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Anti-Israel Petitions Supported by Israeli Academics

Israeli academics signs a petition encouraging the United Methodist Church to divest from "companies that enable the occupation to continue"

Israeli academics, listed below, signed a petition encouraging the United Methodist Church "to divest from companies that enable the occupation to continue, we the undersigned shall applaud your courageous initiative, and fervently hope that it will set an example for many others to follow...":

Ofer Neiman, Dalit Baum, Roman Vater, kobi snitz, Anat Matar, Yael Korin, Udi Adiv, Prof. Kobi Peterzil, Hannah Safran, Haim Bresheeth, Ur Shlonsky, Moshe Machover, Dana Ron, Yael Ronen and others.

<http://www.petitiononline.com/Israelis/petition.html>

Letter of Support from Israelis to the United Methodist Church

We endorse the Letter of Support from Israelis to the United Methodist Church Petition to James E. Winkler, General Secretary of the United Methodist Church.

To: James E. Winkler, General Secretary of the United Methodist Church Letter of support from Israelis to the 2008 General Conference of the United Methodist Church January 22, 2008

We, as Israelis, express our support of the 2004 resolution adopted by the General Conference of the Methodist Church that states "The United Methodist Church opposes continued military occupation 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 Jewish settlements and any vision of a 'Greater Israel' that includes the occupied territories and the whole of Jerusalem and its surroundings [Book of Resolutions, 2004, #12]." Should the Methodist Church in the wake of the above resolution elect to divest from companies that enable the occupation to continue, we the undersigned shall applaud your courageous initiative, and fervently hope that it will set an example for many others to follow.

We assure the Methodist Church that it is no more anti-Semitic to criticize and oppose Israeli government policies than it was anti-American to oppose the Vietnam war or is anti-American to oppose the present war in Iraq. It is never anti-Semitic to oppose injustice, destruction, gross inequity, and inequality. We also assure the Church that Israel, having the fourth most powerful military in the world, is in no existential danger.

As citizens devoted to the promotion of peace and democracy in the region, we denounce the international community's continued economic investments in our country which directly and indirectly support Israel's daily violations of international law and colonization of the occupied territories. We fear the potentially irreversible damage created by Israeli occupation, by Israel's unilateral plans, and by the international community's impotence in ending Israel's occupation. We realize that Israel's occupation of Palestinians and their lands will probably not end without international sanctions.

Moreover, Israelis, as well as Palestinians, will benefit from ending the occupation Symmetry never exists between occupier and occupied, oppressor and oppressed. Yet Israelis suffer from loss of life, increase in militarism, and a steady devaluation of human life. This latter is particularly evident in the socio-economic sphere and the affliction of post-traumatic distress.

Successive Israeli governments have spent enormous amounts of money on expansion, to the detriment of social benefits for the Israeli population. While it is true that had there been no occupation, Israeli governments might not have spent the money on social benefits, the fact that expansion continues apace alongside continued endeavors of ethnic cleansing reveals Israel's

intention to rid the West Bank of as many Palestinians as possible and to prevent the emergence of a Palestinian state.

To this end, money is spent on maintaining a large military presence in the occupied Palestinian Territories, on erecting the apartheid wall at 4 million dollars a mile, with 400 miles planned (twice as long as if it had been built on the 'green line'), and constructing more housing units in highly subsidized settlements. In December 2007, for instance, the Israeli Housing Ministry announced that it was building 300 more units on Har Homa (Jabal Abu Ghnaim to Palestinians), with another 1000 intended, and more recently has begun construction of 60 homes in the Ras Al-Amud section of East Jerusalem. Israel claims Har Homa to be a part of Jerusalem, but the international community regards Israel's construction on it and in East Jerusalem to be further illegal colonization of Palestinian land. Given the subsidies and other perks with which Israel lures Israelis to colonize the West Bank, it is small wonder that population increase in the occupied Palestinian territory is five to six percent, by contrast to the two to three percent maximum growth in Israeli communities within Israel proper. Israel additionally spends much on constructing super-highways for Israelis-only in the occupied Palestinian Territories, as well as for lookout towers (that can double as sniper towers), and checkpoints galore. Furthermore, the majority of the more than 500 checkpoints separate Palestinian communities from one another.

