

TABLE TALK: Presbyterian Dialogue on Israel/Palestine

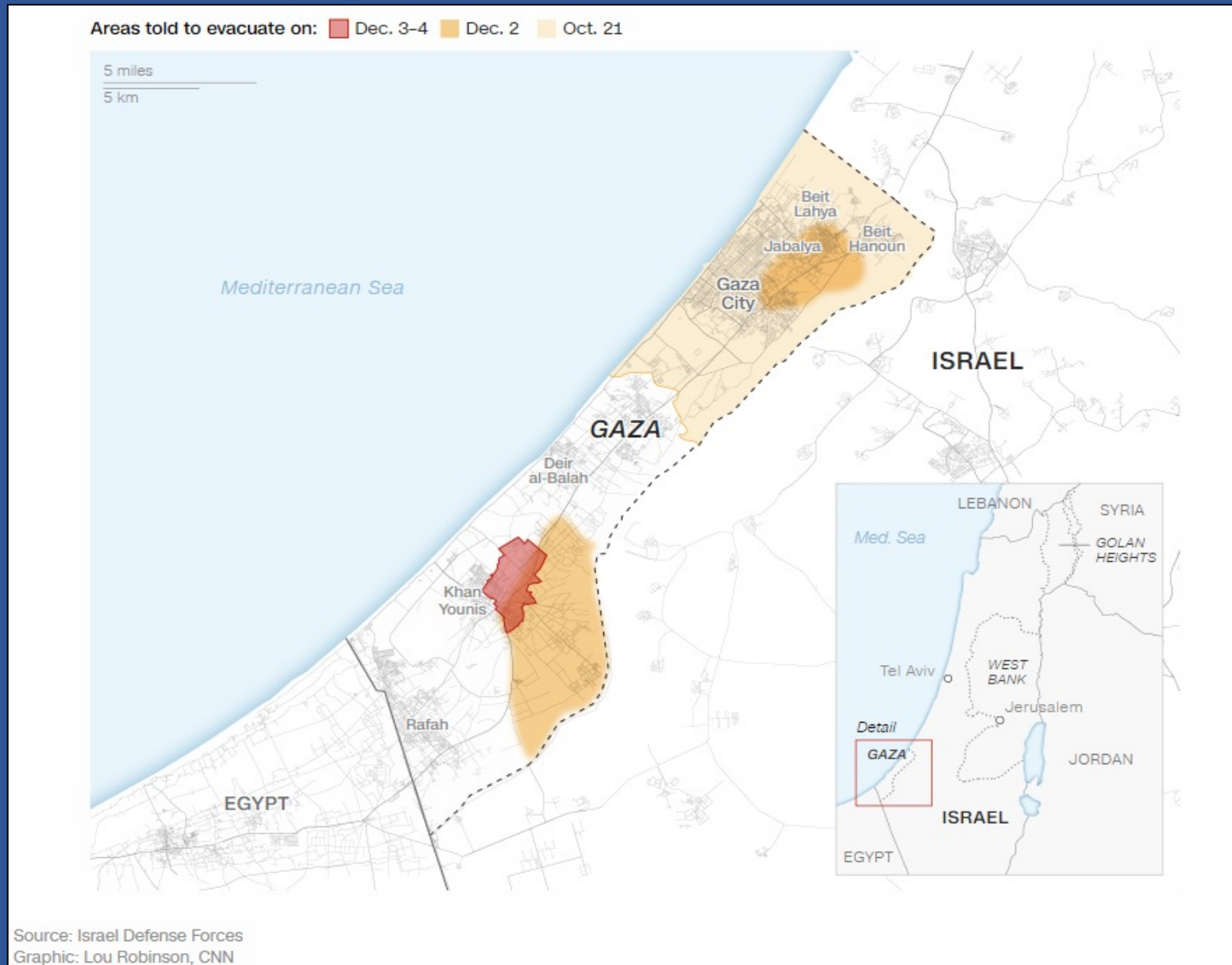
**Pastor Peter Whitelock
Mission Elder, Chris Johnson
Clerk of Session, Terry Clark**

December 10, 2023

Israel and Lebanon



Gaza Strip





Atfaluna Society For Deaf Children Wishes You

Happy
Holidays



Atfaluna Sheltering



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Highlights about Atfaluna's Team
Atfaluna's Emergency Responses
In the midst of challenging times, specialist Ikhlas Jaber stands as an unwavering pillar of compassion within the Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children. Residing in the shelter alongside displaced children, she dedicates her every moment to serving these affected children. Within her humble center resonating with echoes of fear and sorrow, Ikhlas orchestrates a symphony of healing. Her tireless efforts in providing psychological support form the bedrock of her mission—to bring laughter and dispel the looming shadows of fear from these young hearts. Crafting imaginative activities, she ignites their minds and uplifts their spirits, infusing the space with joy and



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November 23



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November, 2023

Atfaluna's Emergency Responses

In the midst of adversity, the Atfaluna Emergency Team emerged as a ray of hope, dedicated to uplifting the spirits of those most vulnerable.

