

Meeting of the LWF Council
Wittenberg, Germany June 16-21, 2016
REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC VOICE
(Excerpt with items related to the Middle East)

4. Resolution - Supporting Arab Christians in the Middle East

The LWF Council supports the on-going efforts by the Fellowship of Middle East Council of Churches (FMECC) to sustain the Christian presence in the Middle East as a witness for the gospel of love and the sake of moderation. Being aware that these churches, including our member church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, are witnessing in very difficult circumstances, we pledge our support, financial and otherwise, as they develop an indigenous theology of mission and vision in the Middle East and continue their witness through educational and social programs. We also support them for the role they play in building a modern civil society that respects internationally-recognized human rights, including freedom of religion and freedom of speech, and promotes gender justice.

We support:

- 1) religious speech that respects “the other” and recognizes them as they wish to be understood;
- 2) changes in educational curricula that call on everyone to respect different religious traditions;
- 3) the promotion of an understanding that the Christian presence in the Middle East is integral to those societies and that they are bridge-builders;
- 4) the promotion of an understanding that regional conflicts are at their roots not primarily religious but political, historical and economic, among others.

The LWF Council calls also on the nation states to guarantee equal citizenship -- with equal rights and responsibilities -- grounded in law that respects all ethnicities and religions and embraces diversity. It also reiterates its support for the building of Christian-Muslim-Jewish relations that promote mutual understanding and respect and actively overcome any kind of extremism.

5. Resolution - Israel-Palestine

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains, regrettably, one of the world’s most intractable political conflicts and the central problem of the Middle East. After nearly 50 years of Israeli occupation of Palestinian land (beyond the 1967 de facto borders), the LWF Council, meeting in Wittenberg, Germany, 15-21 June 2016, continues -- with many people of good will -- to seek out signs of “hope in a hopeless situation”.

We commend the recent decision of the European Union to label products from the illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories to create awareness that safeguards the commitment to a two-state solution, based on the 1967 borders.

Despite a number of efforts, the well-known core issues that would be part of a final status agreement are still unresolved – borders, security, settlements, movement and access, refugees, mutual recognition and the status of Jerusalem.

The Council calls on our member churches to encourage their governments to commend the recent initiative of the Government of France to hold an international conference by the end of 2016 to discuss a plan, based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 as well as on the Arab Peace Initiative (API). The API commits 57 Islamic and Arab countries to accept normalized diplomatic relations with the State of Israel if it allows for a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders. The Council asks the churches to invest in peace in this and other ways.

The Council calls on the international community, for the sake of the whole world as well as those parties to the conflict, to redouble their efforts to reach a final status solution based on peace with justice.