While all this is taking place at considerable economic cost, poverty in Israel has increased sharply. Israel in 2006 gained the dubious notoriety of having the worst poverty level in the Western world, and has retained this position through 2007. Over one quarter of Israelis now live under the poverty line. One of every three children goes to bed hungry. And every fourth elderly person is poor. No wonder, then, that many of Israel's elderly are "suicidal." The Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronot revealed in a report that over 50 percent of suicides in Israel every year are committed by people aged 65 and over. And there are additional worrying trends. Not only are the few rich getting richer and the numerous poor getting poorer, but also many in the middle class who have jobs are sliding into poverty due to low wages. The Adva Center report of December 2007 showed that a fifth of Israeli wage earners are now living under the poverty line.

One result of the increased poverty is that 25% of Israelis forego medical care because they cannot afford it. 75% of the poor cannot afford medication. But of all the sad statistics, one of the more shocking is that over 80,000 Holocaust survivors—now mostly aged individuals—live in desperate straits. It is shameful that of all places in the world, in Israel, Holocaust survivors live in dire poverty and misery.

The worsening economic conditions contribute, in turn, to escalation of violence. Thus, for instance, one of every five elderly Israelis is subject to abuse, mainly by spouses or children. And the Israeli police recorded a 24% increase in violence among youth the first months of 2006.

A direct cost of occupation and a threat to Israel's welfare is post-traumatic stress, which can result in addiction to drugs and alcohol, and can also contribute to violence. A counselor at a rehabilitation center terms the malady "a ticking bomb," Help, he relates, is unavailable for many soldiers who have gone "into terrible distress of drugs, beatings, violence, impatience, ... soldiers who clashed with a civilian population, and when they were discharged understood that they had been wrong." Hundreds, he reveals, "are roaming about with the feeling that there is no point to living, and the path to suicide and drugs is very easy. We are afraid that former soldiers will commit criminal acts as a result of their distress."

On the Palestinian end of the occupation, the situation is far worse both economically and in terms of security. For Palestinians, occupation means a loudspeaker in the middle of the night ordering residents out of their homes, regardless of whether it's winter or summer, hot or cold, wet or dry. Occupation means long waits at checkpoints, even in emergencies. Occupation means that one needs permits to go to one's fields, permits that are often not given. Even when permits are given, the Palestinian farmer often finds that the military gates that control accessing his fields are closed and fail to open, and, for that matter, fail to open also for children on their way to school. Occupation means land theft and uprooting of olive trees, some of which are 100s of years old, all of which are means of sustenance for the Palestinian people, some now the only means.

Occupation means curfews, during which sick people can and do die. Occupation means that one's home can turn into rubble in minutes, as bulldozers or explosives demolish it, along with its furnishings, toys, family photograph albums, computers, and all else. Occupation means imprisonment. Approximately 11,000 Palestinians are now incarcerated in Israeli facilities.

Israeli Occupation means apartheid. The separation wall is one instance; four additional ones are water, roads, home construction, and checkpoints. Of 960 million cubic meters of water that is generated in the West Bank, Palestinians are allowed to use only one-tenth of it. The rest goes to Israelis. On average, a Palestinian citizen in the West Bank is allowed to use no more than 36 cubic meters of water per year, while Israeli settlers in the West Bank can use up to 2,400 cubic meters. Palestinians are not permitted to drive on 'settler' roads, which are highly superior to other roads in the occupied Palestinian territories. Palestinians are not allowed to build houses or even to add rooms, while Jewish settlement building continues uninhibited. Checkpoints also discriminate. Israelis, tourists, and Jews from abroad can go from the Territories to Israel via many checkpoints, but Palestinians having permits are allowed to enter Israel only through 11 of them, forcing Palestinians fortunate enough to have a permit to travel far out of the way on their way to work or for medical care in Israel.

