



# World Council of Churches

*(as approved by the WCC central committee, 2-8 July 2014)*

## **Statement on Economic Measures and Christian Responsibility toward Israel and Palestine**

Our hearts are heavy. Too many people, both Israeli and Palestinian, have died already in this latest eruption of violence. In recent weeks, the level of tension and violence in Israel and Palestine has again reached frightening proportions. We bear witness to the senseless deaths of young people and the suffering visited on Israeli and Palestinian families. On the 1 July 2014, the World Council of Churches (WCC) general secretary expressed deep sorrow over the suffering and loss of life in the region. He affirmed that “collective retribution is not justice, nor will it lead to peace”. Unfortunately and sadly, we are still witnessing demolition of Palestinian homes, acts of revenge and collective punishment measures by the Israeli army against Palestinians, dangerous threats of increased Israeli military attacks against Palestinians in Gaza, and rocket attacks from Gaza. The current violence comes with the failure of the latest round of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and the loss of prospects for a political solution.

Following the many calls issued by Palestinian Christians - most directly and succinctly in “A Moment of Truth,” the [Kairos Palestine document](#) issued in December 2009 – churches around the world are deeply concerned by these recent, highly destructive developments. It is the call of the churches to seek for Jerusalem “the things that make for peace” (Luke 19.42). Seeking peace for both Palestine and Israel is a longstanding commitment of member churches of the WCC.

As we face the possibility of yet another escalation in violence, we are called to consider again what actions churches around the world may take to help reduce the violence and promote peace for both peoples. As the [WCC central committee noted in 2005](#), several churches have undertaken “initiatives to become better stewards of justice in economic affairs which link them to on-going violations of international law in occupied territory.” Initiatives that manifest solidarity with those who are oppressed are clearly the kind of actions which should govern the lives of people in covenant with God. In the present context of growing violence, such economic measures offer hope for promoting peace. In the spirit of promoting healthy Jewish-Christian relations in which we speak honestly and forthrightly with one another, we affirm the Central Committee’s statement of 1992 that “criticism of the policies of the Israeli government is not in itself anti-Jewish” any more than criticism of Palestinian Authority policies is anti-Palestinian;

We note the actions taken recently by the Presbyterian Church (USA) to divest from corporations that profit from Israel’s illegal military occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The United Methodist Church has also sold the shares of a corporation that provided equipment for prisons in the West Bank. These decisions were taken after long and careful deliberations which took into account all factors and perspectives. We also note actions by churches which work closely with their national governments so that goods produced in all Israeli settlements be labelled as manufactured in occupied Palestinian territories. These efforts are bearing fruit especially within the European Union. We also note the actions of those member churches that have voted to boycott goods produced in the Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian lands. As we said in 2005, these actions are “commendable in both method and manner,” using “criteria rooted in faith.” The purpose of these actions is to bring a just peace which will benefit both Palestine and Israel, peace that will save lives of Israelis and Palestinians and their families from grief.

We have been called by Palestinian Christians to stand with them in this moment of deep pain. In faith, hope, and love, we are called to join creative peaceful resistance to illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine. While we seek peace with justice for all persons and communities affected by this conflict, we also acknowledge the profound imbalance of power in Israel’s favour. We are confident that might will never make right, and with Martin Luther King Jr. affirm that the “moral arc of the universe is long but it bends toward justice”.

We refuse to stand by silently and let baseless incitement and religiously-sanctioned extremism take even one more Israeli or Palestinian life. In this particular situation, we are convinced that targeted economic measures are an important nonviolent strategy for promoting peace and abating violence. We are called to take action in support of peaceful solutions to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Economic pressure, appropriately and openly applied, is one such means of action. However, recognizing that different churches have complex relationships with Israel and Palestine, the WCC Central Committee acknowledges that the outworking of this statement will be different for individual churches in their own contexts.

In addition to the important policy approaches outlined in the 2005 minute, which we reiterate today, **the central committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland from 2-8 July, 2014 therefore:**

- A. **Reminds** churches with investment funds that they have an opportunity to use those funds responsibly in support of peace with justice for both Israelis and Palestinians.
- B. **Requests** the wide ecumenical family to accompany individuals and churches singled out for criticism because they seek to provide prophetic leadership to end the occupation of Palestine and to build a just peace;
- C. **Encourages** its member churches to make investments that also help maintain a vibrant Palestinian Christian presence and witness in Israel and Palestine;
- D. **Encourages** its member churches to engage in dialogue with Palestinian churches, civil society actors, and Jewish partners. Rather than reacting to the political controversies around economic measures, churches should thoughtfully and prayerfully consider how they might respond from the foundation of their faith;
- E. **Stands** in solidarity with all who are working for peace with justice in Palestine and Israel.