

Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association RESOLUTION

ON THE CURRENT CONFLICT IN GAZA AND THE WEST BANK

1988

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association adds its voice to the expressions of sorrow at the tragic loss of life during the current wave of violence and we lament and deplore the excesses which have been perpetrated by all sides.

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association expresses its support for those elements in the Israeli population and government which believe that direct negotiations with the representatives of the Palestinian people are imperative if the conflict between Israel, the Palestinians, and the Arab states is to be resolved peacefully and justly. We believe that participation in a peace process such as has been suggested by the United States during Secretary of State Shultz' recent trip to the Middle East is less of a threat to Israel than the continued control of the territories and of the over one million Palestinians therein.

We recognize that Israel has the ultimate responsibility to make decisions regarding her security. Yet we express our conviction that Israel's security is ultimately dependent on the achievement of a negotiated resolution rather than on perpetual control of the territories. We further believe that the unique partnership between Israel and the North American Jewish community mandates that we share our concerns with Israel, and that we do so out of love and respect for Israel as the Jewish homeland.

The current wave of violence in Gaza and the West Bank has occasioned serious debate and discussion within both the Israeli and the North American Jewish communities. We believe that an honest exchange of opinion and a sharing of concerns, while painful and difficult, is both necessary and desirable. We therefore call on our members to work within their local communities to promote and support responsible, open discussion on issues relating to the current conflict. The centrality of Israel to the Jewish people worldwide arouses passionate debate across the spectrum of opinion. It is therefore crucial that we strive to create a climate which allows both for questioning and affirmation. We have a responsibility to our own communities to support appropriate public expression on matters related to Israel.

As rabbis concerned with Israel's survival and aware of the moral imperatives of our tradition, we believe that the Jewish people's own experience with historical persecution and homelessness should make us especially sensitive to the frustrated sense of national fulfillment felt by the Palestinians. While Israel is not primarily responsible for Palestinian homelessness, the State of Israel could distinguish itself in the current crisis by reaching out to a people whose condition of homelessness in many ways echoes the Jewish historical experience. It is also necessary that the Arab states acknowledge their shared responsibility in peacefully resolving the plight of Palestinian Arabs within their own borders as well as in the territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 war.

The current crisis necessitates a new openness to the possibilities of reconciliation. Mistakes of the past need not haunt either side forever. New options for compromise, coexistence and neighborliness need to be explored. As the State of Israel prepares to celebrate her fortieth anniversary of independence, we extend our hands and open our hearts in expression of the bonds that link Israel and world Jewry.