



## Church of the Brethren General Board

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# Hebron Massacre

March 7, 1994

We join the world in shock and grief at the senseless killing of more than 50 Palestinians and the wounding of more than 200 others at worship in the Shrine of Abraham Mosque on Friday 25 February by one or more Israeli settlers. As a community of faith we find the time and place of the assault to be particularly appalling. Such horrific affairs prompt us to refocus on the injustices, the roots of violence, which exist in the region.

The presence of Israeli settlers and settlements in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank, Gaza, southern Lebanon, and the Golan Heights, is a continuing provocation to violence that requires a prompt political solution. We find hope in the Declaration of Principles, which reflects a spirit of mutuality and is designed to move toward an Israeli- Palestinian peace accord. Particularly relevant is the requirement that Israel cease all governmental and privately- funded settlement and infrastructure activity in the territory subject to negotiation. We urge all involved to move swiftly to implement these agreements toward Palestinian autonomy.

We deplore the widespread carrying of weapons by Israeli settlers living illegally (under provisions of international law) amid an unarmed Palestinian population; the excessive use of force to stop demonstrations; impeding the travel of those in need of medical treatment; and the Israeli government's inadequate efforts to prevent its citizens from taking the law into their own hands. Each of these factors appears to exacerbate the violence. We call on Palestinians as well to reject violence in their struggle for justice and security.

Under the Fourth Geneva Convention, the responsibility of the occupying authority is to protect civilians under its control. The government of Israel should disarm settlers and take responsibility for the safety of the civilian population. If such protection cannot be provided by the government of Israel, we call for nonviolent international protection of Palestinian citizens.

The United States has a unique role in relationship with Israel; no other government is as able to effectively influence the policies of the state of Israel. Therefore, as U.S. citizens, we feel the weight of responsibility to press our government to hold Israel accountable for policies that tend to foment violence and inadequately protect civilians both Palestinian and settler under its control. We reaffirm our 1988 resolution calling for the United States to make its foreign aid conditional upon an end to Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We further call for the U.S. government to take an active role in the peace process and to encourage negotiations about settlements being made a priority.

As members of a faith tradition that has known religious persecution, we are particularly shocked by this attack on persons at prayer. We believe God has a vision for peace in this land, sacred to three faiths, which is larger and fuller than can presently be imagined. We support efforts to restore peace and security within Israel and the Occupied Territories by the Middle East Council of Churches as well as by indigenous Palestinian and Israeli peace organizations. We pledge our renewed efforts toward rebuilding a Middle East that ensures both peace and justice for all the children of Abraham.