

Resources for Understanding:

“A Call for the United Church of Christ to Take Actions Toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”

– a resolution adopted by the 30th General Synod, June 2015

*“And what does the Lord require of you but to
do justice, to love kindness, and to walk
humbly with your God?”
(Micah 6:8)*

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Introduction and Background of Kairos Palestine

Written by Christian Palestinians, the Kairos Palestine document -- "A Moment of Truth" -- was released in Bethlehem in December 2009. To quote from the introduction, they said:

“We, a group of Christian Palestinians, after prayer, reflection and an exchange of opinion, cry out from within the suffering in our country, under the Israeli occupation, with a cry of hope in the absence of all hope, a cry full of prayer and faith in a God ever vigilant, in God’s divine providence for all the inhabitants of this land. Inspired by the mystery of God’s love for all, the mystery of God’s divine presence in the history of all peoples and, in a particular way, in the history of our country, we proclaim our word based on our Christian faith and our sense of Palestinian belonging – a word of faith, hope and love.

We address ourselves to our brothers and sisters, members of our Churches in this land. We call out as Christians and as Palestinians to our religious and political leaders, to our Palestinian society and to the Israeli society, to the international community, and to our Christian brothers and sisters in the Churches around the world.”

The full document is available at: <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/content/kairos-document>

Following its release, the document was translated into many languages and recommended for study by churches and denominations around the world, including by the UCC in April of 2010. After extensive study and reflection, the resolution **“A Call for the United Church of Christ to take actions toward a just peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. A Resolution of Witness”** was presented to the 30th UCC General Synod in June 2015. The resolution calls upon UCC members and congregations to:

- A. Study the *Kairos* Palestine document as well as other perspectives on the occupied Palestinian territories
- B. Divest from companies that profit from the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and people
- C. Boycott products made by companies that operate in illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories
- D. Advocate with Congress to ensure Israel’s compliance with US laws, related to the \$3.1 billion of military aid that the US sends annually to Israel, and in light of Israeli human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territories
- E. Continue to engage in interfaith dialogue, including with Jewish colleagues and organizations.

Reverend Mitri Raheb, pastor of the Christmas Lutheran Church of Bethlehem and an author of the Kairos Palestine document, delivered the sermon to the entire Synod in Cleveland on the eve of the vote. The next day the vote was 508 in favor, 124 opposed and 38 abstentions.

In light of this action by the Synod, a first step for UCC members is to read the Kairos Palestine document and to seek to understand why the UCC Synod recommended these actions.

This resource booklet is intended to give UCC members access to important UCC documents in reference to this recent resolution. At the end of the booklet is a listing of UCC and other web sites where additional resources can be found.

In Peace...

October 2016

1 **APPROVED** as amended (subject to ratification by the UCC Board in October, 2015)

2
3 **A CALL FOR THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST TO TAKE ACTIONS**
4 **TOWARD A JUST PEACE IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

5
6 **Submitted by Central Atlantic Conference, Central Pacific Conference, and the**
7 **New York Conference**
8 **A Resolution of Witness**
9

10 **SUMMARY**

11
12 This resolution proposes a fourfold strategy by the United Church of Christ to help end
13 the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The strategy seeks to combine: (1) educational
14 empowerment (study of *Kairos Palestine 2009 – ‘A Moment of Truth’: A Word of Faith,*
15 *Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering*); (2) economic leverage
16 (divestment from companies that profit from the Israeli occupation of Palestinian
17 territories and boycott of products produced in such territories by Israeli companies); (3)
18 political pressure (petition to Congress to ensure that aid to Israel violates neither the U.S.
19 Foreign Assistance Act nor the U.S. Arms Export Control Act); and (4) interreligious
20 dialogue (conversation among the three Abrahamic faiths aimed at reaching religious
21 reconciliation and achieving political resolution).
22

23 **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL GROUNDING**

24
25 This resolution is grounded in the Biblical prophetic call to do justice and the decisive
26 embodiment of that call in Jesus Christ. It springs from the Affirmation of the 15th
27 General Synod that the United Church of Christ is a Just Peace Church. That affirmation
28 commits the United Church of Christ to enacting “solidarity with the poor, seeking to be
29 present in places of oppression, poverty, and violence, and standing with the oppressed in
30 the struggle to resist and change . . . evil.” It thereby commits the United Church of
31 Christ to be both “a community of resistance, standing against social structures
32 comfortable with violence and injustice,” and “a community of political and social
33 engagement, in regular dialogue with the political order.”
34

35 In addition, the United Church of Christ has historically stressed the importance of living
36 out a Covenantal theology, whereby diverse autonomous organizations covenant to
37 collaborate for the common good. Through such Covenantal relationships, the United
38 Church of Christ partners globally with those most impacted by the continuing conflict
39 between the Palestinians and Israel. The current list of thirteen Global Ministries Middle
40 Eastern partners includes regional groups as well as Israeli and Palestinian groups,
41 notably Kairos Palestine.
42

43 Informed by that Just Peace commitment and Covenantal theology, this resolution seeks
44 to respond to the theological declaration of our Christian partners in the Middle East that
45 we are at a Kairos moment – a special opportunity provided by the “Still Speaking God”
46 for us individually as Christians and collectively as a church both to listen to the

47 Palestinian people courageously voice faith, hope, and love in the midst of their suffering
48 and to respond with action.

49
50 Such listening and response is thoroughly in keeping with various historical (and
51 historic!) United Church of Christ resolutions and actions concerning the Israeli-
52 Palestinian conflict:

53
54 The United Church of Christ has affirmed the right of Israelis and Palestinians
55 to live peacefully within internationally recognized borders.

56
57
58 The United Church of Christ has identified Israel's occupation of Palestinian
59 land and the human rights abuses it has committed there to be a major source
60 of conflict and has called for an end to settlement activity.

61
62 The United Church of Christ has a long history of effectively supporting
63 boycotts against products produced under unjust conditions (lettuce, grapes,
64 infant formula, etc.) and policies that produce such conditions (apartheid).

65
66 The United Church of Christ has had, since the passage of the 2005 resolution
67 on economic leverage, a strong history of corporate engagement with
68 companies that profit from the Occupation.

69 70 **MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

71
72 The desired outcome is a just peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The hope is that
73 individuals, churches, and church entities will learn of the present plight of the
74 Palestinians, will study the history of the conflict, will examine their own consciences,
75 and will engage in individual and institutional actions to pressure the government of
76 Israel to end the Occupation as a step toward a just peace. At the same time, the call is to
77 address members of our own government and ask them to ensure that U.S. aid to Israel
78 complies with applicable U.S. laws.

79
80 Those stakeholders most directly affected are the Palestinians. The originators of the
81 resolution, the United Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network, have consulted with
82 United Church of Christ's Global Ministries partner, Kairos Palestine, and with the
83 movement that represents a wide coalition of the largest Palestinian organizations, trade
84 unions, networks, and NGOs. Both enthusiastically support the resolution, as do
85 Palestinian groups within the United States. Many groups in other Christian
86 denominations and in the Jewish community also support this resolution.

87
88 The originators have also approached the two major United Church of Christ financial
89 entities addressed by the divestment call – United Church Funds and the Pension Boards
90 – United Church of Christ, Inc.

92 The United Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network has consulted with staff from
93 United Church Funds and has been in dialogue with them over the past six months. In
94 addition, a member of the United Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network Steering
95 Committee has been welcomed to the meetings of the Ecumenical Action Group, which
96 has been working on corporate engagement with some of the companies named in the
97 resolution for the past nine years. None of the American companies named has
98 responded to shareholder pressure to disengage from its support of the Occupation. Two
99 of the international companies have taken steps to or made announcements that they
100 would remove their operations from the occupied territories, but they have not yet fully
101 done so. United Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network is committed to continued
102 dialogue about the best way to make investment/divestment decisions and welcomes a
103 mechanism for establishing standards by which to make such decisions in the future.

104
105 United Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network has also attempted to dialogue with the
106 Pension Boards – United Church of Christ, Inc. on the divestment issue. Thus far, its staff
107 has not been willing to engage in dialogue on the topic. Its executive has stated on the
108 basis of legal opinion that its fiduciary responsibilities do not allow it to make
109 investment/divestment decisions in response to Synod votes. Nevertheless, it has
110 responded to the 2005 Synod “Economic Leverage” resolution by investing in the Siraj
111 Fund, which supports nineteen Palestinian companies. Although this is indeed a positive
112 step in support of the Palestinian economy, it does not acknowledge Israel’s complete
113 control over that economy and all its resources as documented by the World Bank.
114 Therefore, it cannot be viewed as an effective step toward ending the Occupation.