Amidst the challenges, their untiring commitment shone brightly as they extended their care to over 10,000 children with and without disabilities who found themselves displaced in shelters. Through carefully tailored debriefing sessions and empathetic psychosocial support activities, this compassionate team set out to restore a sense of normalcy and comfort to these young souls during these daunting times. Each interaction was not just an intervention; it was a catalyst for healing, aimed at nurturing resilience and



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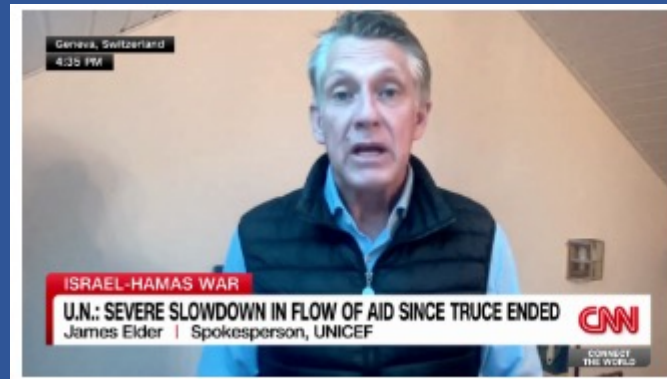
Atfaluna Sheltering



Why We Must as Christians Look at Gaza and Palestine



The head of **UNRWA**, the agency dedicated to Palestinian refugees, informed the UN Secretary General that it was facing the "darkest hour" in its 75-year history. Phillipe Lazzarini warned of the imminent "collapse of the mandate I am expected to fulfill." [Haaretz.com 12/8/2023](https://www.haaretz.com/12/8/2023)



"The screams of mothers ringed with me" -- UNICEF spokesperson on Gaza

Dec 08, 2023

As the death toll for Gaza's children reaches devastating levels, UNICEF spokesperson James Elder talks to CNN's Eleni Giokos about "the intensity of sadness and sorrow" in Gaza.

Why We Must as Christians Look at Gaza and Palestine

Palestinian death toll in West Bank surges as Israel pursues militants following Hamas rampage

Deadly violence has been surging in the Israeli-occupied West Bank as the Israeli military pursues Palestinian militants in the aftermath of the Hamas attack.



United Nations

Peace, dignity and equality
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UPDATING LIVE: US vetoes resolution on Gaza which called for 'immediate humanitarian ceasefire'

8 December 2023 — The UN Security Council held an emergency meeting Friday morning New York time to discuss the catastrophic situation in Gaza. This follows Wednesday's urgent letter by Secretary-...

Why We Must as Christians Look at Gaza and Palestine

➤ Toll on Human Life (ongoing):

17,500-19000 in Gaza, 70% women and children

1200 in Israel

230 in West Bank



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Gaza: Hospitals must be protected

Published 11. Nov 2023



Statement by Angelita Caredda, the Norwegian Refugee Council's Middle East Regional Director on the deadly attacks on hospitals in Gaza:

"We are horrified by reports of relentless attacks on Gaza's hospitals. Patients, including babies, and civilians seeking relief are trapped under attack. It is an affront to wage war around and on hospitals. Those being treated or seeking shelter in hospitals have nowhere else to go. Roads leading to the south are unpassable in vehicles. The harm to patients besieged in hospitals and the lasting effects of depriving the population of major medical facilities in a time of armed conflict may very well be unlawful.

"Medical facilities and personnel exclusively engaged in the treatment of the sick and wounded have special protection under international humanitarian law that must be respected in all circumstances. Failure to do so amounts to a grave breach of international humanitarian law.

