

Costly Solidarity for Disciples

A toolkit for congregations committing to work for justice and the human rights of Palestinians



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Introduction

As Christians, we are faced with a genocide about which we are fully cognizant. If we choose to watch, our social media and news feeds are documenting the wanton killing and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. As Palestinian Evangelical Lutheran Pastor Munther Isaac has said: “Right now, in Palestine, we have given up on the idea that the church would side or help us stop this genocide. But the real question that must be addressed is, ‘How will the church survive this? How will the church survive from the fact that, 14 months after a genocide has started, they have not yet called it a genocide?’ We must recognize what is happening, and take action to combat it!”¹

This is a time when our church, our congregations, and we as people of faith must act. This resource is designed to provide congregations resources to help respond to the genocide and to work to dismantle Israel’s operating system of apartheid and occupation which support and promote the genocide.”.



“Mother Protecting her Children”
Artist: Malik Mattar,
Source:www.facebook.com/MalakMattarArtist/photos,
Accessed 5 June 2025

¹ Quoted from an interview with Joshua Daniels in Sojourners, January 7, 2025.

01: Why Now and Why Us

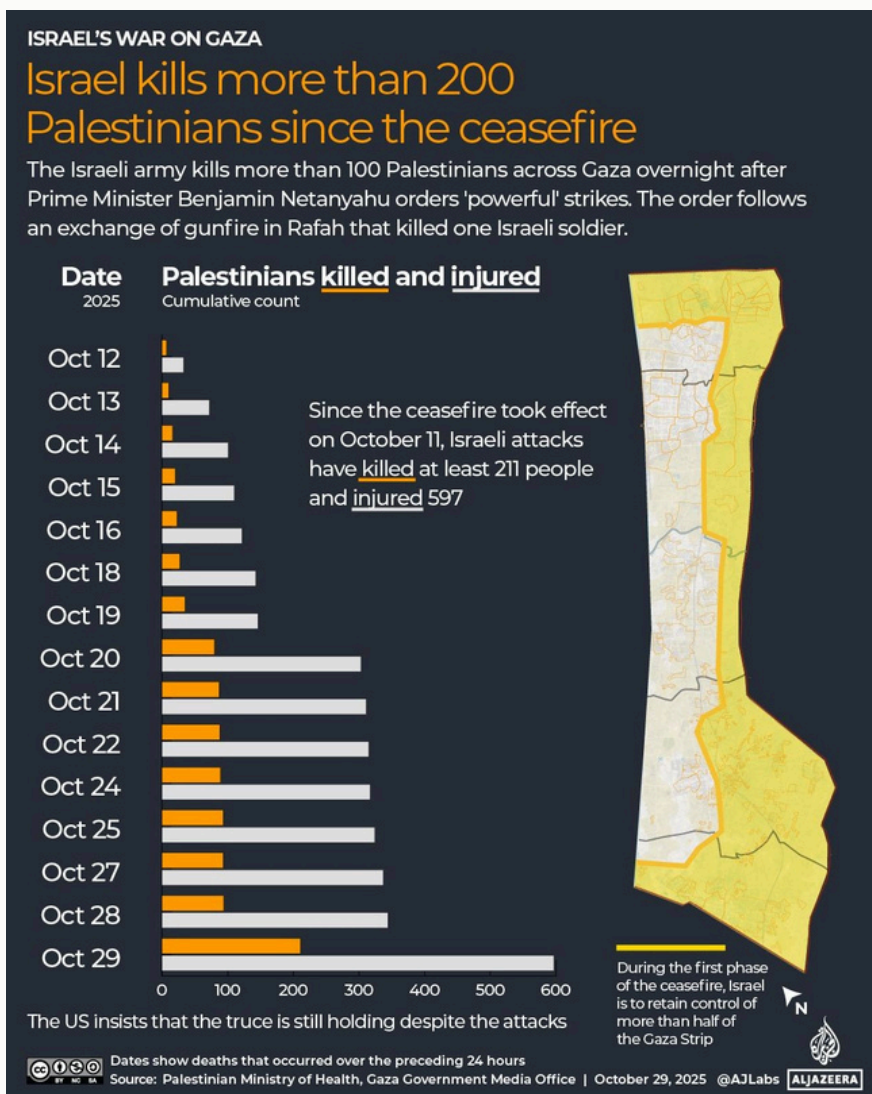
- **The urgency of the moment:** Christ is being crucified every day in the genocide in Gaza and now in the West Bank. The recent Trump “Peace Plan,” while initially promising the respite of a ceasefire in its first phase has only been a “commercial break.” Israel has continued attacks within the first two weeks since the October 12th ceasefire, killing over 200 Palestinians in Gaza, injuring close to 600, and allowing only an insufficient trickle of humanitarian aid. The so-called “Peace Plan” fails to address the underlying systemic injustices of Israel’s apartheid and occupation, and to the contrary allows Israel to continue to occupy large portions of Gaza. But, the world has woken up to the displacement, destruction of villages, and deaths through Israel’s ongoing ethnic cleansing of the population of Palestinians and understands: this is still a genocide. The moment for costly solidarity is as urgent as ever.



