

WHY IS USPG CONCERNED WITH THE PALESTINIANS ?

Support for the Palestinian People is one of four strands in USPG's current Advocacy Strategy. The others are the 'Make Poverty History' campaign, HIV/AIDS, and the forthcoming Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 2007.

In this pained and troubled world there are so many causes and issues which cry out for attention and action, but if only to have some hope of making a difference a small organisation like USPG has to decide on some priorities. We are guided in this by such considerations as

- our understanding of Mission as God's activity in the world, and what we learn from Scripture about how God seeks Justice and brings about Reconciliation;
- the places in the world where we are already involved and where there is a clear call from our partner Churches to get involved;
- the concerns of our supporters here in Britain and Ireland, and where they would like us to target our limited resources.

The injustice suffered by the Palestinian people has long been a concern of the worldwide Church. In the Anglican Communion successive Lambeth Conferences have called for the implementation of the United Nations resolutions which have denounced the occupation of their land by Israel and promised them a secure homeland of their own. Earlier this year the Anglican Consultative Council considered how church investment policies could support the infrastructure of a future Palestinian state, so that there might be peace, justice and co-existence in the Holy Land.

A significant minority of Palestinians are Christian, and USPG is working increasingly closely with fellow-Anglicans in the Diocese of Jerusalem. Their Bishop has warmly welcomed our support, and in response to his request a USPG missionary is currently attached to his office to assist with Communications. The Diocese and its Bishop are committed to the peaceful pursuit of a solution where Palestinians and Israelis can live together in the Holy Land. Like USPG they reject the use of violence, such as the terrorist attacks on Israeli citizens, and the forced expulsion of Palestinians from their own land.

USPG is keen to work with all people of goodwill who seek a non-violent solution to the world's problems, so that everyone can enjoy that peace and justice which we believe to be God's will for all his people. Here in Britain and Ireland we would like to make more contacts with Jewish people who share this hope for Israel/Palestine. More generally we support work in a number of places with Muslim communities, and welcome the way in which so many of their leaders have joined in the denouncing of terrorism and suicide bombers.

We hope that USPG supporters in this country will participate in this campaign by

- becoming more aware of what is happening to the Palestinian people
- praying regularly for Israel/Palestine
- lobbying their M.P.'s for more action at a Government level
- visiting the Holy Land and seeing the current situation from the perspective of our fellow-Christians
- talking with Jewish friends about what the Israeli government is doing, and how mutual fear can be replaced by reconciliation
- considering their own investments, and those of their Church, in the light of the Anglican Consultative Council resolution

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Some more detailed points for Staff use

1. Why is USPG involved in this specific issue, rather than something like Zimbabwe?

Whilst we applaud the courageous public stance taken by the Roman Catholic bishops in Zimbabwe, and we know from more private conversations that many Anglican church leaders share their view, the position of the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe, especially in the Diocese of Harare, is more complicated and this makes it more difficult for an agency like USPG to speak publicly. We also have a care not to put church leaders with whom we talk in danger. It is easy to speak out here in Britain, but not if it compromises those who may be doing the best they can in their own situation.

2. Why is USPG speaking out on behalf of Palestinians rather than Jews? Is USPG being biased in its approach to a complex issue?

Yes, the situation is complex, but that should not be an excuse for doing nothing. USPG is not advocating particular actions, but rather supporting fellow-Anglicans in the country as they work in day-by-day reconciliation and contribute to a long-term solution.

3. Are we being anti-Semitic?

No, but we recognize the danger. This is why we seek to engage with the large number of Jewish people around the world who, however strongly or not they support an Israeli state, believe that the Palestinian people have an equal right.

4. Are we condoning suicide bombing as a response? Are we supporting terrorists?

USPG, like the Anglican Church in the Holy Land, rejects utterly any use of violence to achieve political ends, whether against Israel or here in Britain and Ireland.

The Anglican Consultative Council (June 2005) resolution on the Israeli Palestinian Conflict

a) welcomed the September 22nd 2004 statement by the Anglican Peace and Justice Network on the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict

b) commended the resolve of the Episcopal Church (USA) to take appropriate action where it finds that its corporate investments support the occupation of Palestinian lands or violence against innocent Israelis, and

i) commends such a process to other Provinces having such investments, to be considered in line with their adopted ethical investment strategies

ii) encourages investment strategies that support the infrastructure of a future Palestinian State

c) requested the Office of the Anglican Observer to the United Nations, through or in association with the UN Working Committee on Peace in the Middle East, as well as through this Council, and as a priority of that Office, to support and advocate the implementation of UN Resolutions 242 and 338 directed towards peace, justice and co-existence in the Holy Land.