

## Memorials to the Conference 2022

### **M8 Cry for hope**

In the light of:

- the Cry for Hope by Palestinian Christians, which Conference 2021 commended to the Methodist people for prayer and study
- the detailed description of Israel as an apartheid society by the late lamented Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International
- the clarity in the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism that criticism of the state of Israel is not in itself anti-Semitic

the Sheffield (25/1) Circuit Meeting (Present: 64; Voting 59 for, 0 against) requests Conference to urge the Methodist people to support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign referred to in *Cry for Hope* as a key means of bringing about non-violent change in Israel/ Palestine.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Sheffield Circuit Meeting for the memorial and reaffirms its commendation of 'Cry For Hope: A Call To Decisive Action', a statement made by the Palestinian-led coalition 'Global Kairos for Justice'.

In 2014, at the request of the Conference, the Methodist Council presented to the Conference a briefing on the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. The briefing describes the movement's aim to, in the light of on-going illegal occupation and oppression of Palestine, encourage non-violent punitive measures until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law. The Methodist Council briefing notes the historicity of the contrasting narratives on all sides of this conflict, the need for sustained dialogue, the power imbalance that exists in Israel and Palestine and the BDS movement's assertion that proposals for mutual dialogue are flawed when there is no mutuality.

Since the Conference received the Methodist Council briefing in 2014, the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem has reported the demolition of 1,068 Palestinian houses leaving 3,934 people homeless (including 2044 minors) and in addition the demolition of 2,000 non-residential structures<sup>1</sup>. Over the same period B'Tselem also reports the killing of 1,102 Palestinians by Israeli security forces<sup>2</sup> and of 63 Israeli civilians or security forces by Palestinians. Since 2014, at any one time the Israeli Government has held between 355 and 584 Palestinians in administrative detention without trial. The United Nations Security Council in December 2016 passed resolution 2334 condemning "all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, including, inter alia, the construction and expansion of settlements, transfer of Israeli settlers, confiscation of land, demolition of homes and displacement of Palestinian civilians, in violation of international humanitarian law and relevant resolutions".

In 2018, the Conference, in its reply to memorial M37 'Situation in Palestine', noted changes in Israeli law that have deepened the occupation and diminished the status and rights of non-Jewish residents in Israel including the introduction of 'The Basic Law: Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish People' in 2018 and the 'Law for the Prevention

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<sup>1</sup> B'Tselem database of house demolitions – figures for January 2015 to March 2022 <https://statistics.btselem.org/en/demolitions/pretext-unlawful-construction>

<sup>2</sup> The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs database records 1,162 Palestinian deaths from Israeli security forces over the same period, and 37 Palestinians killed by Israeli settlers or other parties. [www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties](http://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties). (These figures do not include the much larger death toll from the Gaza war of July/August 2014).

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of Damage to the State of Israel through Boycott' in 2011. The Conference notes the decision on the 25 May 2021 of the Irish government, and of the Irish parliament in a unanimous vote, to recognise that Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem and its settlement activity there and in other areas of the West Bank, amount to an unlawful de facto annexation of that territory and a serious breach of international law.<sup>3</sup>

The Conference opposes all instances violence and deplores the indiscriminate firing of rockets from Gaza directed towards Israeli neighbourhoods and urges instead non-violence means of expression and protest.

The Conference has already provided a degree of support for some aspects of the call for boycott, divestment and sanctions. In 2010 Conference resolution 14/9 called for a boycott of goods from settlements in the occupied territories.

On divestment, the 2021, the Conference resolution 3/5 (as its further reply to 2020 memorials M7-M9) endorsed the recommendation of the Methodist Council on the exclusion from investment of companies operating in settlement areas in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) have since advised the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church (CFB) on the revision of the Israel/Palestine investment policy in this regard. JACEI will use independent research to assess companies against the investment policy on a case by case basis taking into account the degree of involvement in the occupation.

With respect to sanctions on Israel, the reply of the Conference (2021:3/5) to Memorials M8-M11 'Cry of Hope' calls upon the British Government to end support for military contracts with Israel whilst that country remains in violation of international law. The Conference notes that Israeli defence companies such as Elbit Systems have won multi-million pound UK defence contracts in strategic aspects of defence yet provide and service aerial drones that have been use in attacks on Gaza.<sup>4</sup> In view of the illegality of the occupation the Conference calls on the UK government to suspend the right of Israeli defence companies involved in the occupation to tender for Ministry of Defence contracts.

In response to the request of the Sheffield Circuit, the Conference therefore invites the Methodist people to support the above measures in relation to boycott, divestment and sanctions until such time as Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and complies with the precepts of international law. The Conference supports the right of any individual or institutional investor to join a divestment campaign in the cause of justice and expresses concern over the UK government's interest in curtailing such rights with new primary legislation.<sup>5</sup>

The Conference acknowledges the deep divisions that exist over the aspirations of two peoples in the land for self-determination as well as the desire of many for security, understanding, mutual respect and beneficial co-existence. The Conference urges leaders on all side of this conflict to return to a path of dialogue and accommodation of needs of all peoples. It applauds the many positive educational initiatives in the region and beyond including the work of the Abraham Initiatives supported by the Council of Christians and Jews. It deplores antisemitism in its different expressions, directs people to the 2018 memorial M26 on antisemitism and welcomes definitions and declarations on antisemitism that improve understanding and awareness. It urges people to pray for trust, security and freedom from fear, in order that the region may become a place for two nations and three faiths to co-exist with parity of esteem, building a lasting peace for all.

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<sup>3</sup> Dáil Debates, Tuesday 25th May, 2021, Vol. 1007, No. 5 [Annexation of Palestine: Motion \[Private Members\] – Dáil Éireann \(33rd Dáil\) – Tuesday, 25 May 2021 – Houses of the Oireachtas](#)

<sup>4</sup> Elbit Systems UK [Elbit Systems UK Ltd | Elbit Systems UK \(elbitsystems-uk.com\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> Right to Bouycott coalition [Right to Boycott | Protect the right to boycott](#)