Artist: Sobhiya Hasan Qais
Source: www.facebook.com/ArtOfPalestine,
Accessed 5 June 2025

01: Why Now and Why Us

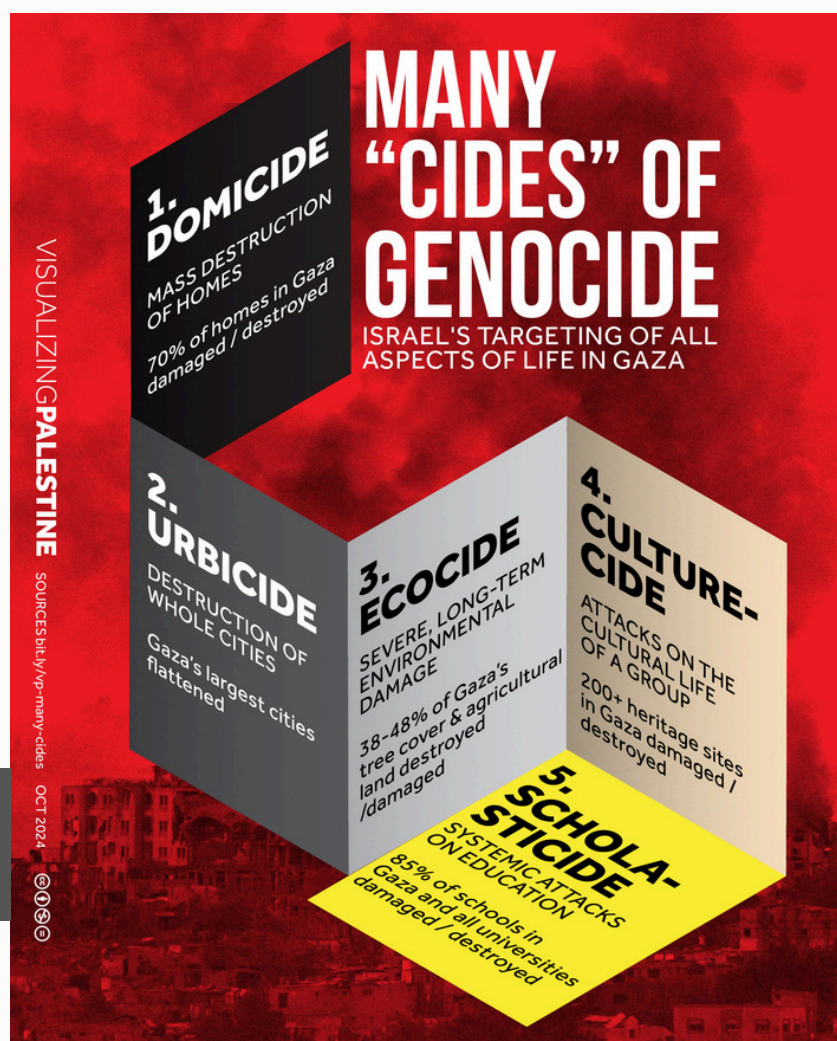
- **The extent of Israel's genocide is unfathomable:** according to the United Nations in the two years since October 7, 2023, Israel has killed, more than 67,000 Palestinians in Gaza, including over 20,000 children, and injured more than 169,000, with more than 1,000 Palestinians killed (among them 212 children) and over 7,500 injured in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Gaza has been reduced to rubble. Israel's attacks have destroyed most of Gaza's homes along with 80 percent of commercial facilities; demolished 88 percent of schools and all 12 of Gaza's universities; destroyed 50 percent of hospitals and the rest have been rendered only partially functional; destroyed 68 percent of road networks; and destroyed 68 percent of cropland. The entire population of Gaza has been forcibly displaced multiple times and most are now homeless.