115
116 Finally, this resolution recognizes that members of the Jewish community with whom we
117 have had long standing interfaith relationships are also stakeholders. It commends those
118 relationships and calls for them to continue and expand.

119 120 **ACTION STEPS**

121
122 Studying the *Kairos Palestine* document individually and in church groups

123
124 Encouraging travel to the region with Global Ministries and other alternative
125 travel groups

126
127 Sponsoring local educational conferences

128
129 Self-examining investment portfolios by individuals, churches, conferences,
130 and national United Church of Christ entities to discern whether and how
131 divestment may be effectuated

132
133 Working side by side with allied organizations in local communities to initiate
134 and support boycott actions

135
136 Writing letters and petitions, as well as making visits, to members of Congress
137 in cooperation with Justice and Witness Ministries or other peace groups

Initiating or continuing interfaith dialogues at all levels

Evaluation Plan

The resolution asks the General Minister and President to provide the whole church an annual assessment on the implementation of the resolution. United Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network will offer a report on actions in the wider church that may be of assistance in developing that assessment.

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body for each of the four components addressed in the resolution (elucidated above in the section entitled Summary), with the funding to be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies (primarily the United Church Board, Global Ministries, and Justice and Witness Ministries) and the funds available to these agencies, keeping in mind that many of the actions will be taken by individuals and congregations of the United Church of Christ.

In addition, Global Ministries, the joint witness of the United Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ for international peace, reconciliation, and justice, will be invaluable in implementing the resolution as it works to nurture existing partnerships in the region. Its efforts will be enhanced by the June 2015 launch of its eighteen-month Middle East Initiative.

Moreover, the United Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network, supported by its own budget, will continue to broaden its work of educating local churches and conferences.

Taking all the aforementioned into account, it is clear that the United Church of Christ is currently well-equipped to implement easily this resolution.

PROBABILITY OF INFLUENCING SOCIAL CHANGE

With the adoption of this resolution, the Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ will secure its rightful place alongside other denominations and peace-seeking groups in the United States and around the world that are taking a public stand against the occupation of Palestinian territories by the Israeli government while promoting the human rights of the Palestinians and opposing the use of violence by either party.

The unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict is of world-wide concern and has the potential to influence many other issues, including the safety of U.S. citizens here and abroad. The United Church of Christ has not addressed this conflict via resolution since 2005; yet, political realities have changed drastically in the interim. Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories has become increasingly entrenched; settlements have grown exponentially; four massive attacks have been carried out on Gaza; and several attempts at the "peace process" have failed to resolve the conflict. Frustration with the lack of progress has contributed to escalating violence from both sides.

Meanwhile, Palestinian Christians have issued their *Kairos Palestine 2009 – "A Moment of Truth"* document, and Palestinian civil society has endorsed a movement calling for boycott, divestment, and sanctions. That movement is now world-wide and has achieved some notable successes, particularly in Europe but also in the U.S., including the loss of \$26 million in contracts by Veolia, the divestment from Israeli banks by European banks and pension funds, and the loss of revenue by SodaStream. Recently, Kuwait announced the termination of contracts with companies complicit in the Occupation and Sweden recognized the State of Palestine. In addition, most of the mainline Protestant denominations in the U.S. have been considering resolutions that call for some form of boycott and/or divestment. Indeed, local Presbyteries, Episcopal Dioceses, and Methodist Conferences have voted to boycott or divest. Most notably, the Presbyterian General Assembly voted in 2014 to divest from three companies.

By approving this resolution with its clear, unequivocal call for specific actions toward ending the occupation of Palestinian territories, the United Church of Christ can offer a sign of hope to the Palestinians and add its weight to a world-wide movement toward a just peace in the region.

United Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network has been presenting workshops and study sessions on this issue in local churches, associations, and conferences since its inception in January 2012 and will continue to do so. The consideration of this resolution in five United Church of Christ conferences and its acceptance as a study document in two more conferences have led to an enormous amount of discussion and education in those conferences. Without a resolution with specific action components, such engagement would not have occurred. The consideration of the resolution by the Synod opens this conversation to the wider United Church of Christ.

TEXT OF THE MOTION

The psalmist celebrates, "How good it is when brothers and sisters dwell together in unity." (Psalm 133) Yet today the Middle East is torn by disunity between Semitic brothers and sisters separated by "dividing walls of hostility." (Ephesians 2:14) We hear the call of the prophet Micah, "And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8) - and we are

reminded that we must conduct ourselves with kindness and humility even as we seek to counteract injustice anywhere and to stand in solidarity with its victims everywhere.

As disciples of Jesus, we hear and seek to heed his call to be peacemakers: responding to violence with non-violence and extending love to all. In the words of the *Kairos Palestine* document, “True Christian theology is a theology of love and solidarity with the oppressed, a call to justice and equality among peoples.” (*Kairos Palestine 2009* – “*A Moment of Truth*”)ⁱ

THEREFORE, in the spirit of the witness of the psalmist and ancient prophets and of the ministry of Jesus the Christ, we offer this resolution.

WHEREAS, in 1985 the 15th General Synod of the United Church of Christ committed itself to be a Just Peace Church,ⁱⁱ

WHEREAS, historically the United Church of Christ has affirmed Israel’s right to exist within secure and internationally recognized boundaries (GS 16[1987]ⁱⁱⁱ and GS 18[1991]^{iv}) and asserted the rights of Palestinians to enjoy sovereignty in an independent, contiguous, and viable state of their own, within secure and recognized boundaries (GS 16 [1987], GS 17[1989],^v and GS 18[1991];

WHEREAS, past General Synods have identified the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and its human rights abuses committed therein to be a major source of conflict and have called for the end of the construction and expansion of settlements (GS 18 [1991] and GS 21[1997]^{vi});

WHEREAS, the various expressions of the United Church of Christ have a long history of effectively using boycotts against products and policies (lettuce, grapes, infant formula, apartheid, etc.) to address injustices;

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ is deeply committed to interfaith relationships and General Synods have confessed to the sin of anti-Semitism and proclaimed its renunciation (GS 23 [2001])^{vii} and have denounced actions against Islam or Muslims based on ignorance or fear (GS 28 [2011]);^{viii}

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ has historically stressed the importance of living out a Covenantal theology, whereby diverse autonomous organizations covenant to collaborate for the common good, and that through such Covenantal relationships the United Church of Christ has partnered globally with those most impacted by the continuing conflict between Palestinians and Israel;

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ recognizes the complexity of the conflict and that it has caused suffering for both Palestinians and Israelis;

WHEREAS, as demonstrated through ongoing dialogue and partnerships, the United Church of Christ values and nurtures its relationships with Jewish groups in the U.S. and

Israel who seek justice, equality, and freedom for both peoples, including groups with differing perspectives on the conflict;

WHEREAS, Palestinians in the West Bank have lived since 1967 under Israeli military occupation that subjects them to many human rights abuses, including: loss of their land for the purpose of building Israeli settlements; limited access to their land and to each other on account of the route of the Separation Wall on occupied Palestinian territories; systematic displacement into small, non-contiguous geographic enclaves separated by barriers and checkpoints; gross inequality in the amount of water allocated to them; severe and arbitrary travel restrictions; limited access to holy sites; segregated roads; demolition of their homes; destruction of their crops by settlers and the Israeli army; and arbitrary arrest, even of children;^{ix}

WHEREAS, the Israeli government has once again subjected Palestinians in Gaza to military attacks using deadly force beyond that necessary for Israel's acknowledged need for self-defense and thereby beyond that measure of proportionate response permitted by historically Christian just war theory,^x has destroyed Gaza's infrastructure and economy, and has imposed: severe limits on personal entry and on the entry of products essential to Gazans' well-being; fishing limits in violation of international law and the Oslo accords; and strict control of electronic communications, as well as of air and sea space;^{xi}

WHEREAS, Israel has annexed Palestinian East Jerusalem and separated it from the West Bank and Gaza and continues to appropriate Palestinian properties there for Jewish settlements and to deny building permits to Palestinians, as well as to revoke the residency rights of many of its Palestinian citizens there;^{xii}

