

PROTESTANT CONSULTATION ON ISRAEL AND THE MIDDLE EAST (PCIME)

Concluding Statement from the Jerusalem Consultation on the Mainline Protestant Churches and the State of Israel (November 5-8, 2012)

We are church members residing in Europe, North America, and Africa. We came to Jerusalem to share our concerns for the relationship between our churches and Israel. We affirm our love of Israel. We believe that God remains in covenant with the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God's intention is to bless them, and through them to bless others. We repudiate the "replacement theology" that claims Israel has no further place in God's plans.

We see the modern State of Israel as a hopeful sign. In a region long dominated by harsh autocrats, Israel stands apart as a stable, pluralistic, multi-party democracy. Israel's citizens are free to criticize failings of their government and there are mechanisms to correct those failings. Our group heard Israelis frankly discuss the wisdom of government policies. This propensity for self-criticism is a legacy of the prophetic tradition that Jews and Christians share.

Our love for Israel does not contradict our love for other peoples in the region, including the Palestinians. They too have a place in God's heart. We believe it is possible to pursue justice and peace in ways that attend to the rights and needs of all peoples of the region.

We are distressed to see how certain European and North American church officials approach the Israeli-Palestinian dispute as if it were a zero-sum game. They fall in line with the international campaign that purports to help the Palestinians by delegitimizing Israel. They also promote the radical "Kairos Palestine" clique, which condemns Israel alone out of all the parties to the conflict and favors a "one-state" solution. They target Israel alone for boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS). This approach is unjust, and it is unhelpful to the cause of peace.

Whether this effect is intended or not, such strategies lend encouragement to the forces that have vowed to destroy Israel – forces that launch rockets at Israeli civilians on a daily basis. We fear that this approach is not motivated by Christian love for anyone, but quite the opposite. We ask the zealous promoters of those strategies to examine their consciences in this matter.

We have also come to see the hostility to Israel as part of a larger pattern. The forces that refuse to tolerate the existence of a Jewish state are fiercely intolerant of other religious and ethnic minorities in the Middle East. We have heard the testimony of Coptic Christians from Egypt and Assyrian Christians from Iraq, among others, about their sufferings at the hands of aggressive Islamist movements. By contrast, we were assured by authoritative church leaders in Jerusalem that the Christian citizens of Israel do enjoy equal rights of citizenship and a good standard of living, despite occasional frictions with some of their neighbors

The future of 2,000-year-old Christian communities, and the future of pluralism, are at stake in the Middle East today. We cannot afford to ignore this big picture in which the conflicts around Israel occur. We are committed to stand with Israel and the Jewish people, as we also stand with

persecuted Christians and other minorities in the region. We are grateful to Christian leaders in Jerusalem who met with our group, and we promise our prayers for them and their communities.

Canada

***Rev. Andrew Love**, United Church of Canada (UCC)

Finland

***Rev. Inkeri Tahvanainen**, Pastor, Lutheran Church of Finland

Germany

***Kreiskantorin Christiane Klein**, German Protestant Church, Chair Friendship Group Israel

***Rev. Albrecht Lohrbaecher**, German Protestant Church, Chair Israel Info

***Mr. Johannes Riegger**, German Protestant Church, Co-Chair Informationsdienst Israel

***Mrs. Christiane Sahm**, German Protestant Church, Co-Chair Friendship Group

Israel

* **Rev. Dr. Petra Heldt**, Co-Chair, Liaison Committee (German Protestant Church)

* **Esq. Malcolm Lowe**, Editor *Immanuel*; Fellow, Gatestone Institute

Netherlands

***Rev. Aart Brons**, Israel Representative, Dutch Christlike Reformde Kerk

***Rev. Henk Poot**, Hervormde Kerk, Chair Christian Friends of Israel in the Netherlands

Norway

***Dr. Hanne Nabintu Herland**, historian of comparative religions, lecturer and author

Uganda

***Pastor Umar Mulinde**, Rector, Protestant Church Kampala

United Kingdom

***Rev. Martyn Perry**, Patron of Anglican Friends of Israel

***Mrs. Pam Smith**, Methodist Church, Regional Chair of Friends of Israel

***Rev. Dr. Paul Wilkinson**, Associate Minister, Hazel Grove Full Gospel Church

United States

***Mr. Jim Fletcher**, Evangelical Church; writer; Executive Committee member, National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel (NCLCI)

***Rev. Luke Moon**, United Methodist Church; Institute of Religion and Democracy (IRD)

* **Mrs. Juliana Taimoorazy**, Founder and President, Iraqi Christian Relief Council

* **Dexter van Zile**, Christian Media Analyst, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting (CAMERA)

***Mr. Alan Wisdom**, Freelance writer; Fellow, Institute of Religion and Democracy (IRD)