Source: Al Jazeera, Accessed 3 November 2025

01: Why Now and Why Us (cont'd)

- **Israel has repeatedly blocked international aid**, creating conditions of famine as trucks wait outside the gates that block access to the territory. Efforts to replace international humanitarian aid delivery with an Israeli-US contractor initiative has resulted in killings of hundreds as they tried to access desperately needed food and hygiene products.
- The US President and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu have talked openly about removing Palestinians and building a tourist resort on Gaza's beaches.



Source: visualizingpalestine.org,
Accessed 3 June 2025

01: Why Now and Why Us (cont'd)

- **The violence is being done in God's name** (taking God's name in vain), as Israeli officials and U.S. supporters of Israel, specifically Christian nationalists/Zionists: invoke God as a 'real estate agent'; use the Biblical language of Judea and Samaria to describe the West Bank; effectively deny/erase Israel's colonial settler history, and the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Palestinians since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 (the Nakba) and 1967 (the Naksa); and continue to support, defend, and celebrate Israel even as they commit the crimes listed above.
- **Violence is being done in our name** as the US facilitates Israel's actions using tax dollars to fund weapons, and technology, and providing diplomatic cover with UN Security Council vetoes. Between 1946 and 2024 US had provided \$310 billion in mostly military support of Israel. Since October 2023, the US provided \$17.9 billion in military aid under the Biden Administration, and an additional 12.3 billion under the Trump Administration, including 35,000 2,000 pound bombs that have been devastating to infrastructure and life in Gaza. As US taxpayers we are all complicit in the **genocide**.
- Israel's attacks on civilians and restrictions on humanitarian aid are profound human rights violations, documented by multiple human rights organizations and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC). [-> find links in Part 3]
- The very stones (Palestinian Christian Partners, Jewish and Muslim colleagues) are crying out for witness and resistance from us as people of faith.
- This must not be normalized; there will be a reckoning. Anti-Zionist Jewish scholar Peter Beinart, talks about "the Gaza Template" of nations flouting international norms and denying necessities such as water to civilians during conflicts. Palestinian Evangelical Lutheran Pastor Munther Isaac has asked where is the voice of the U.S. church decrying these violations.

This resource will help the church to act.

02: The Response of the United Church of Christ

2.1 Theological Imperative for Prophetic Witness, General Synod 2021

In 2021 the General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopted a "Declaration for a Just Peace Between Palestine and Israel" which provides a framework for advocacy and solidarity based on human rights and international law. Excerpts from that Resolution ground our current response to the genocide in Gaza and the ongoing Occupation of Palestine.

In *Kairos Palestine: A Word of Faith, Hope, and Love From the Heart of Palestinian Suffering* (2009), Palestinian Christian theologians assert that

our land has a universal mission. In this universality, the meaning of the promises, of the land, of the election, of the people of God open up to include all of humanity, starting from all the peoples of this land. In light of the teachings of the Holy Bible, the promise of the land has never been a political programme, but rather the prelude to complete universal salvation. It was the initiation of the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God on earth" (*Kairos Palestine* par. 2.3).

The promise of God regarding land and blessing in Genesis was ultimately not about possession of land, but about the role of the people of Israel as a blessing that "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12.3). In light of the on-going genocide in Gaza, the vision of some Israeli and American political leaders to empty Gaza of Palestinians, and the relentless building of settlements in the West Bank and the concurrent demolition of Palestinian homes and villages, Isaiah's words are telling "Ah, you who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one but you and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land" (Isaiah 5.8). They remind individuals and nations that the mere accumulation of land and economic resources at the expense of justice and righteousness offers only a barren future.