WHEREAS, Israel refuses to end, but rather has sought to solidify, its occupation of territory conquered in the 1967 War, leading to numerous illegal actions and human rights abuses by the Israeli government and military in defiance of United Nations resolutions,^{xiii} and refuses to respect the 4th Geneva Convention as called for by the International Court of Justice in its opinion concerning the Separation Wall in the occupied Palestinian territories;^{xiv}

WHEREAS, our Palestinian Christian partners, seeking an alternative to violence born of hopelessness and despair, have authored *Kairos Palestine 2009 - 'A Moment of Truth': A Word of Faith, Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering* as a call and summons to their global partners to engage in non-violent measures that will pressure Israel to end the Occupation;^{xv}

WHEREAS, the resolution "Concerning the Use of Economic Leverage in Promoting Peace in the Middle East," passed by the General Synod in 2005, calls upon "the Covenanted Ministries, Pension Boards, United Church Foundation, local churches and members to use economic leverage, including, but not limited to: advocating the reallocation of US foreign aid so that the militarization of the Middle East is constrained; making positive contributions to groups and partners committed to the non-violent resolution of the conflict; challenging the practices of corporations that gain from the

continuation of the conflict; and divesting from those companies that refuse to change their practice of gain from the perpetuation of violence, including the Occupation”;^{xvi}

WHEREAS, despite years of corporate engagement and the submission of shareholder resolutions from United Church Funds^{xvii} and other religious and secular groups, few companies have withdrawn any of their operations that support the Occupation;

WHEREAS, many agencies, institutions, universities, and Christian denominations around the world are severing financial ties to companies or institutions that help sustain the Israeli occupation and now, notably, have been joined by various Jewish groups in the U.S., such as Jewish Voice for Peace^{xviii} and American Jews for a Just Peace-Boston,^{xix} as well as Israeli groups, such as the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions^{xx} and Coalition of Women for Peace,^{xxi} that support using boycott and divestment strategies; and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ’s efforts to end the Occupation through economic leverage and advocacy for the protection of human rights of all Palestinians and Israelis are not aimed at isolating Israel or any other party but reflect the belief that engagement and communication among all affected by the current tragic situation in the Middle East are in the deepest interests of both Palestinians and Israelis;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ:

CALLS upon United Church of Christ churches and church members to study thoughtfully the *Kairos Palestine* document, as well as other perspectives on the occupied Palestinian territories, to reflect upon the theological truths within the *Kairos Palestine* document, and to take heed of its call for non-violent measures pressuring Israel to end the occupation in solidarity with the Palestinian people suffering under occupation;

CALLS upon the United Church of Christ Board, the Pension Boards – United Church of Christ, Inc., United Church Funds, conferences, local churches, members, and other related United Church of Christ entities to divest any direct or substantive indirect holdings in companies profiting from or complicit in human rights violations arising from the occupation of the Palestinian Territories by the state of Israel, including, but not limited to, Caterpillar, Inc., Motorola Solutions, Hewlett-Packard Company, G4S, and Veolia Environmental and its subsidiaries until such time as these companies no longer profit from or are complicit in said human rights violations;

URGES the United Church of Christ Board, soliciting input from stakeholders in this issue, to develop and publish standards by which faith-driven investment, divestment, and re-investment decisions will be made in the future;

CALLS upon all entities of the United Church of Christ to boycott goods identified as produced in or using the facilities of illegal settlements located in the occupied

Palestinian territories, including, but not limited to, Ahava skin care products, SodaStream products, and Hadiklaim dates, and upon church members to join boycotts of such goods in their local communities; and for such boycotts to end when these companies cease operations in the illegal settlements;

CALLS upon the United Church of Christ Officers and church members to persist in the request to Congress, previously made by a number of religious leaders, to ensure that the U.S. aid to Israel violates neither the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act, which prohibits assistance to any country that engages in a consistent pattern of human rights violations nor the U.S. Arms Export Control Act, which limits the use of U.S. weapons to “internal security” or “legitimate self-defense”,

COMMENDS United Church of Christ leadership for continuing to dialogue with major Jewish organizations and call for United Church of Christ-wide participation in a rigorous dialogue among the three Abrahamic faiths at all levels – in particular between local congregations – that will be resourced with materials from the Wider Church Global Ministries Middle East and Europe office in order to identify ways in which groups of congregations of different faiths can work in concert to promote sacred reconciliation among all people who are affected by the conflict in the Middle East and to influence public policies in ways that will promote peace and social justice for Palestinians and Israelis and end violence in all its forms;

CALLS upon the United Church of Christ Board to monitor the implementation of this resolution by all United Church of Christ national entities and to urge that those who manage the United Church of Christ Board’s own invested funds and who provide United Church of Christ Board employee health and pension benefits be in compliance with this resolution; and

ASKS the General Minister and President to provide an annual report to the whole church on the implementation of this resolution, including a summary of interfaith dialogue at various levels, along with examples of interfaith, congregation-to-congregation peace efforts.

FUNDING

The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

ⁱ <http://www.kairopalestine.ps/sites/default/Documents/English.pdf>.

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- ii “General Synod pronouncement and proposal for action on the United Church of Christ as a ‘Just Peace Church,’” [//www.ucc.org/beliefs/theology/general-synod-pronouncement.html](http://www.ucc.org/beliefs/theology/general-synod-pronouncement.html).
- iii “The Israeli Palestinian Conflict,” <http://globalministries.org/mee/resolutions/ucc-resolutions-related-to-israelpalestine/1987-ip-resolution.html>.
- iv “Consequences of the Persian Gulf War for a Just Peace Church,” <http://globalministries.org/mee/resolutions/ucc-resolutions-related-to-israelpalestine/1991-gulf-war-resolution.html>.
- v “The Middle East,” <http://globalministries.org/mee/resolutions/ucc-resolutions-related-to-israelpalestine/1989-mid-east-resolution.html>.
- vi “Palestine/Israel,” <http://globalministries.org/mee/resolutions/ucc-resolutions-related-to-israelpalestine/1997-palestine-israel-resol.html>.
- vii Minutes of the Twenty-third General Synod, “*Resolution: Anti-Semitism*,” pp. 11-12, <http://www.ucc.org/assets/pdfs/synod/gs23.pdf>.
- viii <http://uccfiles.com/synod/resolutions/Resolution-On-Actions-of-Hostility-Against-Islam.pdf> (2011).
- ix Annual Report, B’Tselem, “*Human Rights in the Occupied Territories 2011*,” http://www.btselem.org/annual_report_2011 and UN Human Rights Council Session 12, “Human Rights in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories,” <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/12session/A-HRC-12-48.pdf>.
- x As John Hickox has observed, “The most recent episode of Israel’s bi-annual atrocities in Gaza has faded from the news. How can that be? An estimated 2106 citizens of Gaza were killed! Israel admits that ‘as many as 72% were civilians.’ That means that 1516 non-Hamas men, women, children and babies were killed by rockets and bombs launched from American-made Apache helicopters and F-16 jets.” <http://cpcjusticeandwitness.com/2014/09/23/where-did-it-all-begin/> Given that Israel is reported to have lost just sixty-seven of its soldiers and only six of its civilians in the recent conflict, there can be little doubt that its response did not meet the just war principle of proportionate use of force. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29503439>.
- xi <http://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en/>.
- xii “Background on East Jerusalem,” B’Tselem, www.btselem.org/jerusalem.
- xiii <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/study-israel-leads-in-ignoring-security-council-resolutions-1.31971> and <http://www.ifamericansknew.org/stat/un.html>.
- xiv Advisory Opinion, International Court of Justice, 9 July 2004, “*Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*,” <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?pr=71&code=mwp&p1=3&p2=4&p3=6>.
- xv <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/sites/default/Documents/English.pdf>.
- xvi <http://globalministries.org/mee/resolutions/ucc-resolutions-related-to-israelpalestine/2005-economic-leverage.html>.
- xvii United Church Funds, “*UCF Mideast Engagements*,” <http://ucfunds.org/social-responsibility/corporate-engagement/economic-leverage/promoting-peace/united-church-funds-engagements/>.

xviii www.jvp.org.

xix www.ajpboston.org.

xx <http://icahdusa.org/an-open-letter-from-jeff-halper/>.

xxi <http://www.coalitionofwomen.org/>.

