

ISRAEL-PALESTINE

THE TOPIC

As has been the case during previous General Conventions, resolutions regarding Israel and Palestine garnered very different reactions from the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies. While the House of Deputies had favored actions like divestment from companies that do business with the Israeli military, the House of Bishops had shied away from taking actions that might put the Diocese of Jerusalem in a difficult position with the Israeli government.

WHAT HAPPENED AT GENERAL CONVENTION

Of the 15 resolutions submitted on Israel-Palestine, only six passed both houses. The successful resolutions touch on the plight of Palestinian children; the status of Jerusalem as a shared holy site and capital of Israel and a future Palestinian state; the disproportionate use of lethal force on both sides of the conflict and ways The Episcopal Church can press for peace through its investment decisions.

Both the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies took pains to affirm Israel's right to exist and to defend itself, citing long-standing church policy toward the region. While the bishops rejected the most controversial resolution, Resolution D019 Ending Church Complicity in the Occupation, saying it amounted to a dangerous "divestment" from Israel, they did join the deputies in passing Resolution B016, which echoes D019 in its use of the phrase "human rights investment screen." Unlike D019 however, B016 includes no timeline for action by Executive Council or any reference to church complicity in the occupation, though it ultimately could result in the church pulling money out of companies that do business with the Israeli military. Further, B016 directs the Episcopal Church to join the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America's work in this area, increase positive investment in Palestine and encourage the Executive Council's Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility to engage in shareholder advocacy regarding human rights in Israel and the occupied territories.

QUESTIONS?

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