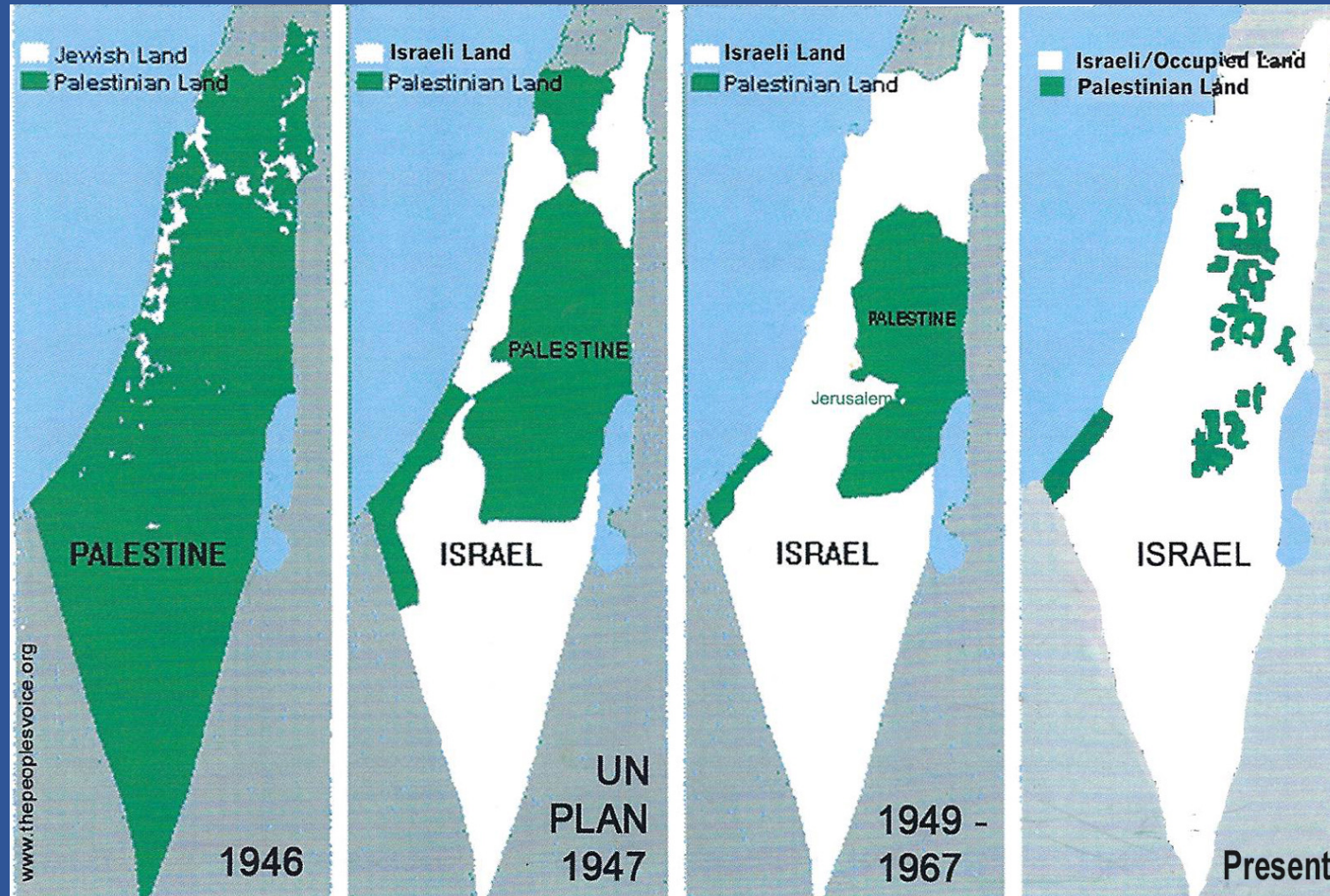
"An urgent ceasefire is needed to avoid further loss of innocent lives. All parties must abide by the laws of war to spare all civilians, including the critically ill and injured and those who tend to them."

