

## FAQs Related to the Proposed Resolution on Israel-Palestine

- 1. How long have Mennonites been involved in Israel and Palestine?** Mennonites have been ministering to human need and witnessing to the way of Jesus in this region for more than 65 years. Mennonite Central Committee first initiated refugee relief efforts in 1949. Today MCC, Mennonite Mission Network, Ten Thousand Villages and Christian Peacemaker Teams have ongoing work in Israel-Palestine.
- 2. Why aren't there any Mennonite churches in Israel or Palestine?** When Mennonites first began working in this region they decided not to plant Mennonite churches but to work in partnership with local Christians and other groups. Mennonites have been respected and trusted because they developed genuine partnerships and weren't viewed as competitors who inserted themselves. As a result, deep and long-standing relationships have been formed with a wide range of Christians in the region.
- 3. What does Israeli occupation of Palestine look like?** Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967. Under military occupation many civilian laws and procedures are suspended. Arrests and extended detention without formal charges are very common, for example. Land seizures, destruction of olive groves, and home demolitions are frequent. Israeli settlements with tens of thousands of residents continue to be built on Palestinian land. The separation wall, settlements, and Israeli-only roads which connect them cut off large swaths of Palestinian land, and in many places cut off Palestinian farmers from both their land and their water resources. Palestinians are denied the rights of self-determination.
- 4. Why is the occupation called sinful in the Kairos document and the proposed resolution?** The resolution does not say that Israelis are sinners nor that Arab Christians and Muslims are not sinners. Specifically, it says that "Israel's military occupation is sinful." While we are more familiar with naming individual actions as sinful, we do also commonly speak of social sins like racism and war. Likewise the ongoing injustices and dehumanization of military occupation are contrary to the will of God and sinful.
- 5. What is Kairos Palestine and what is its main message?** The full title of the Kairos Palestine document is *A moment of truth: A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering*. This appeal to the world was prepared and distributed in 2009 by a remarkably broad group of Palestinian Christian leaders including Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans, Lutherans and Evangelicals. This document is especially compelling to Mennonites because it comes to us from Christian brothers and sisters, and because of its deep commitment to Jesus' way of love even in the face of great suffering and severe injustice. The main message of Kairos Palestine is: The decades-old Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territories is a sin against God and humanity. Any theology or interpretation of the Bible by Christians or Jews that justifies this occupation is "far from Christian teachings." Non-violent resistance to this evil is a "right and duty for all Palestinians including Christians." Only a resistance based on love of enemy and a repudiation of revenge can lead to just peace and reconciliation.
- 6. What has been the response of Mennonite Church USA to Kairos Palestine?** In 2011, on behalf of the MC USA Executive Board, Ervin Stutzman wrote a letter to Palestinian Christian brothers and sisters in response to the Kairos appeal. The letter said "We hear in your call the appeal of Christ to us." The letter committed to expanding opportunities for Mennonite leaders to visit and learn firsthand about their suffering, and indicated the need to wrestle with theologies that

support occupation and with the way our financial lives are enmeshed in policies of occupation. An accompanying letter to members of Mennonite Church USA encouraged Mennonites to read and study Kairos Palestine.

- 7. Why should Mennonite Church USA be involved in this problem?** Mennonites have been sharing experiences and working alongside Palestinians and Israelis for decades, seeking to discover our responsibilities in these relationships. The appeal of Palestinian Christian brothers and sisters, especially compels us to pray and work for peace in that land. In addition, as citizens of the United States, whose government provides massive financial, military and political support for the state of Israel and its policies of occupation, we feel a particular responsibility to be engaged. Finally, conflict in that small area fuels much mistrust and violence throughout the region and the entire globe, and our commitment to the Prince of Peace beckons us to strive for God's justice and peace in this region.
- 8. Why should Mennonite Church USA, our congregations and members be concerned about how our financial lives are enmeshed in policies of occupation?** As people who seek to follow Jesus in daily life, we know that how we spend and invest our money is an important part of our faith life. Concerns about simplicity, fair trade and sustainability, guide our purchasing decisions. Likewise, Mennonites have spent many years developing investment strategies that reflect our deepest convictions. We do not want to profit or benefit from the suffering of others, including those living under Israeli military occupation. This resolution establishes a process for convening key partners to regularly review church investments with this in mind.
- 9. What is the Mennonite Palestine-Israel Network (MennoPIN)?** MennoPIN was formed in 2013 as a grassroots network of Mennonites seeking to pray and work for peace with justice in the spirit of Jesus. Many participants have deep and long-standing experience in Israel and Palestine.
- 10. Are we "taking sides" in a complicated situation?** In the dynamics of this situation, it might be said that Palestinians and Israelis who use violence are on one side, working against Palestinians and Israelis who are committed to justice and peace on the other side. In some ways, those who use violence need each other, pointing to the violence of the other to justify their own violence. In this situation, Mennonites seek to be on the side of Israelis and Palestinians working for peace with justice. We think that is the side Jesus would want us to take.
- 11. What about the suffering Jews experienced during the Holocaust and the current threats to Israeli security?** As Christians addressing the Palestinian's plight we must acknowledge the shameful role of Christians in the historic persecution of Jewish people. Though these experiences no doubt shape current perspectives, these horrible wrongs should not be used to justify new wrongs. Together with our Palestinian Christian brothers and sisters who drafted Kairos Palestine, we long for a future when all the inhabitants of the land will experience peace, justice and security. It is important to be clear that this resolution is about the policies of the Israeli government and not about the Jewish people as a religious, ethnic or cultural community.
- 12. Might this resolution be considered anti-Semitic?** As Sonia K. Weaver has written in *What is Palestine-Israel?*: "Critiquing discriminatory and oppressive policies carried out by the State of Israel is not anti-Jewish; many Jews themselves criticize Israel's destructive policies, arguing that house demolitions, land confiscations, and disproportionate use of lethal force are not compatible with Jewish practice and belief. Christians' critiques of Israeli policies should be made in a spirit of humility and should not use anti-Jewish stereotypes when describing the oppressive Israeli practices in the Occupied Territories."