For the above reasons, we Israeli seekers of peace and justice express our sincere gratitude to the Methodist Church for its stand on the occupation, and support the proposals before the General Conference this April on divestment. Boycott and divestment are non-violent means of pressuring governments to change their policies--means now sorely needed to compel the Israeli government to end its occupation of Palestinians and their lands and thereby to better the lives of Israelis as well as of Palestinians.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned

Name address

97. Creighton Lacy WNC Annual Conference
96. William Greene
95. Emily Schaeffer Tel Aviv, Israel
94. Rosamine Hayeem London, UK
93. Udi Adiv Detrech Tzarfat 32, Haifa
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91. ruth victor Jerusalem
90. Yali Amit
89. Hannah Safran Haifa
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85. Lily Traubmann Kibutz Megiddo
84. Dr. Sara Fischman
83. galit hess
82. Ruth Tenne
81. ginzburg shaul
80. yifat doron
79. Janet Green
78. Ur Shlonsky
77. Alissa Ben-Ari
76. Noa Shaindinger
75. Jaye N. White Fayetteville, NC
74. Eli Hamo
73. Yael Oren Kahn UK
72. racheli bar-or
71. Yisrael Puterman tel aviv
70. yasmin sivan
69. eytan lerner
68. Matan Cohen
67. Moshe Machover
66. Yotam Pappo
65. Itamar Shachar
64. Rela Mazali Herzlia
63. David Nir Tel Aviv, Israel
62. Amit Ron
61. yoav barak Tel Aviv
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59. Adi Dagan Tel Aviv, Israel
58. Yael Ronen Beer Sheva
57. Elchounon Esterovitz
56. Amit Perelson Haifa
55. Jonathan Pollak
54. Angela Godfrey-Goldstein Jerusalem
53. Oded Goldreich Tel Aviv
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44. Teddy Katz Magal, Israel
43. Mary Alice Nesbitt
42. Kfir Cohen

41. Gideon Spiro גידעון ספיר (Within the Green Line)
40. Amos Gvirtz Shefayim, Israel
39. Yael Lerer Tel Aviv
38. jake javanshir
37. Yvonne Deutsch Jerusalem

36. annelien kisch-kroon ramat hasharon , Israel
35. Ofra Ben- Artzi Jerusalem
34. Sandra Ruch Israeli in Toronto
33. noa schwartz tel aviv, israel
32. michal schwartz tel aviv, israel
31. Judy Blanc
30. Beatrice Eichten
29. Bilha Golan
28. tsilli goldenberg israel
27. ofer neiman Israel
26. Galit Kadan Toronto, Canada
25. Dalit Baum Tel Aviv
24. Susanne Moses
23. Roman Vater
22. DINA GOOR
21. Hanna Braun London; UK
20. Merav Amir Tel Aviv
19. Alla Nikonov §
18. kobi snitz haifa
17. Hillel Barak Haifa, Israel
16. ruchama marton Tel Aviv
15. Reuven Kaminer Jerusalem
14. Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta
13. Avishai Chelouche Pardes-Hana, Israel
12. Anat Matar
11. Jeannette Herzberg Israel
10. PNINA Feiler KIBBUTZ YAD-HANNA
9. Tamar Yaron Kibbutz Hazorea
8. Yael Korin
7. eileen fleming <http://www.wearewideawake.org/USA>
6. Paul H. Verduin Silver Spring, Maryland
5. Eldad Benary A Israeli in NY
4. Smadar Carmon
3. Eldad Benary A Israeli in NY
2. Israel Naor Herzlich, Israel
1. Dorothy Naor Herzlich, Israel

The Letter of Support from Israelis to the United Methodist Church Petition to James E. Winkler, General Secretary of the United Methodist Church was created by and written by Dorothy Naor (dor_naor@netvision.net.il).

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