



June 19, 2012

Commissioners, Committee 15  
220<sup>th</sup> General Assembly  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Dear Commissioners,

The National Middle Eastern Presbyterian Caucus (NMEPC) greatly appreciates and acknowledges PC (U.S.A.)'s position and long-standing commitment to peace and justice in the Middle East. The NMEPC commends:

- The actions taken by consecutive General Assemblies of the PC (USA) to address the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and calling for the Israeli military occupation to end.
- The GA actions that named the infrastructure of the occupation as obstacles to peace. (The separation wall, the illegal settlements, the Israeli-only roads, home demolitions, etc.).
- The 2008 endorsement of "The Amman Call" from Christians in the Middle East to back up their words against the occupation with action.
- The 2010 GA action of receiving for study, by all PC (USA) congregations, the Kairos Palestine document, which calls for non-violent action through BDS, Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions.

Today, we stand together with other Christian Palestinians (letter enclosed) and with an Ohio born Palestinian business man (letter from Sam Bahour enclosed) in support of the recommendations going to the 220th General Assembly to divest our funds from three companies that MRTI (Mission Responsibility Through Investment) has identified as profiting from non-peaceful pursuits: Caterpillar, Inc., Hewlett-Packard and Motorola Solutions. To recognize that Israel's laws, policies, and practices constitute apartheid against the Palestinian people is a prerequisite to peace and justice in Israel and Palestine and will contribute to reconciliation between the people of Israel and Palestine. To solve a problem, one has to honestly recognize and acknowledge that the problem exists.

The NMEPC recognizes, with great distress and grief, the suffering of the Jewish people over the past two millennia (particularly in Europe at the hands of Christians), which culminated in the Nazi persecution and Holocaust. Further, having been ourselves minorities in the Middle East, we are acutely aware of the status of Jews in the pre-World War II Middle East. We recognize the importance and legitimacy of the efforts to ensure an end to Jewish suffering after the Holocaust. Yet, we regret that the solution was implemented with little regard to the rights of resident Palestinian Muslims and Christians as the state of Israel was established in mandated Palestine and as the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territories followed and continues to today. In the face of this illegal occupation and continued territorial expansion by the state of Israel, the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination has been given much lip service and little genuine support. The core cause (though not the only cause) of violence and continued hostility between Israel and Palestinians, and between Israel and many Middle Eastern countries has undoubtedly been the continued Israeli occupation of Palestine.

We, therefore, believe that nonviolent direct action is needed by churches everywhere to promote a just peace, as the Church's witness and peacemaking efforts should not be in words only, but in deed as well. Divestment is a proven nonviolent tool that can bring about justice and peace in this conflict. While a "positive investment strategy" can be constructive and beneficial to a degree, it fails to identify and address the causes of the conflict and does not actively oppose the expansion of Israeli settlements in

Palestinian territories. Investment strategies fail to stop the Israeli government from confiscating Palestinian property and expropriating Palestinian land. However, history shows that divestment and calling the present occupation for what it is, apartheid, has been proven effective in other conflicts.

It has been suggested that PCUSA should take a neutral stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We strongly argue that the Church is called to take a principled, ethical stance in the manner of Christ who came to set the oppressed free (Luke 4:18). Neutrality, on the other hand, gives tacit support to the stronger party, regardless of whether that party is right or wrong, and shields the perpetrators and frees their hands precisely by the failure to name them as perpetrators.

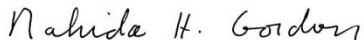
As long as the companies named by MRTI continue to profit from the military occupation of Palestine, and as long as the PC (USA) policy names the occupation as an obstacle to peace, we as a church must not profit from holding shares in these companies. We must also name the occupation for what it is – a crime of apartheid against the Palestinian people.

**Therefore, the NMEPC believes the time has come and calls on the 220th General Assembly to divest all Presbyterian funds from companies that profit from the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and to pass the overture on apartheid.**

It is our hope and prayer that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will continue to be a faithful witness to the Gospel of God's love and a voice for reconciliation and a just peace in the Middle East.

*Recognized by the 208<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1996), the NATIONAL MIDDLE EASTERN PRESBYTERIAN CAUCUS (NMEPC) brings together all PCUSA Middle Eastern congregations, fellowships, Bible study groups, and mission personnel serving in the Middle East.*

Blessings,



*Nahida H Gordon, Ph.D., NMEPC Moderator,*

*Elder Joseph Faragalla, Vice Moderator*

*Rev. Georges Bitar, Secretary*

*Elder Lucy Janjigian, Treasurer*

*Members: Revs. Raafat Hanna and Medhat S. Yoakiem and Elders Irene Roufaeal and Martha Soliman*