

Item 12-01 -- Overture 04-32 On Supporting the Geneva Accord, Urging Israel and Palestine to Implement the Accord

On Supporting the Geneva Accord, Urging Israel and Palestine to Implement the Accord—From the Presbytery of St. Augustine.

Assembly Action

The Assembly voted to adopt the Committee recommendation to approve the alternate resolution in response to this item. (431/62/7)

Committee Action

The Assembly Committee voted to approve the following resolution in response to this item (68/0/0):

At the time the Presbytery of St. Augustine approved Item 12-01, support for the “Geneva Accord” urging Israel and the Palestinians to implement the Accord seemed a practicable way forward in light of the derailed “road map,” especially in light of action taken by the 215th General Assembly (2003) strongly urging Israeli and Palestinian leaders “to be serious, active, and diligent about seeking peace for their peoples; or, if they are unwilling or unable, to step down and make room for other leaders who will and can” (Resolution on Israel and Palestine: End the Occupation Now, Recommendation D, Minutes, 2003, Part I, p. 636.).

At this time, however, several months since the approval of the proposed item by said presbytery, the situation and the prospects for a negotiated just peace have so deteriorated that people in the region generally, and particularly the Palestinians, have been driven to the edge of despair and hopelessness. Therefore, the 216th General Assembly (2004) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) does the following:

1. Confesses the sovereignty of God over all nations, states, governments, and peoples, acknowledging God’s supreme act of love for the whole world manifest in Jesus Christ so that by faith the world might not perish but be saved. In Christ, God has called us to show love, seek peace, and to pursue justice, so that the world might be transformed into a foretaste of God’s peaceable kingdom.
2. Continues to be inspired by the tenacity of hope of our Palestinian Christian partners in the face of ominous, cumulative gloom and foreboding; it affirms that God has not given us a spirit of timidity, nor have we been called to surrender hope to an attitude of despair.
3. Commends the Presbytery of St. Augustine on its concern for a just resolution of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, and for moving the

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to persist in voicing this concern. The assembly, therefore, welcomes the possibilities for peace contained in the “Geneva Accord,” as a useful and practical approach. It would also be encouraged by other inspired initiatives that could advance the prospects of peace in the Middle East.

4. Reiterates and reaffirms the call of last year’s General Assembly on the Israeli government to “end the occupation now,” asserting that:

- a. The occupation must end; it has proven to be at the root of evil acts committed against innocent people on both sides of the conflict.
- b. The security of Israel and the Israeli people is inexorably dependent on making peace with their Palestinian neighbors, by negotiating and reaching a just and equitable solution to the conflict that respects international law, human rights, the sanctity of life, and dignity of persons, land, property, safety of home, freedom of movement, the rights of refugees to return to their homeland, the right of a people to determine their political future, and to live in peace and prosperity.
- c. Horrific acts of violence and deadly attacks on innocent people, whether carried out by Palestinian “suicide bombers” or by the Israeli military, are abhorrent and inexcusable by all measures, and are a dead-end alternative to a negotiated settlement of the conflict.
- d. The United States needs, now more than ever, to become an honest, even-handed broker for peace, and should review its approach to the problem, allowing more room for the more meaningful participation of other members of the U.N.-designated “Quartet” (the United States, Russia, Germany and France) and others;
- e. The international community has an obligation to provide physical protection for those isolated by fear and/or by physical and psychological barriers, thus making space for the restoration of security and creating a climate for the resumption of negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians. We support the Palestinians’ persistent request to the United Nations to send a peacekeeping force.

5. Vigorously urges the U.S. government, the government of Israel, and the Palestinian leadership to move swiftly, and with resolve, to recognize that the only way out of this chronic and vicious impasse is to abandon all approaches that exacerbate further strife, lay aside arrogant political posturing, and get on with forging negotiated compromises that open a path to peace.

6. Endorses the letter sent on April 19, 2004, by the Stated Clerk, reiterating concerns of our denomination for Christian partners and their institutions that serve as agents of reconciliation and hope, as well as for their Palestinian and Israeli neighbors, in the Holy Land, in the framework of previous statements of the General Assembly.

7. Refers to Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee (MRTI) with instructions to initiate a process of phased selective divestment in multinational corporations operating in Israel, in accordance to General Assembly policy on

social investing, and to make appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly Council for action.

Recommendation

The Presbytery of St. Augustine respectfully overtures the 216th General Assembly (2004) to do the following:

- 1. Affirm support for the Geneva Accord and urge both sides to engage in negotiations to implement the accord.**
- 2. Urge an end to the assassination policy of the Israel government and to Palestinian suicide bombings.**
- 3. Urge the Congress to end all military aid to Israel until the occupation ends.**
- 4. Urge the Congress to cease all loan guarantees for building or expanding settlements in Palestinian areas.**
- 5. Call on our Board of Pensions to divest itself of investments in companies receiving one million dollars or more in profits per year from investments in Israel or that have invested one million dollars or more in Israel.**

Rationale

In support of this overture, the Presbytery of St. Augustine observes the following:

1. The state of Israel has occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan heights since the Six Day War of 1967, and this occupation has resulted in great suffering for the 3.5 million Palestinians who live in the occupied territories.
2. The government of Israel has confiscated large areas in the West Bank to build settlements for Jews only, and these settlements are connected by roads restricted to settlers and the Israeli military.
3. Several thousand Palestinians have been killed during the second Intifada, which began in September of 2000. During this same Intifada, hundreds of Israeli citizens have been killed by suicide bombers.
4. The government of Israel has signed and ratified the Fourth Geneva convention that prohibits the use of collective punishment as represented by the imposition of closure, curfew, house demolitions, the transfer of parts of a conquering nation's own civilian population into territories it occupies (a clear ban on settlements), and massive land expropriations. Virtually every element of Israel's occupation violates a provision of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The General Assembly has called for an end to the occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem.
5. The government of Israel is currently building a "Separation Fence" that encircles several Palestinian villages on three sides, divides others in half, and reaches twelve miles into the West Bank in places.

