

Washington Interfaith Alliance for Middle East Peace

Economic Measures Statement

Approved 6/9/2008

The Washington Interfaith Alliance for Middle East Peace (WIAMEP) supports efforts to engage companies that profit from the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, urging them to discontinue activities that result in such profits. Where corporate engagement fails to produce change, WIAMEP endorses divesting from or boycotting those companies. We also urge our country to condition aid to Israel on Israel's compliance with applicable US laws and UN Security Council resolutions, the Geneva Conventions, and international human rights laws. These measures lend a much-needed boost to Palestinians and Israelis who choose non-violent means to end the occupation. We hold this position out of concern for the well-being of Israelis and Palestinians, given that the occupation hurts both peoples and is detrimental to their need to live in peace and with justice.

Rationale

Israel has consistently violated the Geneva Conventions (which it ratified) and multiple UN Security Council Resolutions since the beginning of the occupation in 1967 by, for example, building Jewish only civilian settlements, demolishing Palestinian homes, confiscating Palestinian land and, in violation of an International Court of Justice advisory opinion, has continued construction of a barrier/wall inside the West Bank. At the same time, the U.S. government has repeatedly "protected" Israel from being held legally accountable, both at the UN and with regard to the Geneva Conventions and has provided \$19.6 billion in foreign aid to Israel from 2002 through 2008 (not including loan guarantees)¹ that has facilitated Israel's ongoing occupation and oppression of Palestinian civilians. As an interfaith member of US civil society, we believe it is our moral obligation to speak out publicly against our own government's complicity in this continued injustice, and to work to ensure that private investment and spending do not undermine efforts for peace.

Israel is the occupying authority, with overwhelming military, economic and political power compared to the Palestinian Authority. Israel has continued to expand settlements in the occupied territories and to conduct operations against Palestinians – destroying their homes and crops – that do not enhance Israeli security.

B'Tselem, Israel's leading human rights group, describes Israeli-imposed restrictions on Palestinian movement through what it calls, "The Forbidden Roads Regime," in which Palestinians and Israelis have separate roads and rules in the West Bank. B'Tselem notes that the roads regime is "based on the principle of separation through discrimination," resembling South African apartheid.² Alliance members who have recently visited the occupied territories have personally seen the reality of what B'Tselem describes, exemplified by Israeli-only roads, nearly 500 checkpoints in the West Bank, the ever-expanding settlements, and the continued construction of the barrier/wall inside the West Bank. Haggai Alon, who was a senior advisor to Amir Peretz at the Israeli Defense Ministry has said that the Israeli army is "carrying out an apartheid policy" which includes emptying Hebron's city center of Arabs, setting up roadblocks, installing Jewish settlers in the Jordan Valley and cooperating openly with the settlers.³

On July 9, 2004 the International Court of Justice (ICJ), voting 14-1, issued an advisory opinion that Israel should halt and dismantle the barrier/wall being constructed illegally in occupied Palestinian territory, and "make reparation for the damage..." The Court also stipulated that "all States are

under obligation not to recognize the illegal situation arising from the construction of the wall," and should work together "to ensure compliance by Israel with international humanitarian law" as embodied in the Fourth Geneva Convention.⁴

Even the sole dissenter on the Court, US judge Thomas Buergenthal, a Holocaust survivor and human rights scholar/professor, wrote that he shared "the Court's conclusion that international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, and international human rights law are applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and must therefore be faithfully complied with by Israel." He also agreed that all of the settlements were illegal under international law and that any portion of the barrier/wall that protects settlements is also "ipso facto" illegal.⁵

On July 15, 2004, 361 members of Congress endorsed House Resolution 713, deploring the ICJ advisory opinion, and thereby stood in support of Israel's noncompliance with international humanitarian law. The US government (along with only Israel, Australia and 3 Pacific island nations), dissented from the UN General Assembly resolution which accepted the ICJ advisory opinion and was embraced by 150 countries.⁶

Israel's settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem are illegal and an impediment to a just peace. Three US Administrations have found that they are in violation of international law (Nixon, Ford and Carter). UN Security Council Resolution 446 states that, "the policy and practices of Israel in establishing settlements in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 have no legal validity and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East."⁷ Israel has built a ring of Jewish settlements around Arab East Jerusalem, impeding access to the West Bank for Jerusalem's Palestinian residents and eroding the prospect of East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state, a position that has been endorsed by every major peace plan.

As long as Israel continues its occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, WIAMEP will continue to support nonviolent economic actions aimed at ending the occupation. Until real, tangible progress is achieved toward a just peace – dignity, equitable distribution of resources, freedom of movement for Palestinians, and security for Israelis and Palestinians within internationally recognized borders – it is important for us to promote and facilitate such non-violent measures which can further this goal.

¹ Compiled from Congressional appropriations bills. Includes Foreign Military Financing, Economic Support, Migration and Refugee Assistance, Emergency Supplemental Appropriations, and support for the Arrow Missile Defense System.

² "Forbidden Roads, Israel's Discriminatory Road Regime in the West Bank," B'Tselem, Jerusalem, Information Sheet, August 2004, p. 3.

³ "The Spirit of the Commander Prevails," Meron Rapoport, Ha'aretz, May 20, 2007.

⁴ Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, July 9, 2004.

⁵ Ibid, Dissenting Opinion of Judge Thomas Buergenthal. The basis of his dissent focused on the lack of evidence that could possibly justify other reasons for the wall inside the Green Line besides protecting settlements (Israel refused to submit any evidence to the ICJ in this case because it did not recognize its jurisdiction).

⁶ Resolution ES-10/15. www.un.org.

⁷ Resolution 446 (1979). www.un.org.