

Executive Summary – PFMEP Response and Rebuttal to OV 08-06

The General Assembly should receive but not endorse nor approve The ACSWP Report on Israel-Palestine: For Human Values in the Absence of a Just Peace (Ovt 08-06)

Through study, analysis, and prayer, Presbyterians for Middle East Peace urges commissioners to receive, but not endorse nor approve the content and recommendations of the ACSWP Report *“Israel-Palestine: For Human Values in the Absence of a Just Peace”* (Ovt 08-06). ACSWP is promoting this report as being driven not by pursuit of a two state nor one state solution, but instead by Presbyterian “values” to advocate and advance peace. While there are values expressed in the report, they are by no means exclusively “Presbyterian” and in many cases, seem to be driven not by theology, but by political theory and political goals.

Commissioners need to read the ACSWP report (Overture 08-06) with open eyes. The claim that the report is not about a two state solution or a one state solution is deceptive at best. ACSWP’s report does everything in its power to denigrate the two state solution, what Presbyterians, and indeed, the world, has sought since 1993. We are told that the “door has closed” on a two state solution, based on nothing more than the words of one editorialist. The report uses historically inaccurate and deceptive arguments to place the blame for the conflict almost entirely on Israel. The report even goes so far as to describe the First Intifada, the Palestinian uprising that began in 1987, and which was characterized by rock-throwing and Molotov Cocktails, as “largely non-violent.” We cannot stand for such gross mischaracterizations, which also include:

- Over-simplification of problems over water between Israel and Palestine, and claiming that Israel denies water to Palestinians, while ignoring that 30 percent of Palestinian water in the West Bank is lost due to the inefficiencies of the Palestinian Authority.
- Accusing Israel of systemic child abuse, while failing to acknowledge UNICEF’s report of 2014, which lauded Israel’s willingness to dialogue and make appropriate changes to its systems to protect children’s rights and security.
- Claiming that the Christian population in Israel and Palestine is dwindling, which actual demographics do not support.
- Misconstruing the very geography of Israel by claiming that Israel was given 78% of the territory that made up the British Mandate in 1948, even though the British Mandate included all of Jordan as well as Israel and the West Bank.

The ACSWP report does more than criticize the two state solution; it not only leaves open the door for a one state solution, it effectively encourages it. A one state solution is one in which all Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, approximately 4 million people, would become citizens of Israel, and then through simple math, would become the majority. A one state solution is the desired goal of the BDS movement, a Palestinian state, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, and the end of the Jewish State of Israel.

Let's focus on the values that ACSWP report champions. Many of these values have little or nothing to do with Reformed theology, rather they are found in political theory. The report does not provide definitions of these "Presbyterian" values. The right of self-determination is listed early in the report, but is not a value identified in scripture or in the Confessions of the Church. This is not to denigrate the idea of self-determination; it is an important one. BUT if we are told that Presbyterian values insist that we use it to demand an end to occupation in Palestine, does this mean that the Church must also support Russian separatists in the Ukraine or the Kurds in Iraq or Turkey?

The report talks about the dignity of all people, a concept that should be held sacred. But then the report speaks of Jews in terms of "tribal loyalties." Commissioners should take pause at this language. The language "tribal loyalties" is anti-Semitic code word used to question the loyalty and fealty of the Jewish people to the states where they reside. It implies dual loyalty and the existence of some sort of "nefarious plan" for Jewish domination. How can ACSWP rely on such blatantly anti-Semitic language? When the dignity of all people is used as a smoke screen for anti-Semitism that is unacceptable, and should be enough in itself to reject the report. Yes, the Government of Israel should pursue just and humane policies. But so should the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, whose list of human rights abuses are legion, but ignored by the Report.

There is one value raised up in the report that should be encouraged — reconciliation. Christians believe that Christ's work is clearly that of reconciliation, bridging the divide between God and humanity. And as such, any efforts to separate people or divide or create a form of dualism should be rejected. Co-existence, cooperation, and exchanges are all tools that lead to reconciliation. But even here, the ACSWP Report is completely disingenuous. The Church's BDS proponents are calling for the exact opposite of reconciliation. BDS seeks to shut down communication and exchanges between Israelis and Palestinians. It does not promote interaction, it wants to isolate Israel, and wants to shut down anything that might improve relations. This will not advance reconciliation.

We strongly recommend that commissioners should vote to receive **but to neither endorse nor approve its content or recommendations**. We cannot condone social witness policies that denigrate and demonize Israel, and which are completely unbalanced in their approach. We as a Church must put Christian values first, and must reject the ACSWP report on Israel-Palestine for what it is, a tool of the global BDS movement, designed to ultimately promote the end of the Jewish state.