

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 Gaza and the West Bank,

WHEREAS, people in the United States, through their taxes, provide more than \$10 million dollars a day in economic and military aid 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;

Therefore, be it resolved, that Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. affirms the prophetic voice and courageous witness of Palestinian Christians. We support the non-violent struggle and leadership of Palestinian Christians, Muslims, and other faiths in their pursuit of peace and justice for all people.

Be it further resolved that the PNBCalls for the end of military occupation of the Palestinian land 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 Israeli settlements

Be it further resolved, that we call on the U.S. government to end all military aid to Israel and to work in cooperation with the United Nations to demand that the State of Israel:

1. cease the confiscation of Palestinian lands and water and the demolition of Palestinian homes
2. cease the building of new, or expansion of existing, illegal Israeli settlements and checkpoints and apartheid roads in the occupied Palestine territories
3. lift the closures and curfews on all Palestinian towns by completely withdrawing Israeli occupation forces.

Be it further resolved that we call on Israel to immediately end the immoral and inhumane siege of Gaza and open the borders and put an end to the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.

Be it further resolved that the PNBC, Inc.:

- 1) Engage in study the Kairos document, “A moment of truth, a word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering” and learn from the voices, witness and faith-in action of Palestinian Christians. <http://kairospalestine.ps/index.php/about-us/kairos-palestine-document>
- 2) call for organizing Christian solidarity pilgrimages to Palestinian occupied territories, as a way to express our stand against the Israeli occupation system and its backing by American government aid.
- 3) call for supporting Palestinian local economy by intentionally buying and promoting Palestinian products throughout these pilgrimage trips.