

## RES 25-03 | OPPOSING REPRESSION OF ADVOCACY FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

**SUBJECT:** Defending Free Speech, Opposing Repression of Advocacy for Palestinian Rights

**SUBMITTED BY:** The California-Pacific Palestine/Israel Task Force (including Allison Mark, Paige Eaves, Mary Ann Pickard (chair), M. Theresa Basile, Yoshi Kuramoto, Jeanne Roe Smith, Helen T. Alo, Silaupama Alo-Rojas, Laura Pinho, Steven Rojas)

**AS WELL AS** Mary Elizabeth Moore, Mark Stephenson, Richard Bentley, Frank Wulf, Sharon McCart, Gary Williams, Debbie Gara, Suanne Ware-Diaz, Lily Villamin, Louis Chase, Amy Wake, Janet McKeithen, Janet Cromwell, James Dwyer, Rich Bolin, Tom Zeigert, Jim Conn, Roy Riggs, Erik Iki, Terry Van Hook, Ed Hanson, Victor Cyrus-Franklin, Sandie Richards, David Farley, Myrna Jefferson-Williams, Piula Ala'ilima, Diane Rehfield, Samuel Domingo, Lorilyn Teasdale, Katie Monfortte, Jay Campbell, Dori Fotsch, Erika Gara, Holly Reinhart-Marean, Tom Reinhart-Marean

**ESTIMATED FISCAL IMPACT:** None

**SOURCE OF STAFF TIME:** Conference Secretary

**WHEREAS** the right of free speech and dissent is a cornerstone of democratic societies, and attempts to stifle free speech and threats to Americans' civil liberties have been rising in recent years and have expanded alarmingly in 2025 in what some have called "the new McCarthyism," and

**WHEREAS** these repressive practices are particularly and heavily targeting advocates for Palestinian human rights, and

**WHEREAS** the prophet Isaiah called on God's people to "learn to do good; seek justice; rescue the oppressed; defend the orphan; plead for the widow" (Isaiah 1:17), and

**WHEREAS** tens of thousands of students and other human rights advocates in the U.S. are rising up in anguish over Israel's horrifying extermination of Palestinians in Gaza, a massacre of captive civilians carried out with ample military aid from the United States, and

**WHEREAS**, due in large part to Palestine solidarity actions on their campuses, colleges and universities are being threatened by the U.S. government, through the withholding of federal funds, banning of international students, and other draconian measures, and

**WHEREAS** thousands of students, faculty, and people of conscience across the U.S. are under attack for protesting Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza and supporting Palestinian rights, and they are being harassed, censored, physically attacked, fired, expelled, illegally arrested, imprisoned, and deported, with hundreds having been deported already, and

**WHEREAS** as the prophet Zechariah cautions us to "speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace (Zechariah 8:16), and

**WHEREAS** the prophetic practice of "speaking truth to power" requires courage and clarity, and Christians must name injustices accurately and boldly in order to transform human society, and

**WHEREAS** we acknowledge the evil of antisemitism to be prevalent for too long in Christian history, we reject this sin wherever and whenever it appears, we strongly condemn all racist acts of violence, and declare they do not reflect or support any just cause for equality and liberation, and

1 **WHEREAS** we know that antisemitism is one of many manifestations of racism that plague our society  
2 and is not effectively addressed in isolation from other forms of racism, and we are committed to the  
3 dismantling of racism in all its manifestations including antisemitism, Islamophobia, and anti-Black,  
4 anti-Asian, and anti-Hispanic racism, among others, and  
5

6 **WHEREAS** the dangerous and dishonest tactics of equating advocacy for Palestinian rights with  
7 antisemitism and/or support for terrorism have become commonplace throughout the United States,  
8 and United Methodist justice advocates are educating and mobilizing to refute these lies (see  
9 <https://kairosresponse.org/antisemitism.html>), and  
10

11 **WHEREAS** we declare emphatically that naming crimes against humanity that Israel is committing,  
12 such as genocide, apartheid, and ethnic cleansing, is not a manifestation of antisemitism nor is it support  
13 for terrorism, but rather an indispensable step in ending those crimes and holding perpetrators  
14 accountable, and  
15

16 **WHEREAS** the world's leading human rights organizations and Israel's own human rights centers,  
17 eminent Holocaust scholars, authorities on apartheid and international law, dozens of Jewish  
18 organizations, several Christian denominations, and several United Methodist bodies including the  
19 California-Pacific conference, have identified crimes against humanity that Israel is committing, such as  
20 genocide, apartheid and ethnic cleansing, and  
21

22 **WHEREAS** boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) are ethical and nonviolent methods of addressing  
23 and correcting systems of injustice that have long been used by United Methodists and have been  
24 valuable tools in such struggles as the U.S. civil rights movement, the Indian independence movement  
25 led by Mahatma Ghandi, and the global movement to end South African apartheid, and  
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27 **WHEREAS**, the United Methodist Church has long engaged in boycott and divestment actions in  
28 support of Palestinian rights and in solidarity with Palestinians of all faiths, including:  
29