A Theological Statement in Support of
A Resolution Submitted to the 30th General Synod of the United Church of Christ

**A CALL FOR THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST TO TAKE ACTIONS
TOWARD A JUST PEACE IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

United Church of Christ Palestine Israel Network

March, 2015

Centuries ago Isaiah exposed the crimes of those who “join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land” (Isaiah 5.8). This text reminds us that possession alone does not exhaust the responsibilities of divine promise, that along with the pledge of land in the Hebrew Bible comes the responsibility for establishing justice for all who dwell in houses and cultivate fields.

The modern State of Israel is, of course, a political rather than a theological entity, birthed through the imposition of partition by international structures and enforced by unsanctioned violence. As such, Israel’s responsibilities toward its citizens and neighbors are duties defined by international law and its own claims to democratic principles. During nearly twenty years of partition and an ensuing half a century of occupation, those duties have been ignored and those principles mocked by a pattern of behavior designed to privilege Israel at the expense of its Arab and Palestinian citizens and neighbors. While this has been defended as a response to violent aggression, often it has reflected little more than the brazen exercise of power to extend control over the land and its people for the sake of possession. The warning of Isaiah has eerie resonance with the relentless expansion of settlements, the appropriation of resources, and the removal of Palestinian populations and homes.

While the modern State of Israel is not a theological construct, it has been justified by many on the basis of theological claims grounded in an ancient narrative of promise, by others in a contemporary interpretation of an apocalyptic narrative of the end times, and by still others as a moral response to the centuries’ long narrative of persecution of Jews that found its most devastating expression in the Holocaust. As a result, Israel has taken on for many a quasi-religious and moral character that often distorts history, corrupts the meaning of ancient texts,

and legitimizes oppression and suffering in ways that bear little or no relationship to the ethical principles of either Judaism or Christianity.

Christians in the United States are not of one mind on how to respond to the chronic violence, insecurity, and injustice present in Israel and Palestine or to the various theological and moral claims that compete. The United Church of Christ General Synod has consistently called for all in the region to respect the norms and principles of international law. It has challenged interpretations of biblical texts supporting so-called Christian Zionism that deny Palestinians any claim to self-determination and statehood. It has decried the use of violence by all in the region. It has urgently called upon the government of the United States to equally serve the legitimate interests of both Israel and Palestine in any negotiations. It has provided spiritual and material support to Israelis and Palestinians who are taking risks for peace, for justice, and for the defense of human rights.

Above all, the United Church of Christ, along with many ecumenical partners throughout the world and an increasing number of Evangelical Christians, has sought to be attentive to the cries of Palestinian Christians and to their Muslim neighbors in Israel and the Occupied Territories. This has taken the form of numerous personal visits to express solidarity along with the provision of financial support to churches and institutions in Palestine doing justice and responding to humanitarian needs. It has included reporting on the realities facing Palestinians, both Christian and Muslim, in an American context where those realities are often distorted or rendered invisible. And, it has meant supporting the enduring Gospel witness of faith communities tracing their roots to the very origins of Christianity.

In recent years this attentiveness has heard the cry of Palestinian Christians through *Kairos Palestine: "A Moment of Truth, A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering"* issued in 2009 by Christian Palestinian leaders. By granting *Kairos Palestine* a privileged voice in the church's reflection, the United Church of Christ acknowledges a preferential option for those who live under military occupation, who face daily discrimination and oppression, and who experience in their bodies a suffering only they can know. In its recognition of *Kairos Palestine* the United Church of Christ seeks to demonstrate its respect for and its commitment to Christian partners who have sought our accompaniment as well as our witness to justice on their behalf in a nation that currently provides overwhelming support for a continued occupation and for the relentless extension of settlements. This acknowledgment and recognition expresses critical presence, defined by Global Ministries as "where we meet God's people and creation at the point of deepest need: spiritually, physically, emotionally, and/or economically."

Kairos Palestine calls upon churches both to support divestment from companies whose products or services enable them to profit from the occupation and to boycott products from illegal settlements. Boycotts and divestment are non-violent acts conceived in both instrumental and symbolic terms. They address the extreme imbalance of power between Israel and Palestine that currently requires Palestinians to entrust their future to the benevolence of a highly militarized occupying power. Boycotts and divestment present US economic interests with our conviction that business practices should be subject to moral values as well as profit seeking. They join us to a growing movement of churches and secular institutions around the world providing a profound and necessary source of hope to partners who are daily confronted with signs of discouragement. Boycotts and divestment are a witness to a costly obedience to bear one another's burdens.

Some are troubled by the boycott and divestment strategy. But we must ask, "If not this, what?" Violence is not an option for the church, whether in the United States or Palestine. Nurturing healthy and healing relationships with the Jewish community in the United States, while terribly important for many reasons, does not address a conflict that is fundamentally between Israel and Palestine, not between Jews and Christians. Nor does it speak to the gross imbalance of power that exists between the two parties who must negotiate a just peace. Building Palestinian economic capacity alone only ameliorates an intolerable situation without ending it. Assuming we know better than our Palestinian Christian partners what is best for their situation is arrogance in the extreme.

Fifty years after the voting rights marches in Selma, Alabama the church is well served to remember that justice came through concrete acts of solidarity, responding to the call of those who lived every day under the heat of violent oppression. Justice came from claiming a moral center founded on the Biblical values at the heart of the church's faith, confronting corrupt power, and bearing the cost of ridicule and abuse. Today it asks us to press for the engagement of political and economic powers that have the capacity to press Israel toward justice and peacemaking. Like Isaiah, the church across the nation responded to the pleas of the movement in Selma, "Here I am, send me." In light of those historic events, Martin Luther King's words resound today: "Cowardice asks the question - is it safe? Expediency asks the question - is it politic? Vanity asks the question - is it popular? But conscience asks the question - is it right?"



Following the United Church of Christ's General Synod [action on promoting peace](#) in Israel/Palestine, and to complement the [summary guide to that action](#), this set of FAQs is designed to help UCC pastors and leaders respond to some common questions that have been posed related to our church's witness in and on the Middle East.

Why should the UCC care so much about the Middle East?

The United Church of Christ, like all churches around the world, traces its faith history to the place of Jesus' birth, ministry, passion, crucifixion, and resurrection. We have a 2000 year history there. In mission, the first Congregational missionaries went to the region in 1819, nearly 200 years ago, and since then we have developed many partnerships and relationships with Christian churches, councils and agencies throughout the region, including both Palestinian and Israeli organizations. So, our 200-year mission history and our connections with the people there through mission are important factors as well. In addition, the UCC has a special interest in promoting peace with justice, and the Middle East is a place for which such advocacy is necessary.

Shouldn't the UCC care about the whole world?

Indeed the UCC, with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through Global Ministries, engages in mission and partnerships globally, and has staff dedicated to nurturing such relationships in Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Southern Asia, as well as the Middle East. As a result of our relationships in those places, and our engagement on the issues our partners face, we continue to be active in advocacy on global justice issues in all of those places, not just the Middle East.

Has Synod addressed other international issues?

Very clearly and extensively. Over the course of 30 General Synods, going back to 1957, the UCC has spoken to many international justice issues, and has a wide range and depth of policy, including general resolutions on human rights, East-West dialogue during the Cold War era, and the US' role in the post- Cold War order. Specific to countries and regions, the UCC has spoken on apartheid South Africa, the Congo, China, the Philippines, Cuba, Vieques and Puerto Rico, US foreign and military policy in Central America, human rights in Honduras, Vietnam, Cambodia, Afghanistan, and many other places. At this Synod, the UCC addressed the issue of Korea, and that of the Armenian Genocide, as well. The UCC has also spoken on the Middle East broadly as well as on Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon, in addition to Jerusalem and Israel/Palestine.

Is Israel being singled out?

