

Sam Rodriguez: Christians Must Be the Firewall Against Anti-Semitism

The Presbyterian Church (USA) recently became the most prominent religious group in the United States to endorse divestment as a protest against Israeli policies toward Palestinians, voting for a resolution to sell church stock in three companies whose products Israel uses in the occupied territories.

In a statement on its Facebook page, the Israeli Embassy in Washington denounced the resolution as “shameful.”

“Voting for symbolic measures marginalizes and removes its ability to be a constructive partner to promote peace in the Middle East,” the statement said.

In an op-ed in the *Huffington Post*, Sam Bahour wrote, “Palestinians did not invent the non-violent tool of divestment. After unsuccessfully trying to secure their rights using a multitude of other means, Palestinians have focused their efforts on non-violent methods of resisting military occupation that have been used throughout history by others: boycott, divestment, sanction, international law, civil disobedience, diplomatic efforts, economic resistance, and the like.

Supporting these tools is supporting non-violence; the alternative is to push Palestinians into using violent means of resistance. If nonviolence is deemed unacceptable then violence becomes that much more likely.”

However, we feel that the actions of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in general, and Mr. Bahour in particular, can best be described as misguided, reprehensible and insensitive to the

fact that violence against Israel is part and parcel of the underlying problem that deters a meaningful peace agreement between Palestine and Israel.

How can Israel in good faith continue in what seems a unilateral attempt to forge a two-state peace solution between themselves and the Palestinian Authority, when the PA operates in partnership with Hamas, a certifiable terrorist organization bent on the destruction of Israel, and everything that Israel stands for?

Both Prime Minister Netanyahu and Secretary of State John Kerry asserted that Hamas stands behind the recent kidnapping of three teenagers in Israel just last week. In point of fact, Hamas and other Palestinian linked terrorist organizations have kept up a regimen of violence, including the firing of rockets into Israel on a regular basis. How can Israel make peace with a people that cannot and will not agree that the State of Israel has even a right to exist?

Correspondingly, a fresh anti-Semitic wave currently saturates college & university campuses in addition to many public arenas and various governmental settings around the world. To that regard, the firewall against Anti-Semitism in the 21st century is none other than the body of Christ ... the Church of Jesus Christ. More than ever, we need to understand that these are troubled times; we need the church to rise up in righteousness and justice.

The fact that the Presbyterian Church (USA) has joined the movement known as BDS – or boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel – shows that this movement has gained some momentum in the U.S., Israel's closest and most important ally.

However, we urge our fellow Christians in the strongest possible terms, to resist this naive movement, especially as our Arab Christian brothers and sisters suffer under

regimes—most notable in this case Hamas, supported by Iran, that opposes the very existence of Christianity and engages in religious persecution. Our belief that both Jews and Arabs carry the “imago DEI” the image of God prompt us to repudiate the BDS movement and any all efforts to amplify the message of hate, intolerance and anti-Semitism.

Silence is not an option.