6. The General Assembly has urged the Israeli government to end its expansionist policies of

- a. confiscation of land and water resources and the building and enlarging of settlements,
- b. collective punishment of Palestinians, such as is exercised through administrative detentions, demolition of homes, mass house imprisonment (“curfews”), uprooting olive trees, setting up road blocks and checkpoints, and other forms of harassment and humiliation (see *Minutes*, 2003, Part I, p. 635; *Minutes*, 2002, Part I, p. 732).

7. The General Assembly has supported United Nations resolutions affirming the right of Israel to exist within secure borders and the right of the Palestinians to self-determination, including the establishment of its own sovereign state and the right of return of Palestinian refugees (see *Minutes*, 2003, Part I, p. 635; *Minutes*, 2002, Part I, p. 732).

Advice and Counsel on Item 12-01 -- From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) and the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC).

Item 12-01 calls for the 216th General Assembly (2004) to support the Geneva Accord, urging Israel and Palestine to implement the Geneva Accord.

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) and the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC), in consultation with concerned entities of the General Assembly Council, advise that Item 12-01 be answered by approving the following alternate statement and recommendations:

“At the time the Presbytery of St. Augustine approved Item 12-01, support for the ‘Geneva Accord’ urging Israel and the Palestinians to implement the Accord seemed a practicable way forward in light of the derailed ‘road map,’ especially in light of action taken by the 215th General Assembly (2003) strongly urging Israeli and Palestinian leaders ‘to be serious, active, and diligent about seeking peace for their peoples; or, if they are unwilling or unable, to step down and make room for other leaders who will and can’ (*Resolution on Israel and Palestine: End the Occupation Now*, Recommendation D, *Minutes*, 2003, Part I, p. 636.).

“At this time, however, several months since the approval of the proposed item by said presbytery, the situation and the prospects for a negotiated just peace have so deteriorated that people in the region generally, and particularly the Palestinians, have been driven to the edge of despair and hopelessness. Therefore, the 216th General Assembly (2004) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) does the following:

“1. Confesses the sovereignty of God over all nations, states, governments and peoples, acknowledging God’s supreme act of love for the whole world manifest in Jesus Christ so that by faith the world might not perish but be saved. In Christ, God has called us to show love, seek peace and to pursue justice so that the world might be transformed into a foretaste of God’s peaceable kingdom.

“2. Continues to be inspired by the tenacity of hope of our Palestinian Christian partners in the face of ominous, cumulative gloom and foreboding; it affirms that God has not given us a spirit of timidity, nor have we been called to surrender hope to an attitude of despair.

“3. Commends the Presbytery of St. Augustine on its concern for a just resolution of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, and for moving the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to persist in voicing this concern. The assembly, therefore, welcomes the possibilities for peace

contained in the 'Geneva Accord,' as a useful and practical approach. It would also be encouraged by other inspired initiatives that could advance the prospects of peace in the Middle East.

"4. Reiterates and reaffirms the call of last year's General Assembly on the Israeli government to 'end the occupation now,' asserting that:

"a. The occupation must end; it has proven to be at the root of evil acts committed against innocent people on both sides of the conflict.

"b. The security of Israel and the Israeli people is inexorably dependent on making peace with their Palestinian neighbors, by negotiating and reaching a just and equitable solution to the conflict that respects international law, human rights, the sanctity of life, and dignity of persons, land property, safety of home, freedom of movement, the rights of refugees to return to their homeland, the right of a people to determine their political future, and to live in peace and prosperity.

"c. Horrific acts of violence and deadly attacks on innocent people, whether carried out by Palestinian 'suicide bombers' or by the Israeli military, are abhorrent and inexcusable by all measures, and are a dead-end alternative to a negotiated settlement of the conflict.

"d. The policies and actions of the United States government have proven to hinder rather than promote a promised peace. No political power, however mighty, has the right to consign an entire people to such a hopelessly oppressive future as may be inherent in the Bush-Sharon plan articulated during the latter's visit to Washington in mid April 2004. The United States needs, now more than ever, to become an honest, even-handed broker for peace, and should review its approach to the problem, allowing more room for the more meaningful participation of other members of the U.N.-designated "Quartet" (the United States, Russia, Germany and France) and others;

"e. The international community has an obligation to provide physical protection for those isolated by fear and/or by physical and psychological barriers, thus making space for the restoration of security and creating a climate for the resumption of negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians. We support the Palestinians' persistent request to the United Nations to send a peacekeeping force.

"5. Vigorously urges the U.S. government, the government of Israel, and the Palestinian leadership to move swiftly, and with resolve, to recognize that the only way out of this chronic and vicious impasse is to abandon all approaches that exacerbate further strife, lay aside arrogant political posturing, and get on with forging negotiated compromises that open a path to peace.

"6. Endorses the letter sent on April 19, 2004, by the Stated Clerk, reiterating concerns of our denomination for Christian partners and their institutions that serve as agents of reconciliation and hope, as well as for their Palestinian and Israeli neighbors, in the Holy Land, in the framework of previous statements of the General Assembly.

"7. Finally, with respect to the recommendations in Item 12-01 calling on the Board of Pensions 'to divest itself of investments in companies receiving one million dollars or more in profits per year from investments in Israel...etc.,' the 216th General Assembly (2004) refers the proposal to the Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee (MRTI) to initiate the process of phased selective divestment, in the framework of the assembly's investment policy and

stated positions on Israel and Palestine, and to make appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly Council for action.”