No. The UCC's witness on Israel/Palestine is consistent with its global concern and its focus on peace with justice, as exhibited above, through the General Synod's attention to many global

issues. The UCC has called for the use of economic leverage in other situations of injustice as well, for example, the boycott of Taco Bell and Mt. Olive Pickles, in support of workers' rights. At this summer's Synod, the UCC endorsed a boycott of the Washington, DC NFL team in protest of its team name. Other forms of economic leverage have included boycott of and divestment from companies doing business with South Africa during apartheid, and engagement with corporations through shareholder activism. Currently, the UCC employs social screens for investments. The use of economic leverage is not new; additionally, the US imposes sanctions against other countries for violating human rights, including Iran and Syria, and reviews its foreign aid and military assistance to other countries routinely. Given the fact that Israel receives \$3.1 billion in military assistance annually, General Synod calls for a review of this assistance in light of the occupation and violations of Palestinian rights.

What about Palestinian extremists?

The UCC has consistently and repeatedly admonished violence perpetrated by any party to the conflict, including Israel and Palestinians. It recognizes that there are extreme elements among both communities that sometimes dominate the discourse in the public arena, but works to support those who seek non-violent solutions to the conflict. Economic leverage, including boycott, divestment, and sanctions, is a non-violent approach that is endorsed by many of our Palestinian Christian partners, consistent with their own non-violent theological understanding of peace, justice, and reconciliation.

What is BDS?

In 2005, over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations, including some UCC partners through Global Ministries, endorsed "a strategy that allows people of conscience to play an effective role in the Palestinian struggle for justice. The campaign for boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) is shaped by a rights-based approach urges various forms of boycott against Israel until it meets its obligations under international law by:

1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands occupied in June 1967 and dismantling the Wall;
2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality;
3. and Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194."

The UCC's 2015 resolution supports the spirit of the BDS Movement, but only addresses the first demand—ending the occupation. (The UCC also adopted a resolution in 2005 calling for the Separation Barrier to be removed because it does not follow internationally recognized boundaries and it denies people the ability to know each other, thus augmenting barriers of the mind.)

How do we support Christians in the Middle East?

The UCC works closely with partners throughout the region, many of whom are Christian churches, councils, and agencies. Our partners are engaged in a variety of ministries, from

worship and Christian leadership development, to community development; from interfaith relations to conflict resolution; from publishing to human rights advocacy and peacemaking; and from education and health care to refugee relief. Our support of such vital ministries enhances the Middle Eastern Christian communities' witness and presence in their multi-faith societies.

We also speak out on issues that affect the people of the region, including (but not limited to) the Christians. For example, this General Synod considered, and adopted, a resolution commemorating the centennial since the Armenian Genocide. That resolution:

- ❖ marked the occasion of the 100th year since the beginning of the Genocide in 1915, lamenting lost lives and the lack of recognition of the Genocide by governments;
- ❖ drew attention to the reality of the Armenian community in northern Syria and the tragedy that has befallen them there;
- ❖ and reiterated the UCC's abhorrence when peoples and communities are made victims of violence based on any aspect of identity.

In addition, UCC and Global Ministries leadership have expressed solidarity with partners and Christians in many places around the world, most notably and recently in Egypt and Syria in the Middle East, as they have experienced tragedy.

What did the UCC's General Synod actually say on Israel/Palestine?

The best way to learn about General Synod 30's [resolution on Israel/Palestine](#) is to read the full text, available here. [This additional resource](#) is a summary of the action, and can be useful in understanding and interpreting the resolution. In addition, a compilation of the full corpus of General Synod resolutions on Israel/Palestine since 1967 (the first year the UCC spoke to this conflict in Synod) is [available online here](#).

What are some of the implications of this action on Jewish-Christian dialogue?

While this resolution and General Synod action may be challenging for some dialogue settings, it is all the more reason to maintain and persevere in relationship—to discuss the content of the resolution and the reality of Palestinians living under occupation. The resolution does not target Israel; rather it is directed at Israeli policies of occupation. It does not blame Jews; rather, it focuses on a government's policies and practices.

Just as our American Jewish sisters and brothers have many ties and relationships in Israeli society, so do we among Palestinian Christians; we nurture partnerships with both Israelis and Palestinians. It is important to recognize those relationships, and to understand—and explore—the narratives and experiences that each group brings to dialogue.

The UCC has affirmed its relationship with the Jewish community (1987) and the Muslim community (1989). It has expressed its abhorrence of anti-Semitism (1983 and 2001), and has spoken against actions of hostility against Islam and the Muslim community (2011). The UCC has expressed its commitment to interreligious dialogue, and is engaged in dialogue with each community, ecumenically through the National Council of Churches.



**The United Church of Christ,
General Synod 30, and Israel/Palestine**
*What Synod Said, and What It Didn't—
A Summary Guide for UCC Clergy and Members*
July, 2015

The 30th General Synod of the United Church of Christ met from June 26-30 in Cleveland, Ohio. In addition to a variety of significant business on its own structure, race issues in the US (mass incarceration and the Washington, DC football team name), and global issues (unification of Korea and the Armenian Genocide), Synod also addressed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

On Israel/Palestine, the General Synod **adopted** a resolution entitled, “A Call for the United Church of Christ to Take Actions toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.” The vote was 508 in favor, 124 opposed, and 38 abstentions (80.4% in favor, counting those who voted for or against; 75.8% in favor, counting all delegates).

This resolution calls upon the UCC to:

- A. Study the [Kairos Palestine document](#) as well as other perspectives on the occupied Palestinian territories
- B. Divest from companies that profit from the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and people
- C. Boycott products made by companies that operate in illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories
- D. Advocate with Congress to ensure Israel’s compliance with US laws, related to the \$3.1 billion of military aid that the US sends annually to Israel, and in light of Israeli human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territories
- E. Continue to engage in interfaith dialogue, including with Jewish colleagues and organizations.

This resolution does **not** call for boycott or divestment from Israel. There is an important distinction between that and what the resolution calls for. The resolution addresses the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and its people; it does not challenge Israel’s existence.

This resolution is an endorsement of the spirit of the Palestinian BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) Movement, but only addresses one of the BDS Movement’s calls—the end to occupation. The BDS Movement is a Palestinian civil society movement that was launched in 2005 and supports employing these tactics to bring about an end to the occupation, as well as two additional calls, which the UCC’s General Synod resolution does not address: “recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194.”

The resolution seeks to employ a non-violent tactic to bring an end to the occupation, in response to the authentic and clear call of Palestinian Christian partners, especially as articulated in the *Kairos Palestine* document (2009). The UCC has consistently condemned violence in all of its forms, not only in the Middle East. This approach is consistent with that understanding of ideal human relations.

The resolution focuses on Israeli policies; it does not seek to provoke or alienate our Jewish partners and friends. It does hope to stimulate dialogue on the realities of occupation and on the conflict as a whole, recognizing that the UCC has close ties of partnership and relationship with Palestinian Christians and their institutions, as well as other partners in Israel/Palestine, and that many Jewish colleagues have close ties with Israeli Jews and institutions in Israel (but not as many opportunities for encountering the occupation).

The UCC, through General Synod, has an extensive corpus of General Synod policy on Israel/Palestine dating back to 1967, and a very long history of engagement on the Middle East, as well as global justice issues

throughout the world and over the course of our history, including the Congo, South Africa, the Philippines, Colombia, among other places.

Our engagement in the Middle East is part of the global witness, and our relationships with partners in the Middle East involves solidarity, advocacy, support of vital ministries of presence and witness (including refugee response, community development, conflict resolution, justice and peacemaking, education at many levels, health and wholeness, interfaith dialogue, and Christian presence). The UCC's General Synod positions in Israel/Palestine focus primarily on the situation of Palestinians living under occupation, seeking to end the occupation and various aspects of it. Taken as a whole, these positions characterize the uneven conflict between Israel and the Palestinians as:

- ❖ a conflict over land, control of resources, and political power, between two peoples: the Israelis and the Palestinians—Jews, Christians, and Muslims;
- ❖ a conflict that dates back into the first half of the twentieth century;
- ❖ a conflict that requires a negotiated political solution that addresses the main concerns such as security, boundaries, settlements, refugees, Jerusalem, resources (including water), and demographics and citizenship rights.
- ❖ It is not understood as a millennia-old civilizational conflict, or even as Jewish-Muslim; Palestinian Christians experience the same effects of occupation as their Muslim neighbors.

In previous years, the General Synod has adopted resolutions on the use of economic leverage, such as boycotts of Taco Bell and others related to the Immokalee tomato pickers movement for fair wages; boycotts of Mt. Olive pickles, also related to justice for the workers; and calls for corporate engagement and divestment from Apartheid-era South Africa.

