

Sixty Years of WCC Policy on Palestine/Israel – 1948-2007 (in brief)

Negotiating a just peace under the rule of law is the strongest option for ensuring the well-being and security of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. This is the core of World Council of Churches policy toward the conflict. It is a conviction that has grown as 40 years of illegal occupation of Palestinian territory has claimed lives, distorted the rights of both peoples and deepened the conflict between them. In making policy the WCC is attentive to those who are suffering, recognizes UN resolutions as the basis for peace and is watchful that the Geneva Conventions determine the occupying power's responsibilities in the meantime. Policy is set by the WCC Assembly (WA), Central Committee (CC) and Executive Committee (EC). Main positions, in brief, are:

- **Palestinians have the right of self-determination;** their duly elected governmental authorities must be recognised, including the current leaders; their refugees have the right of return and require a permanent solution. (EC 2006; WA 1998, 1983, 1968; CC 1990, 1969, 1967)
- **Israel and its legitimate security needs are recognized** beginning with the state's emergence in 1948, in UN guarantees for its existence, in the right to protect its people under international law, and in guarantees for the territorial integrity of all nations in the area including Israel. (EC 2004, 1974; CC 1969; WA 1948)
- **The life and witness of local churches guide churches worldwide** in prayer, support and advocacy for peace. Churches are to agree the status of Holy Places with Muslim and Jewish counterparts. Local authorities must not interfere in internal church affairs. (CC 2006, 2002, 1990; WA 1998, 1983, 1975)
- **Jerusalem must be an open, inclusive and shared city** in terms of sovereignty and citizenship. The rights of its communities are guaranteed—Muslim, Jewish and Christian, Palestinian and Israeli—including access to Holy Places and freedom of worship. The WCC opposes the annexation of East Jerusalem. The final status of Jerusalem is an international responsibility and must be agreed within the framework of international law and as part of a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement. (EC 2006, 2004, 2000; WA 1998, 1983, 1975; CC 2002, 1980)
- **Settlements are illegal, as is their expansion;** they are prohibited by the Fourth Geneva Convention and incompatible with peace. Israeli soldiers and settlers must be withdrawn. (CC 2002; EC 2001; WA 1983)
- **The Separation Barrier is illegal.** It is a grave breach of international law and humanitarian law, and must be removed from occupied territory. (EC 2004)
- **The WCC supports a two-state solution** where Israelis and Palestinians live side by side within secure, recognized borders and share Jerusalem, as per UN Security Council resolutions. (EC 2004, 1993, 1974; CC 2002, 1990, 1967; WA 1998, 1983)
- **The WCC supports groups on both sides working for peace** and reconciliation, including inter-religious initiatives. (EC 2006, 2004, 1993; CC 2005, 2002; WA 1983)
- **Violence in all its forms is condemned,** whether perpetrated by the State of Israel inside the Occupied Palestinian Territories or by Palestinian armed groups inside the State of Israel. The conflict cannot be resolved through the use of force but only through peaceful means. (EC 2006, 2004; CC 2002; WA 1983)
- **Certain economic measures are legitimate forms of pressure for peace.** The WCC encourages member churches to avoid investments or other economic links to illegal activities on occupied territory, and to boycott settlement products. (EC 2006; CC 2005, 2002, 2001)
- **Peace in Israel and Palestine is inseparable from international peace.** The conflict affects stability and security in the Middle East and in other regions. (EC 2006; CC 2002, 1979, 1969, 1967; WA 1998, 1968, 1948)