

WHY IT MATTERS, WHAT IT MEANS



Considering Your Vote at General Synod on "A Declaration for An End to Genocide in Palestine"

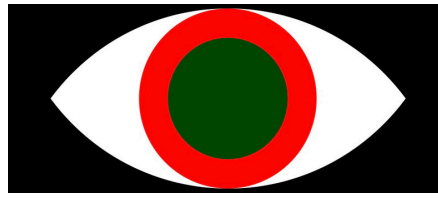
"God calls the church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship...and resist the powers of evil." UCC Statement of Faith

The Thirty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ will be called upon to act on a resolution dealing with what the Rev. Munther Isaac, pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, calls the "moral issue of our time." Recently the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches stated that:

The military campaign in Gaza has entailed grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention which may constitute genocide. . . . Simultaneously, the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem continue to experience intensified violence, illegal settlement expansion, and systemic human rights violations. These actions defy international legal norms, including the United Nations Charter, the Geneva Conventions, international human rights treaties, and numerous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

Building on decades of General Synod statements and resolutions, statements from the ecumenical community, and considering the unprecedented escalation since October, 2023, in Israel's violence unleashed against the Palestinian people, bold witness from the General Synod is called for.

- **Is another resolution needed now?** The General Synod has a long record of actions calling for peace with justice in Palestine and Israel. As recently as 2021 the Synod adopted a comprehensive statement grounding our policy in just peace theology and practice, international law, human rights norms, and the call of our Palestinian Christian and Israeli human rights partners. Since 2023, however, the situation in Palestine has grown even more dire. A radical right-wing government has been installed in Israel. Annexation of the West Bank by Israeli settlements has accelerated. Since the Hamas attacks in October, 2023, unprecedented violence has been unleashed on Gaza. Upwards of 63,000 Gazans have been killed by weapons supplied by the United States, with many more likely dead under the rubble, the majority civilians. The housing and public works infrastructure of Gaza has been destroyed. Humanitarian aid has been blocked or severely restricted. A generation of Palestinian youth will suffer from physical and mental trauma for the rest of their lives. Millions have been displaced multiple times. In the West Bank, settler violence, unrestrained by the Israeli Defense Forces, has grown and entire refugee camp populations have been forcibly displaced. President Trump has made proposals for Gaza that critics, including UN officials, have argued would amount to ethnic cleansing or forced displacement of the Palestinian population.
- **Is this Genocide?** The International Criminal Court defines genocide as "acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group."



As early as January 2024, the International Court of Justice have found Israel's actions in Gaza had reached the threshold of the "plausibility" of genocide, and required preventive measures to be taken by Israel. Then in November 2024, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Prime Minister Netanyahu, and initiated further investigations. Human Rights Watch, in May, 2025 asserted that "The Israeli government's plan to demolish what remains of Gaza's civilian infrastructure and concentrate the Palestinian population into a tiny area would amount to an abhorrent escalation of its ongoing crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and acts of genocide."

- **Must we use the word Genocide?** Our Palestinian Christian partners have consistently called upon the global religious community to speak the truth about the genocide taking place in Gaza and spilling into the West Bank. And a year ago our United Church of Christ officers said,

Over the last nine months, we have witnessed the atrocities as they have occurred in Palestine, horrors that could have and can be stopped if global leaders and public pressure demand it. As people of faith, we cannot be silent, waiting for the years to pass to verify that Israel is perpetrating genocide against Palestinians. We call for an end to this genocide.

Failure to name what is happening in Gaza as genocide would be a grave failure of The UCC's commitment to be in solidarity with our mission partners, an implied rebuke of our UCC officers, and would be interpreted by leaders in Israel and among pro-Israel organizations in the US as an endorsement of the current campaign of terror.

- **Is this anti-Semitic?** The charge of anti-Semitism has been used by Israel, mainline Jewish organizations in the US, groups like AIPAC, US politicians, conservative Christians, and now aggressively by the Trump administration to silence critics of Israel. We must be vigilant that our language, actions, and beliefs do not represent, condone, or encourage anti-Semitism. But criticism of Israel's policies in Gaza and the West Bank is not anti-Semitism. And there are a growing number of Jews and Jewish groups like Jewish Voice for Peace, Rabbis for Human Rights, and others who are appalled by what is happening in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza.

Will this make a difference? General Synod resolutions, by themselves, don't create change. But they do encourage movements within and beyond the church that make a difference. They are a faithful response to the moral imperatives of our day. Perhaps most important, they say to our Palestinian neighbors and partners, "you are not alone, you are not abandoned, we care."

UCC Movement for Palestinian Solidarity (UCC MPS)

formerly UCC Palestine Israel Network