General Synod 30 also considered, but **defeated**, a resolution that would have called upon the United Church of Christ to “recognize the actions of Israel against the Palestinians as *apartheid*,” according to the 2002 International Criminal Court definition. The vote was 312 in favor, 295 opposed, and 31 abstentions (51.4% in favor, counting those who voted for or against; 48.9% in favor, counting all delegates). The resolution again focused on the occupation and Israeli policies in the West Bank and around Gaza. It did **not** seek to name Israel an apartheid state. While more delegates supported the resolution than opposed it, it did not obtain the required 2/3 majority to pass.

Selected resources for further study:

Kairos Palestine—A Moment of Truth: A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering, http://www.globalministries.org/palestinian_christian_kairos.

Recommended reading on Israel/Palestine, http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/globalministries/legacy_url/5638/Books-Israel-Palestine.pdf?1419967449

UCC General Synod 30 Resolution on Israel/Palestine, <http://uccfiles.com/pdf/GS30-A-CALL-FOR-THE-UNITED-CHURCH-OF-CHRIST-TO-TAKE-ACTIONS-TOWARD-A-JUST-PEACE-IN-THE-ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN-CONFLICT.pdf>

Past UCC General Synod resolutions on Israel/Palestine, http://www.globalministries.org/israel_palestine_resolutions

This summary is prepared to assist clergy, members, and others in understanding and interpreting the actions of the 30th General Synod. For more substantive discussion, please contact Dr. Peter Makari, Executive, Middle East and Europe, Wider Church Ministries, UCC, in the National Setting of the UCC in Cleveland, OH. He can be reached at (216) 736-3227, and by e-mail at makarip@ucc.org.

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.



**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 pastoral response to the Palestine *Kairos* document: “A Moment of Truth”

April 2010

Sisters and brothers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ,

Greetings in the name of our risen Savior, Jesus Christ! We write to you this Eastertide having remembered Christ’s passion and celebrated His resurrection. In these times, as ever, we are particularly mindful of those around the world who are suffering, especially victims of natural disaster and war. We pray for their comfort and the hope that you offer.

As our attention has been on Jerusalem, we find ourselves watching with cautious hope the possibility of the “proximity” negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian leadership, brokered by the US. Previous peace talks in the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict have had but limited success, but we cling to—and support—any effort that may result in a resolution addressing the loud cries for justice that we have heard.

The Palestinian Christian community, whose population is less than 2% of the overall population of the West Bank and Gaza, continues to experience the hardships of occupation. Palestinian Christian leadership have taken the bold step of declaring this a *kairos* moment, a designation not of chronological time, but of opportunity ripe for momentous action, and a moment that can be lost if the opportunity is not seized. A pioneering *Kairos* Document was written by black South African Christians in 1985. Other such documents have emerged from contexts in Central America (1988), Zimbabwe (1998) and India (2000). This past December, Palestinian Christians issued their call, “A Moment of Truth: A word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering.”

“A Moment of Truth” is a powerful statement. In addition to describing the painful reality of more than 40 years of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinian Christians are unequivocal in their belief “in a Good and Just God,” and that their “hope remains strong.” Their faith in God leads them to expect a better future. Palestinian Christians issue this “call to see the face of God in each one of [God’s] creatures.” It is a call “to reject fanaticism and extremism,” reminding us that “human beings were not made for hatred,” and that hatred and killing are not permitted. We fully concur with these expressions of non-violence.

Palestinian Christians see several signs of hope, including enduring Christian presence and ecumenical witness in the land called holy; ongoing interfaith dialogue; the perseverance of generations of Palestinians and the continuation of memory; and the determination to overcome resentment and to be prepared for reconciliation when justice has been restored.

These Palestinian Christians believe that members of the Church must demonstrate love to friends and enemies, and that they must also resist evils, including, in their case, the occupation of Palestinian lands. “A Moment of Truth” states that the Church’s mission is to pray, serve, and be prophetic, speaking for and accompanying the oppressed, proclaiming the “Kingdom of God, a kingdom of justice, peace and dignity.” Now more than ever, Palestinians say to the world “**Come and see.**”

We, too, believe in this role for the Church. Through General Assembly and General Synod, the Disciples and UCC have advocated for a just and fair resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Such a resolution would necessarily involve Israel’s secure existence, next to a free and secure Palestinian state. Now more than ever, we say “**fair and free**” is the only way to ensure peace and justice.

There is much you can do as churches and individuals to work toward a just and peaceful end to conflict, starting with the Palestinian Christian *Kairos* document. We suggest the following four commitments:

- ❖ Commit to read, study, and reflect on the “Message of Hope” with your fellow church members;
- ❖ Commit to visit the region to learn more about the situation on the ground, and non-violent responses to it; a trip can be organized with the advice and counsel of our Global Ministries offices;
- ❖ Commit to advocate with the US government, the most influential outside party in the negotiations, beginning with participation in the Churches for Middle East Peace Advocacy Conference in Washington, DC, June 13-15, 2010;
- ❖ Commit to support denominational partners in Palestine, which supports the Palestinian economy; and to avoid products that are produced in illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

More information on the “Message of Hope” and these actions steps is available on the Global Ministries Palestine *Kairos* page [<http://globalministries.org/mee/kairos>].

Palestinian Christians conclude their letter, “In the absence of hope, we cry out our cry of hope.... We believe in God, good and just [and that God’s goodness] will finally triumph.... We will see here ‘a new land’ and ‘a new human being,’ capable of rising up in the spirit to love each one of his or her brothers and sisters.” Now more than ever, we pray that this vision does indeed come about, with our commitment.

In Christ,

Rev. Geoffrey Black
General Minister and President
United Church of Christ

Rev. Sharon Watkins
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Cally Rogers Witte
Executive Minister
Wider Church Ministries, UCC
Co-Executive, Global Ministries

Rev. David Vargas
President
Division of Overseas Ministries, Disciples
Co-Executive, Global Ministries



UCC General Resolutions on Israel/Palestine Timeline

- 1967 General Synod Resolution: On the Middle East Situation
- 1969 General Synod Resolution: On the Middle East situation
- 1971 General Synod Resolution: The Middle East
- 1973 Executive Council Resolution: Middle East Situation
- 1979 General Synod Action: Communication to Presidents Sadat, Begin, and Carter
- 1979 General Synod Resolution: Overture on Consultation on the Future of the City of Jerusalem
- 1987 General Synod Resolution: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
- 1989 General Synod Resolution: On the Middle East
- 1991 General Synod Resolution: Consequences of the Persian Gulf War for a Just Peace Church
- 1991 General Synod Resolution: Support for the Men and Women of our Armed Forces
- 1993 General Synod Resolution: Urging Reopening of East Jerusalem
- 1997 General Synod Resolution: Jerusalem City of Life
- 1997 General Synod Resolution: Palestine/Israel
- 1999 General Synod Resolution: Bringing Justice and Peace to The Middle East
- 2003 General Synod Resolution: An Alternative Voice to Christian Zionism
- 2005 General Synod Resolution: Concerning Use of Economic Leverage in Promoting Peace in the Middle East
- 2005 General Synod Resolution: Tear Down the Wall
- 2007 Executive Council action on referred resolution "In Support of a Renewed and Balanced Study and Response to the Conflict Between Palestine and Israel"
- 2013 Executive Council action on reports of implementation of 2005 "Economic Leverage" resolution
- 2015 General Synod Resolution: A Call for the United Church of Christ to Take Actions Toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Source: http://www.globalministries.org/israel_palestine_resolutions

Other Resources

There are many, many resource materials available. Members and independent committees from several denominations have assembled the following websites that are rich in resources of reference materials, web links, book and article titles, maps, videos and opportunities for engagement. CMEP is an ecumenical group – Churches for Middle East Peace. Sabeel is a Palestinian Liberation Theology center. Kairos Palestine is an ecumenical Palestinian Christian group. B'tselem is a human rights group in Israel.

