

National Convocation CEASEFIRE Resolution
NC 2024-01-01

WHEREAS, Galatians the sixth chapter and the second verse declares, “Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill[a] the law of Christ.”; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada sent its first missionary to Palestine in 1851 and, through more than a dozen Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) mission partners in Israel and Palestine, Disciples have worked alongside the people there with appointed mission workers and financial support; and

WHEREAS, the National Christian Missionary Convention was prophetically established in 1830, held its first convention in 1917 under the auspicious leadership of the right Reverend Preston Taylor and a host of spiritually endowed black women and men who strove for unity in the broken body of Christ due to white Christian Nationalism, “Jim Crowism”, racism and white supremacy, and;

WHEREAS, through righteous indignation and the liberatory providence of God fully merged into the International Convention of the Convention of the Disciples of Christ and the United Christian Missionary Society in 1969 further establishing National Convocation as a voice of justice and conscious of the international church and;

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has a history of commitment to racial, economic and social justice; and has spoken clearly and participated actively in movements for civil rights and anti-racism in the US and Canada and for human rights and the just resolution of conflict around the world; and since 1973, our General Assembly has articulated clear positions in support of justice and peace for Palestinians and Israelis (“Disciple Resolutions”) ; and

WHEREAS, being led by the same spirit of conscious and justice a black ecumenial Christian who too experienced the evil of Jim Crow white Christian Nationalism, and racism by the name of Ralph Bunche, wrote an anti-colonial resolution in 1947, UN Resolution 181, that established the state of Palestine-Israel, with the aspirations of decolonization and the lessening of the grip of imperialism in the Middle East (“Palestine question at the UN (1947-1975)/CEIRPP Historical backgrounder (A/AC.183/L.3) - Question of Palestine”) for which he was the first African American to receive a Nobel Peace Prize for; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of the State of Israel unfortunately has led to the 75-year displacement and dispossession of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes and property (Carroll)—amounting to a modern-day form of settler colonialism and creating a refugee population that now numbers more than 6 million; and the State of Israel has imposed a harsh 56-years-long occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip; and

WHEREAS, globally recognized human rights organizations- including B’Tselem- The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International- and the United Nations’ Special Rapporteur (“Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967”) have issued detailed reports describing and naming the State of Israel’s apartheid system; and

WHEREAS, in February 2022, Disciples leaders issued a Pastoral Letter, “Compelled to Witness: Affirming Justice, Rights, and Accountability in Promoting Peace in Israel/Palestine,” naming actions and circumstances that have led to the deterioration of hope for a just peace in Israel/Palestine, and finding that “Israeli policies and practices that discriminate against Palestinians- Christian and Muslims alike- are consistent with the international legal definition of the crime of apartheid as defined in the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (ICSPCA, 1973) and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (2002)”; and

WHEREAS, *A pastoral letter for a time of crisis and suffering from leaders of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* states,

“In remembering the experiences and teachings of Jesus’s life, and the crisis and suffering of his last days, we are especially cognizant of the fragmentation of the world around us, near and far. In fact, when we think about Jesus’s last days, and our hearts turn toward Jerusalem today, our eyes are flooded with images of a place nearby to its southwest, the Gaza Strip. We are especially pained by reports of the hunger that the Palestinian people of Gaza are experiencing. Gaza has been under heavy assault since early October, an Israeli response to the horrific Hamas attacks. Following the killing of 1,200 Israelis and the taking of hostages on that day – many of whom remain in captivity – Israel launched a brutal campaign on the Palestinians of Gaza which has, so far, killed more than 31,000 Palestinians, two-thirds of whom are women and children, and injured more than 73,000. The offensive has displaced more than three-quarters of the population and has destroyed homes and communities.

Practically all of the Palestinian people in Gaza are facing levels of food insecurity that are at crisis, emergency, or catastrophic levels. “All her people groan as they search for bread.” Emergency airdrops of food and water have begun, but those don’t always reach the people. Some such airdrops have fallen into the sea, and another actually killed five people and injured others when its parachute failed to open. Shipments by sea have begun to be launched as well, but these are far from sufficient. People are desperate for aid, and it is appalling that Israel has prevented the miles of trucks laden with food, water, medical supplies, and other necessities from entering Gaza over land for months. Allowing such aid by truck would be a much more efficient and effective way, and the items are ready.

A permanent cease fire is urgently needed in order to end the assault on Gaza, for the Palestinians of Gaza to be protected from further siege, to allow for the necessary and sufficient humanitarian aid to enter, and for people to access medical supplies and facilities. There is no military solution. If the violence continues unabated, and access to food and supplies continues to be restricted, then the ongoing death and suffering risks jeopardizing the existence of a whole segment of the Palestinian people. The intensified closure of Gaza must end, along

with the 16-year blockade that Israel has imposed on the Gaza Strip. (Hord-Owens, Cable, and Dorsey)“

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, The National Convocation, meeting in Greensboro, North Carolina, this 13th day of July 2024, affirms GA-2339 which says in part

Embraces an understanding that the Bible’s narrative—beginning with creation and extending through the calling of the Israelites, the prophets’ witness, the ministry of Jesus, the witness of the apostles, and Revelation’s vision of a new heaven and a new earth and the Tree of Life, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations—speaks of God’s blessing extending to “all the families of the earth (Genesis 12.3)”; and

- Believes that all people living in Palestine and Israel are created in the image of God deserving of equal dignity and their human rights; and
- Affirms the 2022 Disciples leadership Pastoral Letter, *Compelled to Witness: Affirming Justice, Rights, and Accountability in Promoting Peace in Israel/Palestine* and the subsequent 2023 General Assembly resolution, also named “Compelled to Witness,”; and
- Asserts that the continued oppression of the Palestinian people is 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 represent a fundamental denial of the Gospel; and
- Rejects any theology or ideology including Christian Zionism, supercessionism, antisemitism or anti-Islam bias that would privilege or exclude any one nation, race, culture, or religion; and
- Condemns speech and acts of antisemitism, and rejects the notion that criticism of policies of the State of Israel is inherently antisemitic; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, given the unique positionality of the African-American diaspora to the bludgeoning impacts of systematic racism and apartheid, and grounded in the understanding of a liberative Jesus who lived and preached as a man of color in an occupied historical Palestine, call for an immediate and permanent cease-fire in the conflict between Hamas and Israel in Gaza and pledge our prayers and commitment to the resolution of the historic claims and root causes to lead toward a durable, just, and peaceful solution for the liberation of all God's children in Palestine, Israel and all in the region understanding the wisdoms of our ancestors that there is "plenty good room in God's kingdom".

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the assembly of the National Convocation, urge all of its expressions to take the non-violent actions of continuing to speak truth in power concerning Palestine-Israel, diplomatic initiatives that will engage both Israelis and Palestinians in an effort to understand the fears, hopes, and aspirations of each other. Such strategies should actively seek a way to promote a just and lasting peace and cooperation that will lead to a durable solution that affords Palestinians and Israelis to live side by side.

Works Cited

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