02: The Response of the United Church of Christ

2.1 Theological Imperative for Prophetic Witness, General Synod 2021 (cont'd)

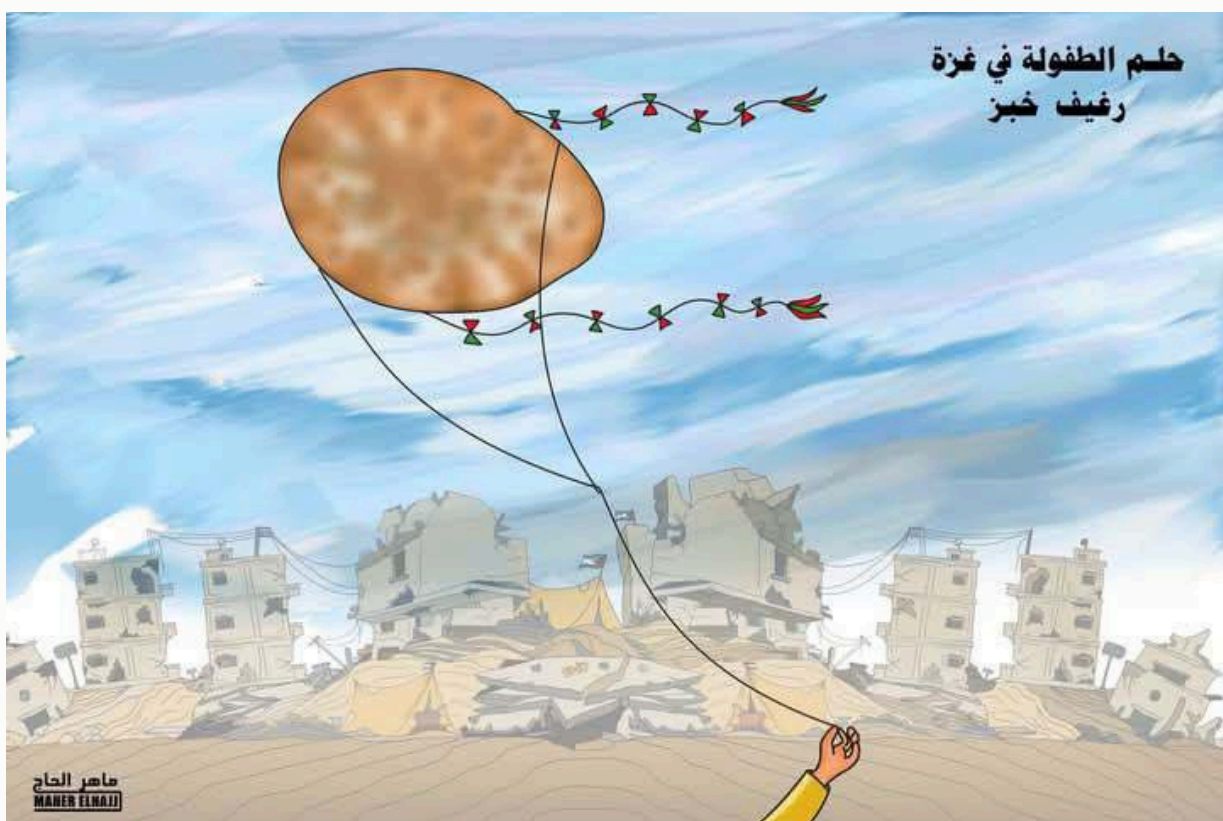
The General Synod of the United Church of Christ in 2021 affirmed the following and offers a framework for imagining a future of peace with justice beyond genocide and ethnic cleansing for Palestinians and their Jewish Israeli neighbors: We affirm:

- that the continued oppression of the Palestinian people remains, after more than five decades, a matter of theological urgency and represents a sin in violation of the message of the biblical prophets and the Gospel, and that all efforts to defend or legitimate the oppression of the Palestinian people, whether passive or active, through silence, word, or deed by the Christian community, represent a fundamental denial of the Gospel.
- that the biblical narrative beginning with creation and extending through the calling of the Israelites, the corrective admonitions of the prophets, the incarnation and ministry of Jesus and the witness of the apostles to the “ends of the earth” . . . speaks of God's blessing extending to “all the families of the earth.” (Genesis 12.3)
- that all people living in Palestine and Israel are created in the image of God and that this bestows ultimate dignity and sacredness to all; and that Israel's apartheid system of laws and legal procedures is a violation of international law and a degrading of the humanity and God-bestowed, inherent dignity of Palestinians.
- that all peoples have the right to self-determination and to their aspirations for sovereignty and statehood in the shaping of their corporate religious, cultural, and political life, free from manipulation or pressure from outside powers, and that a just resolution of conflicting claims is only achieved through peaceful negotiation based on international law and UN resolutions, the equal protection of civil rights, and the fair and just sharing of land and resources.
- the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes if they so choose or to be compensated for their loss of property, consistent with UN General Assembly resolution 194 (1948).

