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# United Church Social Policy Positions

## The Working Group on Israel/Palestine Policy (2012)

That the 41st General Council 2012:

1. receive the report of The Working Group on Israel/Palestine Policy;
2. direct that United Church policies and actions, in relation to Israel and Palestine, reflect the content of the report as these have been affirmed in the motions number 3 through 13 and recommend the report and its policies to its members for study, prayerful discernment and personal action.

*Direct that United Church of Canada policy in respect to the conditions necessary for peace:*

3. Continue to call for rejection of all forms of violence and of incitements of violence and hatred by all parties in the conflict.
4. Continue to identify the end of the occupation as necessary for peace in the region by:
  - a. continuing to name the occupation as a major contributor to the injustice that underlies the violence of the region;
  - b. identifying the end of all settlement construction by Israel as a necessary step in entering into good faith negotiations toward ending the occupation;
  - c. calling on Israel to dismantle settlements within the occupied territories;
  - d. calling on Israel to dismantle the separation barrier in all sections where it crosses over the Green Line;
  - e. identifying equitable access to water as a critical factor in a just settlement of the conflict;
  - f. urging the Canadian government to provide leadership among nations advocating for the end of the occupation.
5. Affirm that non-violent resistance to the occupation is justified and should be supported by all who seek an end to the occupation.
6. Acknowledge with deep regret the past policy of calling on Palestinians to acknowledge Israel as a Jewish state as a prerequisite to peace.
7. Affirm the importance of a just resolution of the rights of refugees throughout the world and the Palestinian Right of Return by continuing to uphold the legal rights of all refugees to return to their home, affirm that in the situation of Israel/Palestine this right extends to both Jewish and Palestinian peoples, and support a negotiated settlement to the Right of Return for Palestinian refugees that maintains the demographic integrity of Israel.
8. Address the critical role that some forms of Christian theology have played in legitimizing the occupation by:

- a. challenging Christian beliefs that theologically justify the occupation and Israel's possession of a greater Israel that includes the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza;
- b. requesting that the Theology and Inter-Church Inter-Faith Committee explore the implications of theologies and beliefs that support the occupation.

*Direct that United Church policy in respect to action to be taken:*

9. Call on United Church members to take concrete actions to support the end of the occupation by:
  - a. directing the Executive of the General Council to give high priority to establishing a church-wide campaign of education and economic action directed against one or more settlement products that can be identified as produced in or related to the settlements or the occupied territories;
  - b. identifying the goal of the campaign as building awareness of United Church members of the illegal settlements' unjust continuation of the occupation and its impact on the lives of Palestinians and Israelis;
  - c. supporting the campaign through accompanying resources such as this working group report, the *Kairos Palestine* document, and others that are clearly directed toward an end to the occupation;
  - d. directing the Executive of the General Council to explore the wisdom of divesting in companies that are profiting from or supporting the occupation;
  - e. encouraging members of the United Church to avoid any and all products produced in the settlements;
  - f. requesting that the Canadian government ensure that all products produced in the settlements be labelled clearly and differently from products of Israel;
  - g. requesting that the Canadian government ensure that products produced in the settlements not be given preferential treatment under the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement;
  - h. inviting the participation of other Canadian churches in the campaign.
10. Identify the importance of trust-building programs between Palestinians and Israelis by:
  - a. encouraging stronger connections between United Church programs and organizations that build understanding between Palestinians and Israelis;
  - b. exploring and supporting initiatives for increasing connections in Canada between Palestinian Canadians and Jewish Canadians.
11. Emphasize the importance for all Christians, and in particular members of the United Church, of visiting and engaging directly with Palestinian Christians by:
  - a. encouraging United Church people to respond to the call from Palestinian Christians to come and see the Holy Land through their eyes, encouraging support of Palestinian-based tourism, and providing materials to United Church members for supporting ethical travel in the Middle East;
  - b. encouraging positive economic action in support of the Palestinian economy and making available to United Church members information on programs and services like the Alternative Tourism Group and the Olive Tree Campaign;
  - c. continuing to support the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program for Palestine and Israel and encouraging United Church members to participate.

12. The United Church of Canada expresses a hope and commitment to be able to contribute to justice, even in a small way, that leads to peace in Israel/Palestine. An even more compelling hope is that we might contribute to dignity for all peoples in the region and respect for the particular calling of the land of Israel/Palestine.

General Council proposes that the 41st General Council directs that The United Church of Canada policy in respect to the conditions for peace in the region include:

- a. Naming that the ongoing aggression and incitement to violence towards the state of Israel and its people is an important contributor to the injustice that underlies the violence in the region.
  - b. Denounce the ongoing aggression and incitement to violence towards the state of Israel and its people by many and diverse parties, individuals and governments in the region and around the world
  - c. Denounces all questions of Israel's right to exist or that seek to undermine its legitimacy as a state.
  - d. In order to do this justice, peace and human dignity work, call on United Church members to continue to deepen and strengthen their relationships with the Jewish community and with the help of the 2003 resource Bearing Faithful Witness. And continue to deepen and strengthen their relationships with the Islamic community and with the help of the "That We May Know Each Other" 2006.
13. The United Church of Canada also denounces the ongoing violence towards and promotion of hatred for residents of the occupied territories by some settlers and others.

This ongoing violence and hatred causes great harm to our ecumenical partners in Israel and Palestine who have asked us and others for support at this time.

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**General Council:** *41st General Council, 2012*  
*Record of Proceedings Page Ref. 2012 ROP, pp. 164, 170-175, 182-185.*

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