

17 June 2015

My dear sisters and brothers in the United Church of Christ,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, through whom we share work and witness on behalf of God's love and God's justice.

I write to endorse, "*A Call for the United Church of Christ to Take Actions Toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*", Resolution #4, which will be put to the vote at your 30th General Synod later this month in Cleveland, Ohio.

We grieve over Israel's decades long oppression of Palestine and Palestinians: The illegal occupation; the expanding West Bank settlements; the separation wall; the siege of Gaza; the manipulation of water rights; the network of checkpoints and settler bypass roads; the detention of people without charges; the travel restrictions, identity cards, and disruption of every aspect of daily life for Palestinians.

We condemn the brutality of Israel's policies. But we do not condemn Judaism or Jews.

As South African, we recognise institutionalized racism when we see it. We have experienced the corrosive effects of segregation – and have witnessed the healing power and joy of reconciliation.

It is unconscionable to remain silent, or neutral, in the face of injustice. Neutrality maintains the status quo and compounds the injustice.

The depth of my commitment to justice in the Holy Land has cost me friends and elicited vehement criticism. It is the cost of discipleship that requires us to name evil and clearly oppose it. Calling me anti-Semitic will not stop me from speaking out for justice.

We do not seek to demonize the architects of Israel's occupation of Palestine, but to implore those with the political power to change their policies and their ways. Injustice brutalizes the humanity of the oppressors as well as that of the oppressed. Freedom for Palestinians will liberate Israelis, too.

We are sisters and brothers of one family, the human family, God's family. We are made for each other, for inter-dependence, for goodness and for love. When we recognise each other for what we truly are, we make the impossible possible.

Thank you for recognising our common humanity, for taking a stand for justice. Your resolution places you on the side of justice and human rights for all.

I endorse fully your resolution's proposal to use the powerful non-violent tools of economic leverage. These tools helped us to engineer a new day for my own country, South Africa. With you, we proved that economic pressure can force the most powerful to the table. I

am grateful that your denomination stood with us then, voting to join the South African divestment movement, and that you are prepared once again to take this stand for justice.

I applaud your decision to be guided by the faithful voice of the Christian community of Palestine, and to encourage widespread study of *Kairos Palestine – a Moment of Truth* (2009). It was just such a document which, in 1985, allowed the world to hear our voice and learn the depth of our oppression in South Africa. May we all heed the Kairos Palestine call, as people of faith, to engage in “resistance with love as its logic”.

I affirm your resolution’s condemnation of all violence and your uncompromising commitment to the path of nonviolence and inter-religious dialogue. And I commend the resolution’s call for accountability from your own, United States, government over its annual \$3.1 billion in military aid to Israel.

As US citizens you have the responsibility to speak truth to the power of your own government. As Christians you have the duty to side with the oppressed and by so doing to liberate the oppressor.

I endorse your resolution, and fervently pray for the day when Palestinians and Israelis will be reconciled and live together in dignity, security, and peace, with equal rights for all. When that day comes our collective hallelujahs will resound across the world we share.

God bless you.

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu
Cape Town, South Africa