- 30 • Calling for a global ban on products from the illegal Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian  
31 territory since 2012
- 32 • Calling on church investment managers to avoid the government bonds of Israel, Turkey and  
33 Morocco, due to the prolonged oppressive illegal occupations they maintain,
- 34 • Blacklisting five Israeli banks due to their support for Israeli settlements in the West Bank
- 35 • Divesting from G4S, an international security firm that maintains infamous Israel prisons
- 36 • In annual conferences, adopting dozens of resolutions calling for church divestment from  
37 companies that are complicit in Israel's oppression of Palestinians,
- 38 • In the General Board of Church and Society, endorsing the global boycotts of SodaStream  
39 (2014) and Chevron (2025) in support of Palestinian rights, and  
40

41 **WHEREAS** false accusations of antisemitism and of support for terrorism have become the most  
42 common, dangerous and insidious tools employed in the U.S. and Europe for repression of advocacy for  
43 Palestinian human rights, and  
44

45 **WHEREAS** those who would shield Israel from criticism and thereby enable the continued oppression  
46 and destruction of Palestinians have organized powerful methods of silencing that criticism and  
47 attacking human rights defenders, including:

- Embedding the deeply flawed Definition of Antisemitism from the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (hereafter called "the IHRA Definition") in government policy,
- Unfounded and deceitful accusations of "support for terrorism," against individuals and groups being codified in legislation that would weaponize these accusations against Palestinian solidarity organizations,
- Project Esther, a policy blueprint to crush the Palestinian solidarity movement in the United States created by the Heritage Foundation, the think tank that spearheaded Project 2025,
- Anti-boycott legislation, already adopted in over 35 states and repeatedly proposed in Congress, that penalizes Americans for supporting boycott and divestment campaigns for Palestinian rights, and

**WHEREAS** the IHRA Definition has become a favored tool for weaponizing charges of antisemitism and examples of its spreading use in government include:

- President Donald Trump issuing two Executive Orders (#13899 in December 2019 and #14188 in January 2025) that promote the use of the IHRA Definition in the United States government.
- The IHRA Definition being adopted by the U.S. State Department and U.S. Department of Education and used as justification to harass and attack students and others across the U.S.
- The U.S. Congress repeatedly considering legislation that would codify the IHRA Definition as national policy, at the urging of organizations that notoriously and continuously seek to suppress advocacy for Palestinian rights.
- The Trump administration using the IHRA Definition, as well as unfounded accusations of support for terrorism, to prosecute and deport legal residents in the U.S., simply for opposing Israeli actions and U.S. complicity in those and for supporting BDS actions in solidarity with Palestinians, and
- Several versions of legislation proposed in the state of California that would impose the IHRA definition of antisemitism on the educational system and threaten the ability of educators to teach honestly and accurately about Palestine/Israel, and
- Several U.S. cities adopting the IHRA Definition and subsequently applying repressive tactics against Palestine solidarity activists in their communities, and

**WHEREAS** many human rights defenders and organizations have warned the public about the "weaponization of antisemitism" as a tool of repression and have strenuously opposed the adoption of the IHRA Definition, and

**WHEREAS** adoption of the IHRA Definition as government policy has not only contributed greatly to the erosion of civil liberties in the United States and Europe, but the widespread unjust charges of antisemitism this policy encourages have dangerously weakened efforts to combat real antisemitism, and

**WHEREAS** organizations and leaders across the ideological spectrum are calling for governments and institutions to reject the IHRA Definition as their policy, including:

- Kenneth Stern, the primary author of the IHRA Definition
- Jewish Voice for Peace and dozens of other Jewish organizations in the U.S. and worldwide
- Over a dozen Israeli NGO's and civil society organizations

- Hundreds of Jewish and other scholars in the U.S. and around the world
- The ACLU
- Human Rights Watch
- Amnesty International
- The Center for Constitutional Rights
- The National Lawyers Guild
- PEN America
- The Southern Poverty Law Center Action Fund, and

**WHEREAS** it is vital for United Methodists to continue to attest to the truth of what is happening to the Palestinian people, in order to relieve suffering, save lives, lift oppression, and dismantle apartheid, with a goal of achieving a just and lasting peace for all the people of the Holy Land,

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the California-Pacific Conference of the United Methodist Church:

1. Calls on our leaders in state and national government to vigorously protect our civil liberties regardless of their personal ideological preferences and partisan loyalties,
2. Stands in solidarity with students, faculty, clergy, and other human rights advocates who nonviolently defend Palestinian human rights and oppose Israel's crimes against humanity,
3. Affirms our right to identify and condemn human rights violations, ethnic cleansing, apartheid, genocide, and other crimes against humanity committed by any government,
4. Asserts our right to apply the nonviolent economic advocacy tools of boycott, divestment, and sanctions to situations of injustice, be they in the United States, Israel, or any place in the world, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the California-Pacific Conference opposes:

1. The adoption or application of the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism as policy by any U.S. governmental branch or office, be they municipal, state or federal,
2. Equating prophetic and principled justice advocacy with antisemitism or any form of bigotry,
3. Unfounded claims of "support for terrorism" and similar accusations and methods to repress freedom of speech, as well as any state or federal legislation that would enable these governmental abuses,
4. Plans for destroying the movement for Palestinian rights in the United States as described in Project Esther, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Secretary of the California-Pacific Conference will transmit the full text of this resolution to all members of the state legislatures of California and Hawaii, the Governors and Lieutenant Governors of those states, the Senators and Representatives in the U.S. Congress that represent the states and districts in the California-Pacific Conference, and the U.S. President and Vice-President.