



## Press Statement

**The Rev. James Moos - Executive Minister of United Church of Christ Wider Church Ministries**

**Cleveland (June 30, 2015)** - The United Church of Christ has been present and active in the Middle East since 1819 when missionaries of a predecessor denomination went to the region. Through our Global Ministries work with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), we are blessed to have active partnerships with churches and civil-society organizations throughout the Middle East, including Palestine and Israel.

The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is one of the most enduring and consequential conflicts of our age. In 1948 over 750,000 Palestinians were forced to flee from their homes and over 400 of their villages were destroyed. The new state of Israel was founded on 78 percent of historic Palestine; Palestinians were left with the remaining 22 percent in the West Bank and the Gaza strip. In the 1967 war, the Israeli military occupied the West Bank and Gaza, and the occupation continues to this day in defiance of international law and multiple United Nations' resolutions.

Given the injustices and ongoing violence, the 2015 General Synod of the United Church of Christ has adopted the resolution, "A Call for the United Church of Christ to Take Actions toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict." The resolution calls the church to engage in specific, nonviolent actions to help end the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict and establish justice and peace.

The Synod resolution calls for all United Church of Christ entities to divest any holdings from a list of companies known to profit from the occupation of Palestinian territories by the state of Israel. The resolution also calls for a boycott of goods identified as produced in illegal settlements located in the occupied Palestinian territories. Boycott and divestment are nonviolent strategies of resistance called for by the Palestinian Christian community.

Among the other provisions of the current resolution is a call for the Officers of the United Church of Christ to persist in requesting Congress to ensure that Israel complies with the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act and the U.S. Arms Export Control Act. These acts prohibit assistance to any country that consistently violates human rights, and limits the use of U.S. weapons to "internal security" and "legitimate self-defense."

This resolution was endorsed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa.

There is a growing recognition that, because they are not members of the Jewish community, Palestinians are systematically denied rights recognized by international law. While the claim that Israel's actions constitute apartheid is controversial,





Secretary of State John Kerry recently warned that Israel is in danger of becoming an apartheid state, while South African Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu has urged Christians in the United States to recognize the actions of Israel against the Palestinians as constituting apartheid. (While it did not endorse the use of the term,) the United Church of Christ consistently condemns all forms of racial discrimination and segregation, and will continue to call for a peace based on justice that will benefit Palestinians and Israelis alike.

The United Church of Christ condemns all forms of violence and anti-Semitism, and affirms Israel's right to exist within secure and internationally recognized borders. We similarly assert the right of Palestinians to have a sovereign, independent and viable state within secure and recognized borders.

The United Church of Christ is deeply committed to interfaith relations with both Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters, as well as those of other faith traditions. Following upon a long history engagement, we call for the continuation of interfaith dialogue.