

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

66 Years of Trusting the Nonviolence of Jesus Christ

Committee 14 takes responsibility for some of the most difficult issues facing GA --- and facing the world. **Hang in there!**

Please let us know if the PPF can help you.

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PPF offers a set of **“Principles to Guide our Work”** on the conflict between Israel and Palestine. These principles honor the wide range of voices that we need to hear on this issue, including:

Our responsibility to our Jewish sisters and brothers, to our Muslim sisters and brothers, to our Christian sisters and brothers in the Middle East, our commitment to those committed to nonviolence and justice, our commitment to stand with the oppressed, the moral bankruptcy of inaction and, in the face of all this, the need for humility. See www.presbypeacefellowship.org/resources/principles

Middle East Peacemaking Issues

14-08 Breaking Down the Walls – From the Middle East Study Committee **PPF recommends full support for this report**

This astonishing document speaks truth with love in a crucial moment, calling us, as Christian citizens in the United States, to a period of intense prayer and action for a just peace in Israel-Palestine. We recommend your full support of the report and recommendations, with thanks to all involved.

While the report stops short of calling for divestment, we celebrate the integrity and fairness of this process and the Presbyterian tradition of a broad-based group commissioned to undergo intense study, first-hand experience, discussion, prayer and reporting back to the church.

Our view: Former GA and Peace Fellowship Moderator, the late Dr. Clinton Marsh, preached a sermon once a year on Paul’s words from prison to Timothy: **“Come before winter.”** Clint got to the heart of *timeliness*---calling us to act for justice and peace *while there is still time to make a difference*. There comes a time when we will be too late. Our prayer is that this report and its follow-up study guide will be read, debated and acted on across the church, while there is still time to make a difference.

Find PPF briefing info on all peace-related issues facing GA at the **PPF Booth #631** in the Exhibit Hall or at www.presbypeacefellowship.org

Briefing Paper for GA Committee

14

14-01 & 14-02 On Divestment from Caterpillar, Inc. and 14-03 The Mission Responsibility Through Investment Report of Its Engagement with Corporations Involved in Israel, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank. PPF recommends support for these overtures and the MRTI report.

Here’s why. The MRTI report contains critical information and, in our view, makes the case for divestment without explicitly calling for it.

The best overture, **14-02**, mentions one example of the use of armored CAT bulldozers: “During the 2009 war in Gaza, more than 4,000 homes were completely destroyed by CAT D-9 bulldozers.” Caterpillar provides bulldozers to the Israel Defense Forces, knowing that they will be used to illegally destroy civilian homes. An armored Caterpillar D9 bulldozer is over 13 feet tall, 26 feet wide, weighs over 60 tons. It razes a home in just a few minutes.



Our view: With our stock in Caterpillar, the PC (USA) profits from and helps to support the illegal occupation of Palestine, creating an exponentially growing level of human misery, embitterment and despair. The key issue is: **should the church continue to profit from this?**

After years and years of GA moral statements and responsible corporate engagement by MRTI, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship humbly and respectfully believes that **it is time to divest from Caterpillar.**

14-04 On Recognition that Israel's Laws, Policies, and Practices Constitute Apartheid Against the Palestinian People.

PPF recommends support for this overture.

What is *apartheid*? Coming from the Afrikaans words "apart" and "heid/hood," it means races living apart, with one race controlling the other by force and by law. In 1961 South African prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd noted that Jews "took Israel from the Arabs after the Arabs had lived there for a thousand years. In that I agree with them, Israel, like South Africa, is an apartheid state."

The language is harsh and we wish that it were not true. But it is true. Archbishop Tutu and former president Nelson Mandela have said that the apartheid suffered by Palestinians today is worse than the apartheid that they experienced.

Tip for GA Committees: church staff can offer clarification, history, advice and answer questions on the issues that you are addressing, but only when requested by a committee member. **Ask the chair!**

14-05 On Commending "A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith and Hope from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering" as an Advocacy Tool.
We recommend support for this overture.

In South Africa, supporting divestment became a capital crime. Here in the *Kairos Palestine 2009* message, we have courageous grassroots Christians in Palestine asking us to join them in concrete acts such as divestment to end the occupation. They commit themselves to the long-term logic of nonviolent social change.

Our view: *Kairos 2009* recalls the letter that the PC(USA) received from the Presbyterian Church of Colombia, pleading for our accompaniment. Receiving and commending a report for study does **not** imply total agreement. Although the Israeli lobby has been critical of much of the Kairos document, we urge the PC(USA) to receive and hear this historic word and to widen its audience.

14-06 On Middle East Peacemaking.
We recommend voting no on this overture.

Here's why: If it were 1975 or so, PPF would support this. **It is 2010.** The intractable nature of this conflict, coupled with the presence of nuclear weapons in the region, threatens the future of the world. While the overture may sound faithful and the intent was faithfulness, it does little more than echo our statements and processes that have been in place for many years, and that have ended neither the violence of Israel's occupation nor the violence of Palestinian rhetoric and actions. **Reject**

Overture 14-06 and pass the recommendations of the Middle East Study Committee report and overtures that sensitively carry forward those initiatives; additionally, support the Palestinian Christians' Kairos Document and the United Nation's Goldstone Report – these are the ways to be faithful in 2010.

14-07 On Iraq – We urge your support

This is similar to the previous GA statement, but asks the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy to study the impact of the war on the US economy and calls upon the US to: maintain the announced schedules for withdrawal of troops and contractors, to have no permanent bases, to provide more and quicker help for refugees, and to provide more medical and psychological help for military personnel.

14-09 On Seeking Compliance to U.S. Government Policy in the Use of Military Aid by All Parties in the Middle East

We recommend your support for 14-09

We believe the US should follow its own laws on military aid and weapons sales to nations who violate the stipulations of the aid. This action does not change non-military aid to Israel. It calls for suspending military aid until US stipulations are met.

14-10 Toward Peace and Reconciliation in the Middle East We recommend your support

Here's why: The Middle East Study Group wasn't allowed to visit Gaza; this overture fills that gap. It updates our view of conditions on the ground in Gaza and joins the PC (USA) with those calling for investigations by all sides of violations of human rights and humanitarian law during the Gaza war of 2008-9. It affirms the PC (USA) commitment to the rule of law in the Israel-Palestine crisis and to accountability whenever violence occurs, as called for in the **Goldstone Report**. That this 575 page United Nations report was led by a South African judge reminds us that change is possible when the world community stands together for justice and peace.

Who We Are: Founded in 1944, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship is a national community of almost 3,000 Presbyterians who believe Jesus calls the church to help reduce the level of war and violence in the world. We are a non-partisan group, open to all Presbyterians, funded entirely by our members, many of whom have served as mission workers around the world and as activists on war and peace issues for decades. Except for Executive Director Rick Ufford-Chase and a part-time staff, we are all volunteers who pay our own expenses to attend GA. We receive no funds from outside lobby groups. For more details, see www.presbypeacefellowship.org