02: The Response of the United Church of Christ

2.1 Theological Imperative for Prophetic Witness, General Synod 2021 (cont'd)

- the First Amendment constitutional right to freedom of speech and assembly to protest the actions of the State of Israel and to uphold the rights of Palestinians, including the use of economic measures to support justice as a First Amendment right and joining the international Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement by individuals, institutions, corporations, and religious bodies that advocate peace with justice or participate in any aspect of the use of economic measures to support justice.



Artist: Maher Elhajj
Source: www.facebook.com/ArtOfPalestine/,
Accessed 5 June 2025

02: The Response of the United Church of Christ

2.2 Declaration for an End to the Genocide in Palestine, General Synod 2025

In the summer of 2025, the United Church of Christ at its General Synod in Kansas City, Missouri responded to the urgency of the moment and named the horrifying reality of Israel's unabashed, unabated, and United States abetted genocide, by passing the resolution "Declaration for an End to the Genocide in Palestine."

Consistent with the framework for advocacy and solidarity based on human rights and international law that the 2021 Resolution adopted, the 2025 Resolution asserts that the State of Israel is perpetrating against Palestinians "war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide." Grounded in and defined by our fundamental confession of faith that we are all made in God's image and deserving of life free from oppression, persecution, and genocide, the 2025 Resolution asks all United Church of Christ entities to receive the Resolution as a prophetic call and to commit to:

1. **Stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people** and to denounce the ongoing genocide whether that be through the context of public witness, legislative advocacy, legal action, or non-violent direct action.
2. **Call on our government** to cease providing financial sponsorship, military arms, and political cover to the State of Israel for acts of genocide.
3. **Denounce hate and violence in all its forms** including that rooted in Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab bias, and antisemitism, as contrary to the teachings of Jesus and the love of God for all humanity.
4. **Share this declaration**, pray, and speak within our congregations and communities about the genocide in Palestine.

03: What can we as congregations, conferences, and individuals do right now?

Study, educate and stay informed to understand the context for the current genocide in Gaza

Listen to and learn from our Palestinian Christian Partners:

- Kairos Palestine's [Cry for Hope](#) (2020):
 - *We call upon all Christians and on churches at congregational, denominational, national, and global ecumenical levels to engage in a process of study, reflection and confession concerning the historic and systemic deprivation of the rights of the Palestinian people, and the use of the Bible by many to justify and support this oppression.*
- Kairos Palestine's [Call for Repentance](#) (2023)
 - *Finally, and we say it with a broken heart, we hold western church leaders and theologians who rally behind Israel's wars accountable for their theological and political complicity in the Israeli crimes against the Palestinians, which have been committed over the last 75 years. We call upon them to reexamine their positions and to change their direction, remembering that God "will judge the world in justice" (Acts 17:31)*
- Kairos Palestine's [A Betrayal of Justice: Kairos Palestine Rejects Trump's Ethnic Cleansing Proposal and Calls for Global Action](#) (2025)
 - *As Kairos Palestine, we categorically condemn and reject President Trump's plans, which amount to the forced displacement and erasure of our entire nation. We considered this neo-settler colonial plan evil, and "a sin against God and humanity", as stated in Kairos Palestine document. We hold the Government of the United States, and Christian Zionist lobbies accountable, for their role in ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people, and the Christian native community.*
- [Follow the Global Kairos for Justice Facebook page](#)

03: What can we as congregations, conferences, and individuals do right now? (cont'd)

Study, educate and stay informed to understand the context for the current genocide in Gaza

Read reports concluding that Israel is engaging in apartheid:

- United Nations [Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967](#) (June 2025)
- Human Rights Watch [A Threshold Cross: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution](#) (April 2021)
- B'tselem - [This Is Apartheid](#) (Jan. 2021)
- Amnesty International - [Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians](#) (Feb. 2022)
- Al Haq [Israeli Apartheid - Tool of Zionist Settler Colonialism](#) (Nov. 2022)
- Academics [Apartheid in Israel: an Analysis of Israel's Laws and Policies and the Responsibilities of US Academic and Other Institutions](#) (May 2025)

Utilize International Law definitions, cases, and rulings:

- [United Nations definitions of genocide and related crimes](#)
- [Summary of ICJ ruling on South Africa's claim that Israel is committing genocide](#)
- [The ICJ's Decision on Israel's Occupation of the Palestinian Territories](#)
- [ICC brings war crimes charges against Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu, former Israel Defense Minister Gallant, and Hamas commander, Mohammed Deif](#)

