

CONDITIONING U.S. MILITARY AID TO ISRAEL (UPDATED)

Submitted by: Thomas Getman, elected lay delegate, St Mark's Capitol Hill, and co-sponsored by Rev. Michele Morgan, Rector, St Mark's Capitol Hill; Rev. Jeanie Martinez-Jantz, Interim Rector, St. Mary's Church; Rev. Vidal Rivas, Rector St. Matthews Hyattsville, Rev. Sally Ethelston, St. Matthews, Hyattsville;; Delegate Steve France, Redeemer Church, Bethesda; Delegate John Harbeson, Redeemer Church, Bethesda; Delegate Mary Neznok, St. Mark's Capitol Hill; Rev. Adrienne Clamp, Redeemer Church, Bethesda; Rev. Nancy Stockbridge, St. John's Olney; Rev. Peter Jarret-Schell, Rector Calvary Church, DC; Rev. Dr. Melissa Sits, St. Christopher's, New Carrollton; Rector Rev. Melana Nelson-Maker, St. Christopher's, New Carrollton.

RESOLVED, that the 129th Convention of the Diocese of Washington submit the following resolution to the 81st General Convention of The Episcopal Church:

RESOLVED, the House of Deputies concurring, that the Episcopal Church calls on the state of Israel and all armed Palestinian forces to cease attacks on civilian targets and declare the existence of a humanitarian catastrophe, and urges them to facilitate and carry out robust assistance to people confined in Gaza, especially to prevent pandemic and famine and enable the wounded and vulnerable including hostages to be evacuated to safe and fully resupplied hospitals in Occupied Palestinian territory (in Gaza or the West Bank), or in Israeli hospitals; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations and Episcopal Public Policy Network only support or enable policies which advance a peaceful, negotiated resolution to the conflict in Gaza; that both assures the future of Israel as a democratic state and leads to the establishment of a secure and self-governed Palestinian state; and be it further.

RESOLVED, that the Episcopal Church reaffirm General Convention Resolution 2022-D024 and continue to urge "that U.S. military assistance and arms sales not be used to perpetuate conflict, violate human rights, or contribute to corruption, instability, or violence", consistent with Psalms assuring preference for the "weak and the poor, destitute and downtrodden"; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Episcopal Church shall call upon the United States Government (USG) to enforce this policy on the state of Israel, as it does with all recipients, pursuant to section 502B(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, and all other applicable statutes, by issuing a report within the

time period set forth in the law detailing Israel's human rights practices relevant to its use of U.S. military aid; and be it further

RESOLVED, that, if Israel is found to be in gross violation of said conditions, the Episcopal Church shall promptly call upon the USG to suspend all military aid to Israel and vigorously implement other appropriate penalties specified in law, for as long as Israel has not provided full and effective assurances that it intends to fully abide by said conditions in a manner continuously transparent to the USG.

EXPLANATION: Five rounds of fighting have occurred between Israel and Hamas in the last 15 years in the densely populated Gaza Strip. On October 7, 2023, Hamas, an armed resistance organization, unleashed a brutal attack against Israel, killing hundreds of people, and taking some 200 hostages. Israel retaliated by launching Operation Iron Sword against Gaza, relying on heavy use of airstrikes, tanks, and artillery, when the opportunity availed to forswear vengeance and turn "swords into plowshares". Much of the military munitions have been supplied by The United States.

The death toll has risen to more than 25,000, with 70 percent being women and children, according to widely accepted Gaza Health Ministry reports. The UN has reported nearly 1.9 million people, more than 85 percent of the population, have been displaced; already by November 24, over 234,000 housing units had been damaged and more than 46,000 homes had been destroyed. The devastation is worse than the two years of bombing of Dresden.

These facts show 1) the scale of the death and destruction caused by Israel's ongoing assault on Gaza, a territory occupied by Israel, which has a duty to protect its inhabitants and infrastructure, 2) the massive material support the U.S. Government (USG) has provided, and 3) the USG failure to implement U.S. law imposing human rights conditions.

The USG has abdicated its duty to limit the scale, scope, and lethality of Israel's use of military aid against Gaza's civilians. Thus, White House on October 27 publicly stated, "We're not drawing red lines for Israel," when that is the USG's obligation. As a result, Israel has provided no accounting for the civilian deaths and destruction it has caused, has barred the entry of almost all food, water, electricity, and medical supplies since October 7, and has grossly impeded humanitarian relief efforts

by governments and NGOs. This was reported on site in January by Sens. Chris Van Hollen (Md.) and Jeff Merkley (Ore.). Finally, South Africa's pending International Court of Justice case accuses Israel, by using quotes from the highest Israeli officials, of the intention of excessive violence toward civilian Gazans. The court is considering a preliminary finding in order to call a halt to the bombing.

The Episcopal Church should reaffirm the focus of General Convention 2022-D024 with regard to Israel's violations of human rights; and condemn the USG's failure to block military aid going to carry out such violations, until Israel has accounted for its actions and committed to abide by human rights norms.