UCC: <http://www.uccpalestineisraelnetwork.org>

UCC Global Ministries: <http://www.globalministries.org/meinitiative>

UCC Palestine Israel Network: <http://www.uccpin.org>

Sermon by Reverend Mitri Raheb delivered at the 30th UCC General Synod (19 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URL0fIlyiLI>

Quakers: <http://www.quakerpi.org>

American Friends Service Committee: <http://www.afsc.org/category/topic/israel-palestine>

Lutherans: <https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Peace-Not-Walls>

Presbyterians: <http://www.theipmn.org/>

Presby' Missions: <http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/global/israel-palestine/>

Methodists: <https://www.kairosresponse.org/>

Meth. Missions: <http://www.umcmmission.org/Explore-Our-Work/Middle-East/Israel-Palestine>

CMEP: <http://www.cmeop.org/content/congregational-resources>

Sabeel: <http://www.sabeel.org>

Friends of Sabeel in North America: <http://www.fosna.org>

Kairos Palestine: <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/>

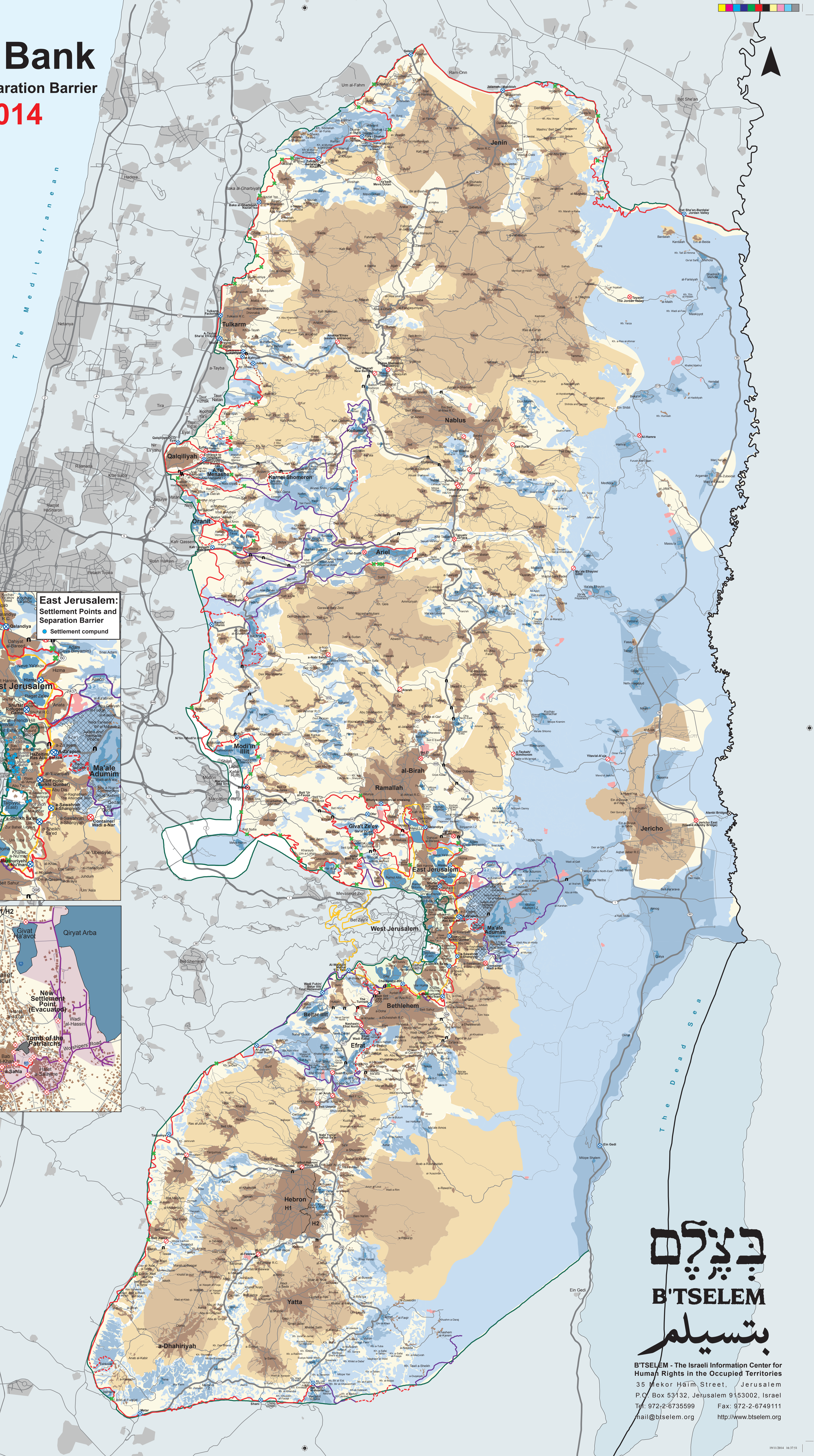
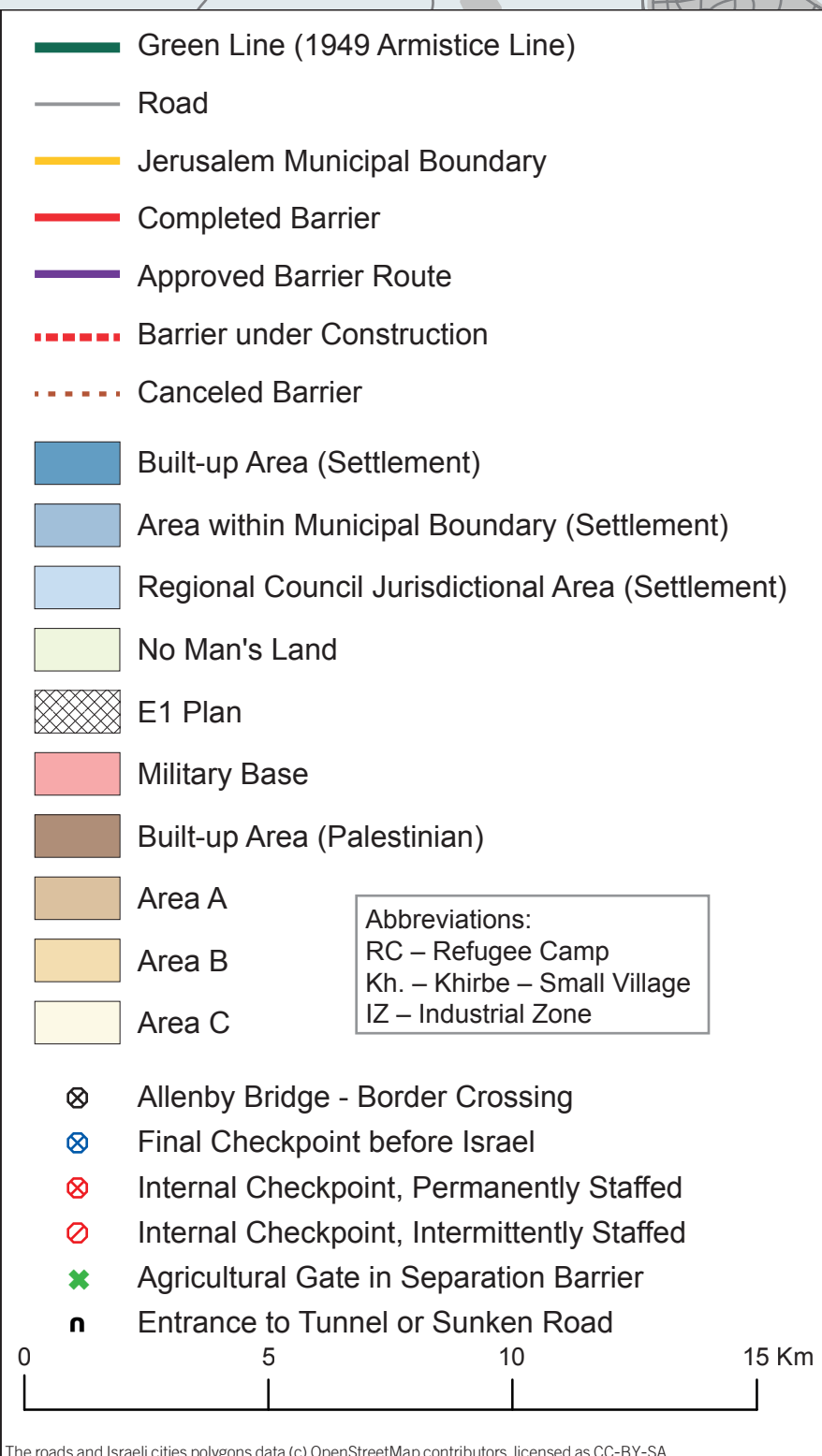
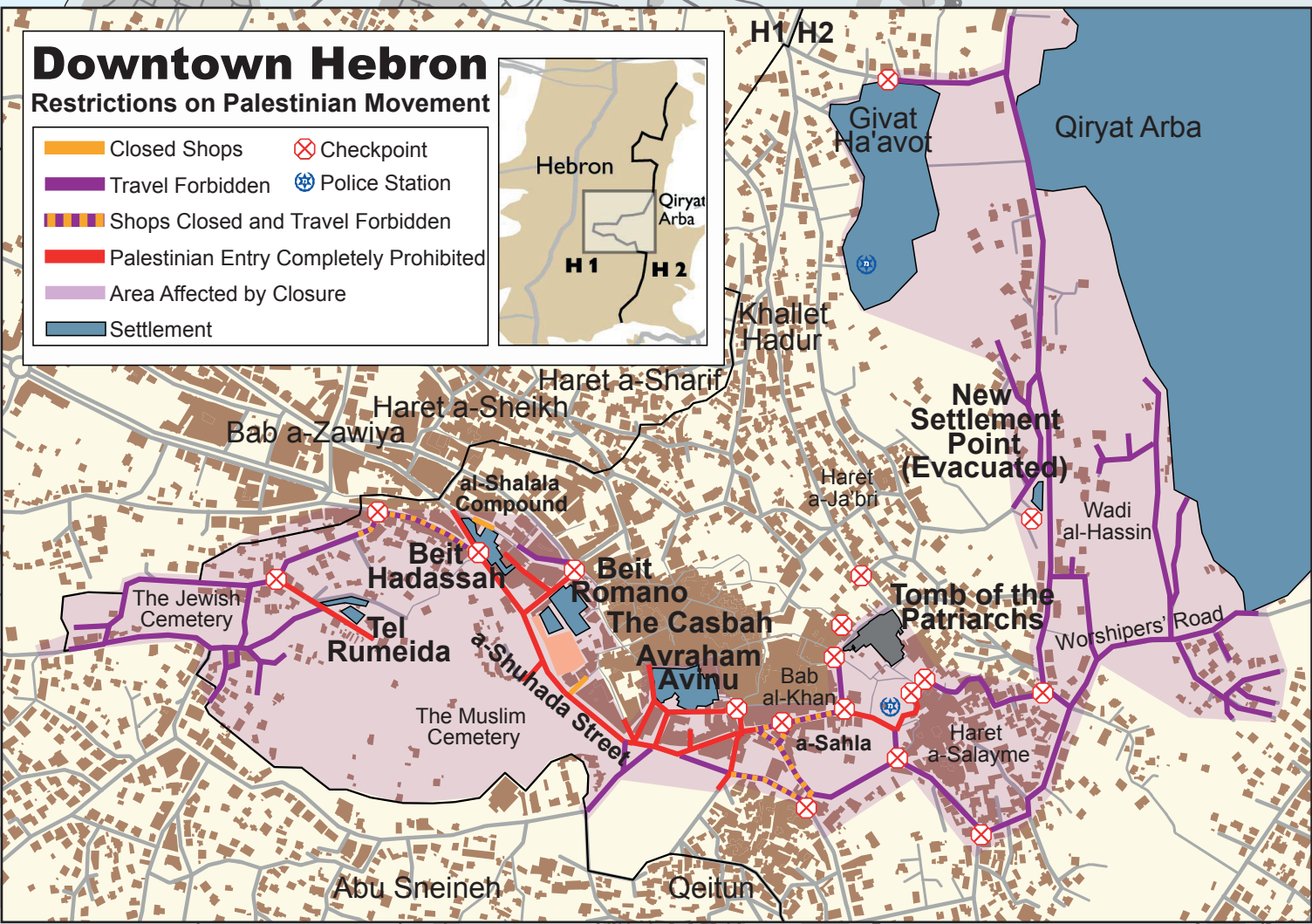
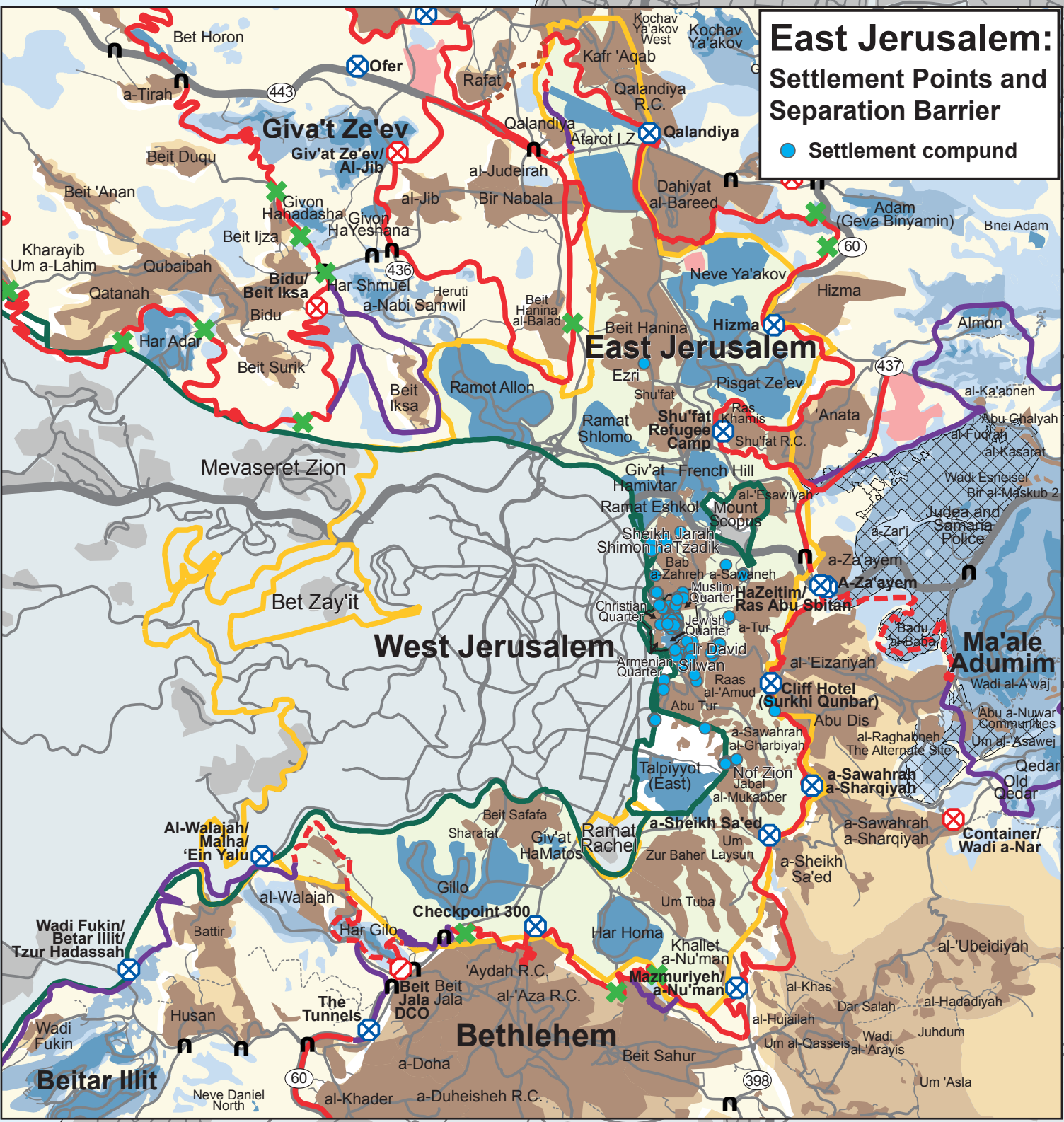
Kairos Palestine USA: <http://kairosusa.org/>

B'tselem maps: <http://www.btselem.org/maps>
(source of the back cover – available on the web in an interactive form)

The West Bank

Settlements and the Separation Barrier

November 2014



ב'טסלם
B'TSELEM
בטסלם

B'TSELEM - The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories
35 Mevor Ha'im Street, Jerusalem
P.O. Box 53132, Jerusalem 9153002, Israel
Tel: 972-2-6735599 Fax: 972-2-6749111
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