

GENERAL SYNOD

PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION: PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

A Briefing Paper from the Mission and Public Affairs Council

The General Synod and Israel/Palestine

1. The Church of England's position on Israel/Palestine is set out in a July 2002 motion passed by the General Synod. The accompanying report to this debate can be found on the Church's website at <http://www.churchofengland.org/our-views/international-affairs/north-africa-and-the-middle-east.aspx>. This website also provides useful material on how the 2002 debate has shaped and informed the Church's subsequent interventions in this area.

The Political Context

2. The Private Member's Motion does not specifically touch on policy, but it obviously can't be divorced from it. In its July 2010 response to Kairos Palestine (GS Misc 953), which can be found on the website listed above, the MPAC provided the following political assessment:

"There is a depressing familiarity about the current state of the Middle East Peace Process. Efforts to resolve the long standing conflict stalled in 2009 with both sides pre-occupied with tackling domestic imperatives and restricted in their bargaining power by hardliners in the leadership. Attempts by the Obama administration to persuade the parties to make short term sacrifices for the good of the long term peace process have produced few results save to demonstrate the limits of Washington's influence in the region.

The logic underlying the 1993 Oslo Accord appears to have unravelled. Although no party has yet called time on the peace process, there are signs that all parties are beginning to think again. Previously discounted ideas, not all of them positive, are now being recalled. Without the introduction of a new factor into the equation to persuade both Israelis and Palestinians to divert their attention away from their short term preoccupations, the chance of progress towards Middle East peace seems slight."

3. The situation has arguably become more complicated since 2010. The Palestinian push for statehood at the United Nations in 2011 signals a deepening frustration with the lack of political progress. The Middle East Peace Process appears to have fallen of the political agenda as a result of the 'Arab Awakening' and the impending US Presidential elections. The emphasis is very much on crisis prevention rather than conflict resolution with the political focus firmly fixed on Iran and Syria. And yet, the situation on the ground for many on both sides of the conflict goes from bad to worse.

The Private Member's Motion

4. The PMM focuses attention on what the Church can do in this country to support communities on the ground. In this sense the PMM is broadly consistent with para (f) of the July 2002 GS motion on Israel/Palestine requesting “dioceses to renew and strengthen the bonds of Christian fellowship with the churches in Israel/Palestine by participating in pilgrimages, encouraging encounters with the living stones and by exploring various expressions of solidarity with the indigenous Christian communities.”
5. Methodologically the PMM is a departure from the 2002 motion in that it singles out two bodies for special attention: the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) and the Parents Circle Family Forum (PCFF). The General Synod has preferred in the past to recommend a category of organisation as this PMM does in paras (b) and (d) rather than emphasising any specific body. This position reflects the wide array of organisations working in this area and the sense that it must be down to individuals, parishes and dioceses to determine which organisation, if any, they want to support. For these reasons, the report informing the 2002 GS debate included as an Appendix a list of organisations that individuals, parishes and dioceses might wish to consider relating to as part of any response to para (f) of the 2002 GS Motion. Since 2002 the Archbishops' Council has looked again at the process by which a decision is taken to support an organisation.

Endorsement Criteria

6. It is current practice for any decision to join or support a campaign or organisation to be judged against 3 criteria: return, reputation and resources.
7. ‘Return’ simply means what does the Church stand to gain for any investment of time effort and credibility in the venture. Is it a worthwhile venture? ‘Reputation’ means testing the potential impact on the Church’s image and credibility if it becomes involved (or indeed if it refuses to do so)? ‘Resources’ simply means assessing whether the investment is proportionate to potential benefit and what the potential liabilities for the Church will be if it signs up or offers its support? Even when no financial investment is involved it is important to scope likely demands on staffing time.
8. Where a proposal looks satisfactory against each of these tests then the presumption should be that the Church should give its support.

