



Israel-Palestine Resolution: Summary of Delegate Comments

Considered and tabled by delegates, July 1, 2015, Kansas City

Affirmations and support:

- Many tables and individual delegates expressed support, even strong support, for the resolution.
- For some it was significant that this resolution was a response to a cry from other members of the body of Christ and long-standing partners of Mennonite service and mission groups.
- Many underscored the pressing need to address the injustices of the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.
- Many tables affirmed that the resolution condemned “the use of violence by all sides.”
- Some identified the context as one of very unequal power.
- A number of delegates affirmed the importance of considering how our financial lives are enmeshed in situations of injustice and violence.
- Some delegates affirmed that the resolution offered concrete steps individuals and congregations could take.
- Numerous delegates sought more information about which particular products support military occupation.
- Delegates repeatedly affirmed the importance of first-hand experiences and of learning tours.
- A number affirmed the paragraph in the preamble acknowledging the history of violence against Jews.
- Some delegates were glad to hear of support from the group of 40 rabbis for this resolution.

Concerns and criticism:

- The most repeated criticism of the resolution was that it appeared one-sided and needed to be more balanced. Specifically, delegates felt that it addressed Israeli wrong-doing and did not in the same way address Palestinian wrong-doing.
- Quite a few delegates expressed concern about using the language of “sin” in the resolution, not because they aren’t critical of the occupation but because they felt this language seemed harsh and hypocritical. A number of delegates wished for more gentle language.
- As an example of this hypocrisy, quite a few delegates raised the issue of treatment of Native Americans and the role of American military power around the globe. Delegates called for a tone of humility and repentance.
- Another major area of concern was whether this resolution served a mediating or reconciling function. “The resolution is not neutral,” said one delegate. “Should Mennonites take sides?” asked another.
- Quite a few delegates asked why this issue was being given this kind of attention when there are many conflicts and injustices around the globe.
- A number of delegates said that it is not appropriate for the church to be addressing political issues.

- Some raised questions about whether this action would be considered anti-Semitic or ally us with groups that didn't recognize the right of Israel to exist. Some wanted more extensive treatment of these themes.
- A few delegates raised questions about the effectiveness or wisdom of economic pressure in this situation.
- A few delegates, perhaps surprisingly few, raised objections that might be termed Christian Zionist, such as, "Hard to vote against Israel — has a big part to play in the end times as God's chosen people."

Additional comments to consider:

- A few delegates asked about the intended audience. Perhaps the resolution should be directed more to the U.S. government and its citizens than to Israel.
- Some suggested that the resolution use the language and framework of trauma to speak to the situation.
- Many delegates named the complexity of the situation and the need for study and discussion in the church.
- Many tables and delegates both affirmed the general intent of the resolution and expressed a desire to see the resolution reworked.

A statement of support for our Palestinian and Israeli partners in peacemaking—

Summary of Delegate Comments

Passed by delegates at Kansas City, July 4, 2015

Most frequent comments from table discussions:

- We're glad we're saying something on this topic.
- This resolution is a gesture of solidarity with our partners in peacemaking in the region.
- This resolution commits us to study and learning in our congregations. How can we hold ourselves accountable?
- This statement seems bland. Does it say enough?
- Disappointment that the first resolution was tabled for two years.
- Appreciate that this resolution names both Palestinian and Israeli peacemakers. Seems more balanced than the initial resolution.
- Uses gentler language than original resolution. But also doesn't speak to injustices.
- Appreciate concise wording.
- Desire resources to use in congregational settings for study.
- Desire to take further action in two years.
- This resolution calls on us to pray and act for peace.

Summary compiled by André Gingerich Stoner, director of holistic witness and interchurch relations, Aug. 26, 2015