Books for Study and Discussion, some examples to get started:

- [Rooted in Faith and Justice](#) edited by Rebekah Choate, Krista Johnson Weickel, & Peter Makari
- [Steadfast Hope: the Palestinian Quest for Just Peace](#) (Israel/Palestine Mission Network)
- [Zionism Unsettled: a Congregational Study](#) (Israel/Palestine Mission Network)
- [Why Palestine Matters: The Struggle to End Colonialism](#) (Israel/Palestine Mission Network)
- [Understanding Palestine and Israel](#) by Phyllis Bennis 2025
- [Faith in the Face of Empire](#) by the Rev. Mitri Raheb

03: What can we as congregations, conferences, and individuals do right now? (cont'd)

Study, educate and stay informed to understand the context for the current genocide in Gaza

For further study:

- The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine by Ilan Pappé
- The Hundred Years War on Palestine by Rashid Khalidi
- Christ in the Rubble by the Rev. Munther Isaac
- Decolonizing Palestine by the Rev. Mitri Raheb
- Being Jewish After the Destruction of Gaza: a Reckoning by Peter Beinart
- Perfect Victims and the Politics of Appeal by Mohammad El-Kurd
- Light in Gaza: Writings Born of Fire edited by Jihad Abusalim, Jennifer Bing, & Michael Merryman Lotze
- One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This by Omar El Akkad

Movies/videos/sermons, some examples to get started:

- Christ is Still Under the Rubble, Christmas 2024 message by the Rev. Munther Isaac,
- Occupation 101 (2006)
- Budrus (2009)
- Five Broken Cameras (2012)
- The Occupation of the American Mind (2016)
- Boycott (2021)
- Israelism (2023)

For further study:

- No Other Land (2024)
- Encampments (2025)
- From Ground Zero (2024)
- The Present (2024)
- The Bibi Files (2024)
- The Settlers (2025)
- 'Til Kingdom Come (2020)
- Gaza Journalists Under Fire (2025)

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03: What can we as congregations, conferences, and individuals do right now? (cont'd)

Advocate for justice and human rights:

- Develop a relationship with your members of Congress and call them often. Persist in demanding: (1) the end to US military aid, technology support, and political cover to Israel; (2) the immediate provision of humanitarian aid and the end to Israel's practice of starving Palestinians in Gaza; (3) end to Israel's occupation and escalating annexation of the West Bank, and (4) an end to the U.S.'s illegal deportation of students supporting Palestinian rights and criminalizing of dissent.
- Sign up to receive various time-sensitive advocacy and action alerts:
 - Global Ministries 4th Thursday alerts, [here](#) (*indicate "3rd Thursday Alerts" or "Palestine-Israel" as your interest*)
 - [Friends of Sabeel North America](#)
 - [Code Pink](#)
 - [Christians for a Free Palestine](#)
 - [Jewish Voice for Peace](#)
 - [AFSC Action Hour](#)
- Be visible – show up at demonstrations and recruit friends to stand with you at intersections, with signs and banners with messages such as: stop US military aid to Israel, end the genocide, etc

Engage in the process of taking the pledge to become an apartheid-free congregation/community:
www.apartheid-free.org

04: What can we do with our ‘treasures,’ as conferences, congregations, and individuals?

Boycott and/or divest from companies that support Israeli apartheid and occupation, not just in the West Bank, but through all of Israel '48:

- The 2015 General Synod Resolution on BDS focused on companies doing business in the West Bank. The boycott now must include all of Israel, given that apartheid exists everywhere.
- Resources: <https://bdsmovement.net/Guide-to-BDS-Boycott>
- Study Global Ministries’ Resource on Using Economic Leverage one-pager about boycotting
- Access and use the BDS Toolkit [here](#)
- Examples of companies to boycott: Chevron, Texaco, Caterpillar, Motorola, IBM, Volvo, Soda Stream. To see a fuller list, see reports produced by Don't Buy Into Occupation
- Divest from companies complicit with Israel’s occupation: if your congregation has an endowment, learn about its investments and determine if it has occupation/apartheid-free human screens.
 - Use the AFSC divestment resources and listing of companies complicit in and supporting Israel’s occupation and genocide: www.afsc.org/divest
 - Consult the UN report “From Economy of Occupation to Economy of Genocide,” by Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories

04: What can we do with our ‘treasures,’ as conferences, congregations, and individuals? (cont’d)

Invest to support human rights; avoid companies that support Israeli apartheid and occupation, not just in the West Bank, but through all of Israel '48:

United Church Funds (UCF), a financial ministry of the United Church of Christ, works with churches and faith-based organizations to steward their assets and grow their ministries through responsible and values-aligned investing.

