

# Presbyterians: We can do better than divestment

We, the undersigned leaders of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), are deeply committed to a just and lasting peace between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. We have watched the events of the past few months with great dismay: the murder of Israeli and Palestinian teenagers; the trauma of increasing rocket attacks by Hamas on Israeli civilians; the extensive suffering and death of Palestinians from Israel's military response; the discovery of tunnels for major terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians; and the unabated expansion of settlements. More broadly, the rise of ISIS, the persecution of Middle Eastern Christians, and a wave of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in Europe and North America all point to the same conclusion: that the extreme elements of this conflict are gaining strength and influence. Meanwhile, those committed to the well-being of all are tempted to join in the polarization or to sink into silence and despair.

Last June, the General Assembly of our church voted very narrowly to approve the divestment of stock in three companies deemed as complicit in the occupation of the Palestinian territories. We are among the many Presbyterians all over the country who have worked against this action, believing that divestment would strengthen the extreme positions on both sides of this conflict without alleviating the suffering of Palestinians — and further divide and discourage the vast center of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that longs for justice with love for both peoples. We continue to dissent strongly from this divestment action, and many of the Presbyterians who fill our pews on Sunday mornings share this conviction.

Yet we are more convinced than ever that those who are concerned for justice and peace in the region must reject polarization, silence, despair, or inaction — starting with ourselves. Only by working together — Muslims, Jews, and Christians; Americans, Palestinians, and Israelis — can we hope to find the true path to a just and lasting peace for both peoples. To this end, we invite Presbyterians and all people of faith and moral conviction to join with us as we commit ourselves to the following aspirations and goals:

- To reclaim the church's role as "repairer of the breach," nationally and locally, among ourselves and between Christians, Jews, and Muslims through deep and relational work that models peace and reconciliation with justice and compassion.

- To reaffirm boldly the church's commitment to a two-state solution with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace, each with secure borders, territorial integrity, and a fair share of natural resources. We also restate our profound condemnation of the threats to a two-state solution, including: violence and terrorism, the Israeli settlements, and any denial of the legitimate aspirations of either party — including their rights to a viable and secure homeland.
- To seek out opportunities in Palestine, Israel, and between Israelis and Palestinians for proactive investment in economic, educational, and interfaith ventures that promote understanding across ethnic and religious divides and that offer the tangible signs of a future where both Israelis and Palestinians may dwell in justice, security, and peace.

Most of all, we pledge ourselves anew to work with Israelis and Palestinians, with American Jews and American Palestinian Christians and Muslims, to affirm the aspirations and address the deep needs of both peoples, and to work toward the day when "they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid" (Micah 4:4).



## Supported by:

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