



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)

IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA



Global Ministries

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ

A Joint Statement Opposing US Policy Shift on Settlements

November 21, 2019

As Christians with ties to the land of the Biblical story of our faith, and as churches with deep and long-lasting mission partnerships in Israel/Palestine, we are conscious of and deeply concerned by recent developments that are antithetical to achieving the peace with justice in the Middle East for which we hope, pray, and work.

Earlier this week, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated that the Trump Administration understands that the “establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the occupied West Bank is not, per se, inconsistent with international law.” This announcement contradicts a US State Department legal opinion of 1978; contrasts the European Union position—including its affirmation that products made in Israeli settlements must be labelled as such—and that of most of the community of nations; and adds to a series of Trump Administration policies and practices that favor Israel at the expense of the Palestinian people. Even so, it does not change the fact of Israeli occupation and its violations of international laws and principles, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. We strongly oppose this policy shift and urge the US President and Secretary of State to reconsider, recognizing the harm that such an announcement can have to the prospects for peace and justice, as well as to the US’s global standing, as this policy change blatantly disregards international law and conventions, including UN Security Council resolution 2334 (Dec. 2016).

Following the US Administration’s announcement, and even as Israelis await the formation of a new government, current Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has worked to fast-track a law in the Israeli Knesset to annex the Jordan Valley—a part of the West Bank that Israel currently occupies—an additional violation of international law.

Settlements continue to grow and expand—Israel has approved thousands of new settlement units in the West Bank and East Jerusalem this year alone. The Israeli blockade of Gaza continues to jeopardize the health and well-being of the 2 million Palestinians who live there. Recent episodes of violence and armed escalation in and around Gaza, and in Syria as well, demonstrate military might but do not bring about ultimate peace, security, or safety for any party involved. The basic human and legal rights of Palestinians living under occupation, blockade, and as refugees remain ignored and dismissed. The possibility of a just, lasting, and durable peace that upholds the rights of all people in the region erodes further.

We have a responsibility to raise our voices, knowing that a different world is possible; one in which the value of human life and dignity is upheld, where international law and conventions are respected, and peace and justice are prioritized over narrow interests.

We reiterate our opposition to occupation, its perpetuation and its deepening; our support for refugees and their rights; and our commitment to a just and lasting peace in Israel/Palestine based on international law and human rights.

We express our strong opposition to the US Administration's series of policy shifts that undermine legitimate Palestinian claims and rights, including its most recent announcement about settlements, as well as its decisions to move the US Embassy to Jerusalem, to recognize Israeli annexation of the Golan, and to end US financial support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and other humanitarian programs for Palestinians.

Finally, we continue to be concerned and pray for the Palestinian people who live with the consequences of decisions made far away that devastate individual lives, and to stand in solidarity with and accompany our partners in a difficult context there, who demonstrate a profound witness of presence and service.

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