This includes avoiding investment in companies that contribute to severe human rights abuses, and calling on all companies operating in conflict zones (e.g., Russia/Ukraine, Sudan, Gaza) and occupied territories (e.g., the West Bank, Western Sahara) to perform heightened due diligence, ensuring that they are not contributing to human rights harms.

As an example, UCF has asked companies to conduct third-party Human Rights Impact Assessments and address any identified harms. When engagement with these corporations fails to produce necessary changes, UCF’s Exclusionary Screens ensure that investment in these stocks is excluded.

UCF’s Responsible Investing work is guided by a commitment to justice and sustainability, influenced by: (1) the prophetic imagination and the stated witness of the United Church of Christ as expressed by resolutions of General Synod, (2) engagement with ecumenical peers and collaborative organizations, (3) domestic and international laws and standards, and (4) a “still speaking faith” that seeks “just world for all.”

05: Be strategic, steadfast, and spiritually grounded -- like a tree planted by the water -- and wise as serpents

Resources for staying spiritually grounded

- Pray the [Sabeel weekly prayer](#)
- Sign up for the [UCC MPS Substack](#)
- Palestine poetry –
 - Refaat Alareer, *If I Must Die*
 - Mosab Abu Toha, *Forest of Noise*
 - Mohammed El-Kurd, *Rifqa*
 - *Sumud: A New Palestinian Reader*, edited by Malu Halasa & Jordan Elgrably
- Palestinian artwork
 - [The Art of Occupied Palestine](#)
 - [The Palestine Museum](#)

Artist: Shehab Kawasmi

Source:

www.facebook.com/ArtOfPalestine,
Accessed 5 June 2025



05: Be strategic, steadfast, and spiritually grounded -- like a tree planted by the water -- and wise as serpents (cont'd)

Resources for staying spiritually grounded

Remember this is about human rights (this is not about partisan politics, left, right, or center).

Be courageous; ending genocide requires us to be bold.

Do not get mired in or intimidated by the weaponization of anti-semitism.

Act together with others and know you are not alone (increasing numbers of US folks support Palestine, especially among younger generations).

Join a UCC Movement for Palestinian Solidarity (UCC MPS) solidarity circle

BUYING TIME FOR GENOCIDE

Israel and the U.S. never really wanted a ceasefire. From the beginning, they obstructed diplomatic efforts to end the genocide and built up Israel's murderous arsenal

May 6, 2024
PALESTINIAN NEGOTIATORS ACCEPT framework for ceasefire

35,215
 Palestinians killed (Oct. 7, 2023–May 6, 2024)

Aug. 13, 2024
U.S. APPROVES \$20BN ARMS SALE to Israel

+3 months
+5,325
 Palestinians killed

Nov. 20, 2024
U.S. BLOCKS CEASEFIRE resolution at U.N. Security Council for the 4th time

"THE IDEA THAT WE WILL STOP... IS OUT OF THE QUESTION"
 - Benjamin Netanyahu

+3 months
+4,200
 Palestinians killed

Jan. 19, 2025
CEASEFIRE BEGINS

+2 months
+2,984
 Palestinians killed

Mar. 17, 2025
ISRAEL ABANDONS CEASEFIRE

+2 months
+639
 Palestinians killed

VISUALIZING **PALESTINE** MAR 2025 ©©©© Sources: bit.ly/vp-buying-time

Source: visualizingpalestine.org, Accessed 3 June 2025

Conclusion

United Church of Christ Movement for Palestinian Solidarity was founded as United Church of Christ Palestine Israel Network in 2012. The steering committee voted to change the organization's name in 2025 to better reflect our mission to strive for costly solidarity with Palestinian partners.

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United Church of Christ
Movement for Solidarity Network



**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
MOVEMENT FOR PALESTINIAN
SOLIDARITY | JUNE 2025**

Costly Solidarity for Disciples

A toolkit for
congregations
committing to
work for justice
and the human
rights of
Palestinians



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