



July, 2012

IJV Supports the Recommendations of the United Church of Canada's Working Group on Israel/Palestine Policy

Independent Jewish Voices-Canada (IJV) is a national organization of Jews committed to a just resolution of the Israel/Palestine conflict based on international law and respect for the human rights of all people. IJV applauds the United Church for its tradition of taking courageous stands on behalf of justice and the rights of the oppressed, which we see as an essential part of our own work.

On May 1, after two years of preparation, including extensive field research in Israel and Palestine, the United Church of Canada's Working Group on Israel/Palestine Policy (WGIP) issued a thoughtful and courageous report for discussion at the 41st General Council meeting in August.ⁱ IJV would like to express our sincere gratitude and strong support for the WGIP's efforts. Our organization formed, in part, to support the right of Canadian organizations like the Church to raise moral and ethical concerns about Israeli policies such as those raised by the WGIP in its report.

IJV supports the key recommendations of the Middle East Working Group

IJV supports the WGIP's key recommendations, especially its call for concrete action to end the occupation, including the call to dismantle all settlements and portions of the separation wall situated on Palestinian land, its support for economic action against products of the occupation, its support for a just resolution to the plight of Palestinian refugees, and its challenge to Christian Zionist theology's support for the occupation.

We believe these recommendations respond thoughtfully and courageously to the call of Christian Palestinians contained in the *Kairos Palestine Document*ⁱⁱ as well as other, earlier calls from the World Council of Churches, to take action that will alleviate the suffering of the Palestinians. We agree with the WGIP that ending the occupation and its associated practices -- including the expropriation of Palestinian land and water for settlements, the demolition of Palestinian homes, and the construction of major portions of the separation wall deeply within Palestinian territory -- are prerequisites for peace.

We appreciate the WGIP's recognition that it is unreasonable and offensive to require Palestinians to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, because doing so would require that they betray their legitimate claims to their land and accept second class status in Israel. Furthermore, we support the right of Palestinian refugees, like all other refugees, to return

to their homes or to receive compensation for their losses through a just negotiating process.

We believe it is essential for the State of Israel to become faithful to the wording contained in the country's Declaration of Independence:

The State of Israel will . . . promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on the precepts of liberty, justice and peace taught by the Hebrew Prophets; will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed or sex; will guarantee full freedom of conscience, worship, education and culture; will safeguard the sanctity and inviolability of the shrines and Holy Places of all religions; and will dedicate itself to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.ⁱⁱⁱ

We believe that Jews can have a homeland in Israel without sacrificing the democratic rights of non-Jewish citizens of the country. As Jews in Canada, we enjoy the right to practice our religion and culture protected by our government. Non-Jews in Israel deserve no less. Religiously observant IJV members point to the Torah in which God demands, “Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I *am* the LORD your God.”^{iv}

We stand with Israeli Jews of conscience, some of whom met with the members of the WGIP when they were conducting their research, in affirming that the occupation undermines Israeli democracy and promotes anti-Semitism, thereby threatening both the future of Israel and the safety of Jews worldwide.

Finally, we applaud the WGIP for calling on the United Church to exercise its ethical and religious obligation not to invest in or purchase products from the Israeli occupation and to consider divesting from companies which profit from the occupation. Independent Jewish Voices adopted a similar resolution in 2009 (see below), as have a number of other Jewish Israeli, international and North American organizations^v. We believe that a range of economic and other non-violent actions are necessary to convince Israel to change its behaviour and to reach out to its Palestinian and Arab neighbours with substantive initiatives for peace.

Conclusion

IJV urges GC41 Commissioners to seize this opportunity for the United Church, once again, to provide moral leadership and demonstrate its courage and integrity. IJV and other people of conscience in Jewish communities in Canada and around the world, as well as the growing international movement supporting Palestinian self-determination, stand with you.

ⁱ *Report of the Working Group on Israel/Palestine Policy* (May 1, 2012)
<http://www.gc41.ca/background-material>

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Kairos Palestine (2009) *Kairos Palestine Document: A moment of truth: A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering.*

<http://www.oikoumene.org/gr/resources/documents/other-ecumenical-bodies/kairos-palestine-document.html>

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Israeli Declaration of Independence May 14, 1948. <http://www.brijnet.org/israel50/decl-eng.htm>

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Leviticus 24:22

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Not in Our Name, Argentina, International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network-Toronto; Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods, UK; Women in Solidarity with Palestine (WSP-Toronto), Jewish Voice for a Just Peace in the Near East, Austria, French Jewish Union for Peace; Jews Against Zionism; Jews Say No! (NYC), Not in Our Name (NION), Jews Opposing Zionism (Canada), Rete-ECO (Italian network of Jews against the Occupation), American Jews for a Just Peace; Boycott: Supporting the Palestinian BDS Call from Within (Israeli); Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb; Rabbi Alissa Wise; Naomi Klein

IJV Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Resolution

(Approved at the Independent Jewish Voices Annual General Meeting in Ottawa, June 14, 2009)

Whereas there will be no lasting peace without implementation of international law, United Nations resolutions and respect for the human rights of both Palestinians and Jewish-Israelis, and

Whereas the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed resolution 242 in November 1967, calling on Israel to withdraw from the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, which it had invaded and occupied in June 1967, and

Whereas Israel has refused to implement resolution 242 and instead has illegally established Jewish-only settlements in these areas in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and

Whereas Independent Jewish Voices is based on a strong commitment to social justice and universal human rights, and

Whereas it is our view that the grave situation in the Middle East threatens the future of both Israelis and Palestinians as well as the stability of the whole region, and

Whereas we support a negotiated peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples and oppose attempts by the Israeli government to impose its own solutions on the Palestinians,

Therefore be it resolved that Independent Jewish Voices will

- Work towards an end to military assaults and other acts of violence that target civilians;
- Demand that the Israeli Government immediately and permanently withdraw from the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan and cease all discrimination against Arab Citizens in Israel.

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- Call on the Canadian government to 1) cease its one-sided and uncritical support for Israel and 2) insist that Israel abide by international law in its relations with Palestinians.
 - Support the Palestinian call for a campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and complies with the precepts of international law, including the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.