The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI)

9. The World Council of Churches’ Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) was established in 2002 in response to a request made in 2001 by the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem “for the protection of our people.” The programme’s aims are to accompany Palestinians and Israelis in their non-violent action on the ground and also in their wider advocacy efforts. The role of participants in the programme includes:

- Monitoring and reporting violations of human rights and international humanitarian law;
 - Supporting acts of nonviolent resistance alongside local Palestinians and Israeli activists;
 - Offering Protection through non-violent presence;
 - Standing in solidarity with the churches and all those struggling for peace with justice;
 - Engaging in public policy advocacy for a just peace based on international law.
10. Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW), part of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain (Quakers), coordinates the EAPPI in the UK and Ireland, on behalf of an ecumenical group who fund, support and publicise the programme. This group includes: Baptist Union of Great Britain; CAFOD, Christian Aid, Church of Scotland, Church Mission Society; Churches Together in Britain and Ireland; Iona Community; Methodist Church; Pax Christi UK; Scottish Episcopal Church; United Reform Church and USPG.
11. EAPPI works closely with many organisations both in the UK and Ireland and in Israel/Palestine. EAPPI holds that it is only in building a movement committed to peace and justice that change will become possible. Organisations include various UN agencies and EU bodies, British Jewish groups working for peace, and Israeli organisations like the Parents Circle Family Forum. It also engages in constructive dialogue with groups and individuals who are opposed to its work.
12. Over 1000 Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) have been sent from more than 20 countries since 2002. 140 Ecumenical Accompaniers have come from the UK and Ireland. The EAPPI in UK/Ireland now sends 20 EAs each year. Out of the 140 EAs sent from the UK and Ireland 24 identify themselves as Anglicans.
13. The Church of England has offered its support to the EAPPI programme through its membership of ecumenical instruments such as the WCC, CTBI and Christian Aid. This complements the direct support provided by agencies like USPG and CMS. The MPA Division has assisted in organising fringe meetings for a number of EAs on their return. Several bishops have also provided direct support by meeting with EAs and by circulating vacancy notices in diocesan publications. Parishes and Church of England schools have also provided platforms for EAs to share their reflections. This level of activity and support probably exceeds that envisaged in para (a) of this PMM.
14. Further information concerning the EAPPI can be found at the following web address: <http://www.eappi.org/>

The Parents Circle Family Forum

15. The Parents Circle - Families Forum (PCFF) is a joint Palestinian Israeli organization of over 600 families, all of whom have lost a close family member as a result of the conflict. It is registered as a not for profit organisation in Israel and is managed jointly by staff, Israelis and Palestinians, working in two offices: the Palestinian in El'ram and the Israeli in Ramat Ef'al, Tel Aviv.

16. PCFF was established in 1995 by Mr Yitzhak Frankental and several bereaved Israeli families. In 1998 the first meetings were held with a group of Palestinian families from Gaza who identified with the call to prevent further bereavement through dialogue, tolerance, peace and reconciliation. From 2000 the PCFF expanded to include Palestinian families from both the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
17. PCFF's mission statement covers the following areas:
- To create a framework of reconciliation between the 2 peoples that takes into account that any peace agreement must include an infrastructure for the process of reconciliation.
 - To work towards an end to violence and towards achieving an accepted political agreement;
 - To influence the public and the political decision makers to choose dialogue and the path of peace over violence and war in order to achieve a just settlement based on empathy and understanding.
 - To avoid the use of bereavement for further violence and retribution.
18. The Forum is supported by a network of friend organizations in the United States, Britain, Germany, Spain and Switzerland. In the UK this takes the form of the UK Friends of the Bereaved Families Forum. In 2012 the FBFF launched its new campaign, *Sponsor our Partners for Peace*.
19. MPA sponsored a FBFF fringe meeting at the July 2012 group of sessions. The Archbishop of Canterbury is one its patrons. Other Patrons include: Lord Sacks, the Chief Rabbi; Juliet Stevenson; Imam Dr Usama Hasan; Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg; Huw Irranca-Davies MP; Lord Janner of Braunstone QC; Dr Amineh Hoti; Karen Armstrong; Rabbi Lionel Blue.
20. This PMM does not stipulate that the General Synod should specifically support PCFF, merely that PCFF is an example of the type of organisation covered by this category that merit support.
21. Further information concerning the PCFF can be found at the following web address: <http://www.theparentscircle.com/> Further information concerning the FBFF can be found at the following web address: <http://www.familiesforum.co.uk/index.html>

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