



ICCJ Calls for International Investment to Promote Israeli-Palestinian Peace

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A call for economic investment in both Israel and the Palestinian people was issued here by the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) as an alternative strategy to groups advocating divestment in companies doing business in Israeli-occupied Palestinian territory.

"Whenever possible, there should be international investment in projects which alleviate suffering, lower tension and promote economic cooperation," according to a resolution adopted by the annual general meeting of the council, which has 37 interfaith member organizations in 32 countries.

The issue of divestment had caused ripples of tensions throughout a three-day council-sponsored conference prior to the business meeting. Such divestment as a measure of support for Palestinian rights has been advanced by several Protestant denominations and suggested as a possible strategy by the World Council of Churches, made up of more than 300 Protestant and Eastern Orthodox churches.

"Negative or hostile gestures can confirm extremists on all sides in their intransigence and make it more difficult for people to play an effective role in mediation," according to the resolution.

The issue was brought to the floor of the ICCJ annual meeting by Sister Margaret Shepherd, the staff executive of the British Council of Christians and Jews. It is based in part on a late June statement of the British organization. ICCJ delegates referred the text to its executive committee for review and adoption. The committee revised the original draft to include a specific expression of concern for the economic future of Palestinians. The resolution, entitled "Investment in Israeli/Palestinian Peace," states:

"These are very difficult and sensitive times for Israelis and Palestinians and both need the

support from the international community to try to ensure that peace and justice for all involved may prevail?.

“Israel is currently preparing for disengagement from Gaza and part of the West Bank. It is of singular importance for Israel to feel that it has the understanding of the wider world and in particular from religious institutions, whose *raison d’être* is the peaceful resolution of violence conflict, as it prepares for its withdrawal. It is equally important for Palestinians to feel that they have a viable economic future in the area.”

The matter of divestment arose in the opening session of the ICCJ’s 2005 annual conference in an address by the Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, general secretary of the World Council of Churches. Dr. Kobia pointed to divestment as an expression of concern for Palestinian rights. He was strongly challenged in a response by Rabbi David Rosen of Jerusalem, who is director of the interreligious affairs department of the American Jewish Committee.

The ICCJ executive committee engaged in a lengthy discussion of the best language to use to express concern for security, rights and peace as Israel prepares to withdraw from Gaza and parts of the West Bank of the Jordan River. Economic investment in both Israel and Palestinian areas was seen as a constructive strategy.

Father John Pawlikowski, OSM, president of the ICCJ and a professor at the Catholic Theological Union of Chicago, noted that a group of Christian, Jewish, and Islamic business leaders in the Illinois city are actively prompting economic investment in Gaza as a positive measure for security and peace. He saw this as a measure that religious communities in the United States and Western Europe can encourage.

The full text of the resolution follows:

Investment in Israel/Palestine Peace

These are very difficult and sensitive times for Israelis and Palestinians, both of whom need support from the international community to try to ensure peace and justice for all may prevail.

Whenever possible, there should be international investment in projects which alleviate suffering, lower tension and promote economic cooperation.

Israel is currently preparing for disengagement from Gaza and parts of the West Bank. It is of singular importance for Israel to feel that it has the understanding of the wider world and in particular from religious institutions, whose *raison d'être* is the peaceful resolution of violent conflicts, as it prepares for withdrawal. It is also important for Palestinians to feel that they have a viable economic future in the area.

Negative or hostile gestures can confirm extremists, on all sides, in their intransigence and make it more difficult for people to pay an effective role in mediation.

A greater international understanding needs to be built concerning the complex political, social, cultural and religious elements of the Israeli/Palestinian situation.

The International Council of Christians and Jews calls for support for all those working for peace in Israel/Palestine and encourages those endeavoring to make a positive difference on the ground.

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

[Other statements on divestment](#)