CJPME | CANADIANS FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Note: On Friday, August 17th, the Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East President Thomas Woodley will be available to speak to media. Please see Mr. Woodley's contact information below to arrange an interview.

SOURCE: Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East
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– FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

United Church approves boycott as official church policy

Montreal, August 17, 2012 — Earlier today, the United Church of Canada (UCC) approved a boycott of products from illegal Israeli-established colonies (a.k.a. "settlements") in the West Bank as official church policy. The resolution passed by a wide margin, reflecting the broad support within the church for Palestinian human rights. CJPME representatives at the UCC General Council meeting found the convention delegates to be extremely well-informed. Many of the delegates had visited Israel-Palestine, and had observed first-hand the violations of Palestinian human rights as a result of the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territory.

The passage of the resolution by the UCC reflects several years of careful study on the part of church leaders. At the previous General Council meeting three years earlier, related resolutions were narrowly defeated, but resulted in the referral of the issue to a church working group. After careful study, consultations, and even a visit to the Middle East, the working group issued a report in May, 2012. The report recommended the boycott of products from illegal Israeli-established colonies as a clear initial step. The May report also recognized Israel's 45-year occupation as the primary contributor to the injustice that underlies the violence of the region and called on Israel to dismantle its colonies and its wall. The report also called on the United Church to avoid all settlement products and to divest from companies that profit from or support the occupation.

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) applauds the passage of the resolution by church delegates. "This is a very important first step on the part of the UCC, and reflects a deep understanding of the dynamics of the Israel-Palestine conflict," stated Thomas Woodley, President of CJPME. "As a result of the economic pressure placed on Israel through this resolution, Israel should be much more inclined to respect its obligations under international law," concluded Woodley. CJPME reminds Canadians that Israeli-established Jewish-only colonies in the West Bank violate Art. 49, p. 6 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states, "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies."

The passage of the resolution echoes similar resolutions passed by Presbyterian and Methodist denominations in the United States in recent months. These resolutions reflect growing knowledge within mainstream society of the legal issues with Israeli colonies in the West Bank – including East Jerusalem – and the need for civil society to respond in a compassionate but firm manner. Israeli companies which profit from Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory are in violation of the UN *Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and other Business with Regard to Human Rights*. Companies like Ahava, and Keter Plastics which export to Canada are directly involved with Israel's occupation and colonization of Palestinian land, and would therefore fall under the UCC's boycott designation.

About CJPME – *Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) is a non-profit and secular organization bringing together men and women of all backgrounds who labour to see justice and peace take root again in the Middle East. Its mission is to empower decision-makers to view all sides with fairness and to promote the equitable and sustainable development of the region.*

For more information, please contact Patricia Jean, 438-380-5410
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