



7th Forum Minute Concerning the Middle East

During the NCCA 7th Forum member churches raised a matter in relation to Christians in the Middle East in particular in Palestine and Israel. After much discussion and consideration the following minute was resolved.

- 10.07.23¹** It was resolved that
- .01** the 7th National Forum Reiterates the decisions of the NCCA Executive in March 2008 to “affirm the right of the state of Israel to exist, and to exist within secure internationally-recognised borders”² and to “affirm the right of the people of Palestine to be freed from more than 40 years of military occupation by Israel, (and) to live within secure internationally-recognised borders”.
 - .02**
 - .1. Welcomes the Kairos Palestine document of December 2009 prepared by Palestinian Christians and supported by the 13 Jerusalem Heads of Churches as the “Christian Palestinians’ word to the world about what is happening in Palestine”.³
 - .2. Notes that the Kairos Palestine document provides a serious theological reflection on the situation facing the Palestinian people, and on the basis of that reflection addresses requests to Christians and churches throughout the world, to the international community, to Jewish and Muslim religious leaders, and to Palestinians and Israelis; and concludes with a cry of hope, believing that “God’s goodness will finally triumph over the evil of hate and of death that still persist in our land”.
 - .03** In a spirit of repentance for past silence and indifference:
 - .1. adds the voice of the National Council of Churches in Australia to Christian voices throughout the world calling for an early end to the occupation of Palestine through a freely and peacefully negotiated solution in accordance with international law and United Nations resolutions; and
 - .2. adds the voice of the National Council of Churches in Australia to Christian voices throughout the world condemning all acts of terrorism.
 - .04** In particular the National Council of Churches in Australia:
 - .1. affirms the solidarity of the National Council of Churches in Australia with Palestinian Christians and assures Palestinians that the National Council of Churches in Australia will continue to advocate and act for an end to the occupation and for an end to the injustice and suffering borne by the Palestinian people;
 - .2. in response to the requests in the Kairos document, calls on the member Churches of the National Council of Churches in Australia and the wider Australian community to consider a boycott of goods produced by Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories;

¹ Moved by the Uniting Church. Seconded by the Anglican Church.

² Minute 08.03.06.03 of the NCCA Executive.

³ Kairos Palestine document, “A Moment of Truth”, was presented in December 2009. It is a word to the world from Palestinian Christians. Developed by a committee of Palestinian Christians and endorsed by Christian Heads of Churches in Jerusalem it involves a theological message and a sincere cry to the world concerning the suffering of Palestinians. It is a request for thoughtful action towards a peaceful resolution to the problems experienced in the West Bank and Gaza. The document and accompanying material can be accessed at <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/>. The Document is available at <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/?q=content/document>.

- .3. requests member Churches to advise the NCCA General Secretary of the outcome of their consideration;
 - .4. requests Act for Peace to provide regular information to the member Churches to assist ongoing actions on the boycott; and
 - .5. welcomes the easing of the Israeli blockade of Gaza in recent days and calls for an immediate end to the blockade.
- .05** Requests Christians involved in inter-faith conversations among Christians, Jews and/or Muslims to include the subject matter of these resolutions in those conversations.
- .06** Requests the General Secretary to convey these resolutions to the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Leader of the Opposition, the Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, all members of Federal Parliament, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils and other individuals and groups as the General Secretary and the President so decide
- .07** Requests the General Secretary to issue a media release relating to these decisions as soon as possible.



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**Supporting a vision for the future beyond the current realities
for the Palestinian and Jewish peoples.**

Following the 7th Forum many groups and individuals contacted the NCCA concerning the content of this resolution. A report on conversations both within the Australian community and with the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) was given to the NCCA Executive last week (Document 12 of the Executive papers). It was noted that the Forum resolution had received support from some groups and equally had raised considerable concern for others. The representatives from the NCCA entered into a dialogue with representatives from the ECAJ, these conversations led to an additional recommendation concerning the future of people in Palestine and Israel.