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF HISTORY ON ISRAEL/PALESTINE

- 1947 U.N. Resolution Establishing Territorial Rights in Former Palestinian Land
- Internationally Recognized Borders Preceding the 1967 Israel/Palestine War
- Maps Show Expanding/Shrinking Territories 1946 – Present
Including Both Gaza and West Bank (aka “the Settlements”)
- 1978 U.N. Resolution Supported the Right of Palestinians to Resist “Colonization”
- Many Uprisings and Attempts at Peace Talks Over the Years from 1946 – Present
- PC (USA) Monitored and Adopted Numerous Resolutions on I/P During this Period

Maps of Expanding/Shrinking Territories

Israel Expanding/**Palestine Shrinking**



RESOLUTIONS & POLICY GUIDANCE OF PC(USA)

(1) The PC(USA) General Assembly passed numerous Resolutions from 1948 up to 2022 strongly supporting:

- Israel's right to exist within the internationally recognized pre-1967 borders, while emphatically condemning violence against civilians of and by all parties
- Palestine's right to be an independent and sovereign State within those pre-1967 borders
- The Right of Return to Palestinian refugees, or a negotiated compensation
- Removal of all illegal Israeli Settlements in occupied Palestinian territories, or a 1:1 swap of land; and an end to the Israel government's military occupation of those territories
- A shared Jerusalem
- Equal Rights for Palestinians who are citizens of Israel

Resolutions (continued)

- (2) A General Assembly Resolution in 2010 stated “We do affirm the legitimacy of Israel as a state, but consider the continuing occupation of Palestine ... to be illegitimate, illegal under international law, and an enduring threat to peace in the region.”
- (3) In 2016 a further Resolution stated “Without repudiating a long-term goal of two free states living in peace and prosperity ... [the PC (USA) is] seeking enforcement of international law and solidarity with civil society organizations to protect the individual and collective human rights of Palestinians.”
- (4) Then in 2018, Israel passed a nation-state law, which declared the distinction between Jews and non-Jews to be fundamental and adopted institutional discrimination in land management and development, housing, citizenship, language and culture.
- (5) Over the next 4 years, major Human Rights organizations declared that this among many other practices of the government of Israel constituted apartheid, defined by international law as crimes against humanity “committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them.”

The Most Current Resolutions

6. After much debate, the 225th General Assembly in 2022 joined those Human Rights organizations in declaring that the PC (USA) recognizes that the laws, policies and practices of the government of Israel regarding the Palestinian people “fulfill the international legal definition of apartheid.” [225th G.A. INT-02].
7. This same General Assembly approved a Study Document denouncing Antisemitism and Islamophobia, affirming Israel’s right to exist, while also advocating for the self-determination and safety for the Palestinian people. **“We can do both.”**
8. To be very clear on the General Assembly position, the Study Document declared:
 - (a) there is a fundamental difference between antisemitism and the right to critique the policies of the Israel government deemed illegal under international law; and
 - (b) it’s not antisemitic to support the Palestinians demand for justice and efforts to seek their full human rights.

CONSIDERATIONS ON DIALOGUE ENVISIONING PEACE

- The thrust and driving purpose of the 225th G.A. INT-02 Resolution and Study Document were to encourage Presbyterians to engage in interfaith dialogue within their own communities with their Jewish, Muslim and Palestinian neighbors.
- The vision of the Interfaith Peace Project affirms that “There will be no world peace without religious peace, and there will be no religious peace until people of diverse faith, culture and philosophy meet, engage and respect each other.”
- LOPC through our Interfaith Team and Neighbor to Neighbor partnership has had long-standing relationships with our Jewish and Muslim friends and neighbors; and we have often served as “ombudsman” in the past, especially during difficult times.
- There is no time more difficult than the present, during which our moral obligation is to respond as people of faith and seek to bring our interfaith neighbors together in dialogue, first individually and then collectively.

ENVISIONING DIALOGUE

- So we have been in contact through many emails, phone calls, zoom calls and visits to learn from both our Muslim/Palestinian neighbors and our Jewish neighbors what kind of support they want and need from us, and ultimately how we might bring them together in dialogue.
- We have learned details of their suffering the horrors of lost friends and family, deep trauma over the hostages, massive disruption and destruction of lives, very uncertain futures in Gaza/Israel/West Bank and the increasing burden and oppression of Antisemitism and Islamophobia here at home.
- This is a humanitarian crisis about fundamental human rights, the saving of lives, and the recognition that all lives are precious – regardless of faith, culture, race or ethnicity.
- How do we talk about this crisis among ourselves and with our neighbors?

QUESTIONS FOR TABLE TALK

Without getting into issues of who is right and who is wrong:

- (1) Recognizing the trauma they're experiencing, what kind of support do you think our Jewish and Muslim neighbors should be receiving?

- (1) What might each of us as individuals do to offer our understanding and support to our Muslim and Jewish neighbors?