



**The United Church
of Canada
General Council**

GC44 NEW04 Join the Apartheid Free Communities Movement for May 2024

True Document Date: May 10, 2024

1. What is the issue?

The Government of Israel has enacted legislation creating a racist, Apartheid state that discriminates against the Arabic population of Israel and Palestine on a daily basis at every level of existence. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, B'tselem and the witness of United Church of Canada Ecumenical Accompaniers testifies to the truth of that designation. Apartheid, a crime under international law, has been enacted in Israel and in Palestine by the government of Israel. Apartheid in Israel and Palestine has resulted in racialization and discrimination against Palestinians and their allies in Canada.

2. Why is this issue important?

The United Church of Canada has declared itself to be an anti-racist church, embracing Deep Spirituality, Bold Discipleship and Daring Justice. Anti-'Arab' racism is official state policy in Israel and in Occupied Palestine and has spilled over into Canada, where those protesting or bringing that racism to light are targeted by supporters of the government of Israel. The Apartheid regime in Israel violates the fundamental theological principles that underly the vision and purpose statements of the United Church of Canada and are in direct support of ongoing anti-Muslim and anti-Arabic racism that exists in Israel and in Canada.

Palestinian citizens of Israel and Palestine do not enjoy equal rights with their Jewish, Israeli counterparts and are regularly humiliated, abused, imprisoned, wounded and killed by direct attack and through the employment of starvation and denial of medical services. Thousands of Palestinians are imprisoned by the government of Israel while tens of thousands have

been killed, and hundreds of thousands (millions since 1948) have been made homeless. In Canada, Palestinian citizens and their allies have undergone discrimination for speaking out against the Apartheid regime in Israel, have been arrested for demonstrating and protesting, have been fired from their jobs and threatened with expulsion.

Palestinians in Israel, Palestine and Canada have consistently cried out for the support of Canadians, Canadian Churches and the United Church of Canada. It is time to act decisively. Joining Apartheid Free Communities <https://apartheid-free.org> would be a step in common with one of our full communion partners – The United Church of Christ, USA - which has signed onto the accord. It would allow our denomination to make a public, intentional and explicit statement in opposition to the racist Apartheid regime in Israel and would provide time for thoughtful reflection on next steps.

3. How might the General Council Executive respond to the issue?

It is suggested that the General Council Executive consider:

- a. Promoting study/discussion of the issue throughout the denomination by supplying links to existing studies already developed by communion partners and others, including the Presbyterian Church USA, the Society of Friends, the United Church of Christ USA, and by Kairos Palestine. Provide links to resources made available by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Ecumenical Accompaniers, The United Nations, B'tselem, Breaking the Silence, Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions, the United Network For Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel, Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, and/or other human rights based, fact sharing organizations in Israel, Palestine and the World.**
- b. Acting on the issue, including:**
 - o GCE becoming a signatory body to the Apartheid Free Community Campaign at <https://apartheid-free.org>;**
 - o GCE commissioning a group including former Ecumenical Accompaniers to Israel and Palestine to recommend effective next steps as an Apartheid Free Church; and**

- **GCE encouraging/suggesting action by congregations and others, asking them to become informed on the issue and to take appropriate action (signing on to the Apartheid Free Community Campaign, etc.)**

4. What will be the impact?

This step (signing on to Apartheid Free Community Campaign and providing links to resources to others) aligns with our plan to become an Anti-Racist Church by acting against the racist regime in Israel and against anti-Palestinians and Islamophobic acts in Canada by refusing to be complicit with the Apartheid regime in Israel.

What is the cost? Staff time + budget – minimal, requires signing on to an online resource, issuing a news advisory on that act, sending information (links) to faith communities with respect to resources available and how to take similar actions. Making use of volunteer resources that could be coordinated through existing groups such as the United Network for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.

Who will be impacted? How? Supporters of Israel's right to be an Apartheid, racist regime will protest this decision. Many others who are not aware that Israel's government is an Apartheid, racist regime will have their awareness raised and may well begin to act in ways that convince the government of Canada to withdraw support from the government of Israel unless or until it changes its legislation, ends its genocidal campaign against Palestinians and withdraws from Occupied Palestine. Canadian institutions, employers and police services departments will no longer be able to dismiss Palestinians and their allies as unlawful protestors but rather as legitimate allies of an Occupied and Racialized people.

What are the risk management issues? The United Church of Canada may be targeted by supporters of the Government of Israel. We may be accused of being anti-Semitic because we do not support a racist, Apartheid government in Israel. We may be told that the only way to control Palestinian resistance to Occupation is to support the ongoing genocide of Palestinians, or stay silent in the face of it.

5. How does this proposal help us live into the commitments on equity?

We are committed to becoming an anti-racist church. More than that we are committed, in the cause of Justice, to hold space for and advocate for those who are targeted by wealth and power, particularly those Indigenous communities who are suffering the loss of land and life at the hands of a foreign, colonizing oppressor. We have agreed to uphold and to respond authentically to the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People and Palestinians are Indigenous to Palestine.

This proposal allows the church to take a large step towards addressing the Apartheid Regime in Israel while considering how best to bring an opportunity of reflection and education to the wider church community. Our partners and other faith groups have developed study resources, Ecumenical Accompaniers have made and are ready to make presentations to United Church and community groups with respect to the reality of the situation in Israel and Palestine and many United Church members have made connections with Palestinians and their allies in Canada and can help them share the stories of their struggles with discrimination and threat.

6. For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council Executive:

Please act with all possible speed. Our faith communities are waiting for leadership on this issue. In particular from an Anti-racist, anti-Apartheid church.

If this proposal is in response to assigned work – either from General Council or a previous GCE meeting, please list proposal / motion numbers.

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