Draft Unconfirmed Minute

10.11.06

**Supporting a vision for the future beyond the current realities for
the Palestinian and Jewish peoples**

IT WAS RESOLVED that

- .01** In accordance with NCCA Executive resolution passed in March 2008 and the 7th Forum resolution of July 2010 affirms further its belief that:
- .a.** a peacefully negotiated resolution of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians based on the principle of two States for two peoples, as envisaged in United Nations resolutions since 1947¹, is an urgent necessity;
 - .b.** Israel has the right to exist in peace as the State of the Jewish people within secure and internationally recognised borders;
 - .c.** a new State of Palestine has the right to exist in peace as the State of the Palestinian people within secure and internationally recognised borders;
 - .d.** the civilizing value of any religion and society is reflected in how well it respects and protects the civil, political, religious and other human rights of all minorities;
 - .e.** exclusivist religious or nationalist claims demanding state sovereignty over the entire land are incompatible with a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict;
 - .f.** all parties must acknowledge and respect the holiness ascribed to the land and holy sites by each of the three monotheistic faiths, and accommodate the right of Jews, Christians and Muslims to worship freely at their holy places; and
 - .g.** acts intended to desecrate places of worship or to permanently deny access to any persons to them or to intimidate worshippers, are sinful.

¹ UN General Assembly Resolution 181 A/RES/181(II) 29 November 1947 provided for a 'Plan of Partition' of Palestine into 'independent Arab and Jewish States'. The Plan of Partition envisaged a Jewish State that would have a Jewish majority and would be required to safeguard the human rights of its Arab minority. Likewise, the Arab State would have an Arab majority and be required to safeguard the human rights of its Jewish minority. The Provisional Government of each State was required to make a detailed declaration to the UN, the terms of which are stipulated in Resolution 181. These terms were to be "*recognized as fundamental laws of the State and no law, regulation or official action shall conflict or interfere with these stipulations, nor shall any law, regulation or official action prevail over them.*" For example, Chapter 2 of the Declaration was about 'Religious and Minority Rights' and paragraph 6 provided:

"[Each]State shall ensure adequate primary and secondary education for the Arab and Jewish minority, respectively, in its own language and its cultural traditions."

- .02** Condemns any attempt to deny the people-hood and right of national self-determination of either the Jewish people, or of Palestinians, as an assault upon their inviolable human dignity; rejects any attempt to force any people to live, at best, as a tolerated minority in what is predominantly a State of the other; and affirms that each of the two peoples has a fundamental right to determine its own future, without being dominated or dictated to by the other.
- .03** Welcomes and prays for the success of negotiations aimed at achieving a just and lasting peace throughout the Middle East and calls upon all parties to persist with negotiations in good faith and with a sense of urgency.
- .04** Reaffirms the solidarity of the National Council of Churches in Australia with Palestinian Christians and assures Palestinians that the National Council of Churches in Australia hears their prayers and will take action on their behalf that seeks to:
- .a.** contribute to building the foundations of a Palestinian State and civil society and a viable economy;
 - .b.** promote understanding, peace and justice between Israelis and Palestinians through cooperative projects; and
 - .c.** discourage and not contribute to the forces of polarization, hatred, de-legitimization or extremism that have brought only misery in their wake.
- .05** Adds the voice of the National Council of Churches in Australia to Christian voices throughout the world
- .a.** calling for freedom and justice for the Palestinians, to be achieved through peaceful means;
 - .b.** reaffirming its condemnation of all acts of terrorism; and
 - .c.** condemning attitudes of and incitement to hatred, which sadly remain present, particularly throughout the Middle East.
- .06** Notes the importance of serious theological reflection upon the multiple conflicts in the region and, in particular, upon:
- .a.** the need for acceptance of Judaism as a living world religion.
 - .b.** the situation facing Palestinian Christians, other Arab Christian communities and other religious minorities in the Middle East;
 - .c.** the relationship between religion and the State.
 - .d.** understanding of the holiness of the land by each of the three monotheistic faiths;
 - .e.** the theological imagining of a vision for the future beyond current realities; and
 - .f.** the anguish about the waves of suffering on all sides year after year as people, all made in the Divine image, die and are grieved by their loved ones;
- and joins again in the cry of hope that “God’s goodness will finally triumph over the evil of hate and of death”, that persist in that region and beyond.
- .07** In light of these resolutions requests Christians involved in inter-faith conversations among Christians, Jews and/or Muslims to include the subject matter of these resolutions in their conversations.

Approved with 3 against.