

Clear Reasons to Reject the Middle East Study Committee Report Executive Summary

- 1) The report veers sharply from the PCUSA's long and consistent policies regarding Israel and Palestine by:
 - Moving from criticism of aspects of Israel's occupation of the West Bank to a position that the occupation is THE problem in the conflict. The report claims that if the occupation ended tomorrow, peace would result. Not even the most naïve believe such a scenario to be true. Consider what happened when Israel withdrew from Gaza (p. 8).
 - Wanting to circulate the Kairos Palestine document for denominational study, a document that advocates for a non-Jewish Israel. This directly contradicts the PCUSA's longtime affirmation of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state. The Kairos document also calls for an economic boycott against Israel, something the PCUSA has always rejected for sound reasons. (Recommendation III (f))
 - Stating a general concern for Israel's security yet inexplicably calling for an unconditional lifting of the embargo of Gaza. Lifting all aspects of the embargo (in contrast to advocating for an increased flow of humanitarian aid) would surely lead to a massive influx of rockets and weaponry to be used by Hamas against Israeli citizens. This blunt demand stands in sharp contrast with past, much-more-nuanced understandings of Middle East realities. (Recommendation IV (d))
 - Calling on the U.S. government to withhold financial, economic, and military aid to countries (anywhere in the world) "where civil, religious and other freedoms of their peoples are (not) fully exercised." If enacted, such an action would effectively end foreign aid for *any* country, which is totally counter to Presbyterian lobbying efforts to support U.S. foreign aid. For example, countries such as Ethiopia and Kenya would be denied U.S. foreign aid. (Recommendation V (h))
 - Failing to engage the mainstream American Jewish community in dialogue (as the PCUSA has done in the past) before proposing actions that relate to Israel and Palestine. The Committee intentionally chose NOT to speak with the many rabbis and Jewish leaders with whom Presbyterian pastors and congregations relate on a regular basis.
 - Including a 68-page narrative written by two Study Group members who conclude that Jews in Israel have no relationship with the Jews of ancient times

- 2) It is simply too expensive. After spending a large amount of money for the past two years during a time of PCUSA financial crisis, the Study Group requests that it be continued for another two years and calls for yet another expensive trip to the Middle East "by a high-level joint delegation of Presbyterians (including representatives from the Board of Pensions, Presbyterian Foundation, and the General Assembly Mission Council)." We cannot afford two more expensive years with negligible results. (Recommendation III (e))