

Peace and Justice through Just and Peaceful Means: Overture on Embargoing Israel

The Presbytery of _____ overtures the 227th General Assembly of the PC(USA) to

1. Direct the PC(USA) Stated Clerk and Office of Public Witness to demand the US Congress and the President to enact a full trade embargo on Israel until the United Nations determines the following conditions are met: (a) the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territory has ended, (b) Israel's apartheid policies are abolished, (c) Israel's illegal separation barrier is demolished, and (d) Palestinian refugees are granted the right to return to their homeland.
2. Encourage Presbyteries, congregations, and individual clergy and laypeople to call upon their Congressmembers and President to impose a full trade embargo on Israel until the United Nations determines the conditions listed above are met.

Rationale:

The PCUSA has long been committed to non-violent solutions to international conflicts, including that between Israel and Palestine. The need for such non-violent solutions are more pressing than ever in contemporary Israel/Palestine in the wake of the deadly attacks by Hamas and its allies on October 7, 2023, which killed more than 1,000 Israelis, and the Israeli response to that attack, which at the time of this writing has killed at least 67,000 Palestinians, including at least 20,000 children.

Before the most recent conflagration of this conflict emerged, Palestinians had for decades been suffering under a brutal Israeli military occupation, a crippling blockade on Gaza, more than seven decades of forced exile, apartheid policies, and a barrier that separated Palestinians not only from Israelis but also from their own land and fellow people.

Each of these impediments to peace has been deemed illegal by the United Nations and condemned by various PC(USA) General Assembly policies.

1 On the illegality of the Israeli occupation: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/ceirpp-legal-study2023/>; on the illegality of the Israeli blockade of Gaza: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/PS/A_71_554_en.pdf; on the illegality of the forced exile of Palestinians: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-210170/>; on the existence and illegality of Israeli apartheid: <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-adv-01-00-en.pdf>; on the illegality of Israel's separation barrier: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2004/07/108912>.

2 PC(USA) General Assembly policy on ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory: <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3179>; GA policy on ending Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip: <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3000472>; GA policy on respecting Palestinians' legal right to return to their homeland from exile: <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3179>; GA policy on Israel's laws, practices, and

policies constituting apartheid: <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3000773>; on relocating the Israeli separation barrier to the 1967 borders: <https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3179>; GA policy on affirming the legitimacy of These conditions have only worsened since October 7, 2023, and there are legitimate fears among Palestinians in the occupied West Bank that what has happened to the people of Gaza—an onslaught that several international human rights organizations, the United Nations Human Rights Council, and a consensus of genocide scholars have identified as a “genocide”—will soon happen to them.

The cry among our Palestinian siblings for freedom from these conditions has never been greater.

Palestinian civil society, including Palestinian Christians, have long asked the international community in general and the Global Church in particular to pressure our government to enact significant sanctions on Israel until it abides by international law and allows Palestinians to live with equal rights, freedom and dignity. The PC(USA)’s church partners in the region, too, have asked us to take prophetic steps toward contributing to a just peace in Israel/Palestine, including advocating for economic sanctions against the state of Israel.

As a denomination, we have an opportunity to play a significant role in helping our government use non-violent tactics to help bring about a peaceful resolution to this longstanding conflict. A full economic embargo on Israel would put significant non-violent pressure on the nation-state of Israel to end its unfair and incendiary policies and thus hasten peace, justice, and reconciliation in the Holy Land.