

**Resolution on Solidarity and Advocacy for Middle East Peace**  
**Adopted by the Catholic Conference of Major Superiors of Men's Institutes**  
**August 26, 2001**  
**National Assembly, Baltimore, Maryland**

**Statement of Resolution**

The Conference of Major Superiors of Men resolves to express its support of and solidarity for the people of the Holy Land at this time of crisis

- by calling on the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to stop resorting to violence as a means to resolving their conflicts and to return to peace negotiations at the earliest possible time;
- by calling on the U.S. government to end all support for military action that is being used against civilian populations;
- by using CMSM's corporate voice, contacts, and resources to work with partner organizations in the United States, Israel, and the Palestinian territories to work towards a just peace in the region.

**Background and Rationale**

Since September 28, 2000 there has been an escalation of violence in Israel and the Palestinian territories resulting in the deaths of dozens of Israelis and hundreds of Palestinians, and many civilians injured. The Palestinian economy, dependent on work in Israel and the tourist industry, has been devastated by the unilateral closures of borders and the collapse of the tourist industry. Many U.S. media reports on the current crisis are unbalanced and misleading placing blame unjustly on one side. Both Israelis and Palestinians express hopelessness and fear and are calling on the international community, especially religious communities, to assist them in finding solutions to the current crisis which will lead to a just and lasting peace.

For several years CMSM has been an active member of Churches for Middle East Peace, a Washington-based ecumenical coalition of churches that advocate for U.S. policy that promotes a just peace in the Holy Land and throughout the Middle East. In December 2000, CMSM President Stephen Glodek, SM, was part of a high-level ecumenical delegation of church leaders to the Holy Land. Some members of the delegation including Brother Glodek met with Secretary of State Colin Powell on June 7, 2001 to discuss U.S. policy in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. In June 2001 CMSM organized a delegation along with Catholic Relief Services that was the highest level Catholic delegation in two years to visit the Holy Land and have access to the West Bank and Gaza. It included the CMSM incoming president, vice-president, chair of the Justice and Peace Committee, and a number of Committee members. The LCWR Director for Social Ministry, Mercy Sister Judy Cannon accompanied the delegation.

CMSM's long involvement in the issue and the recent presence of Conference leadership and staff in the region has resulted in stronger relationships with the people there and a greater responsibility to speak out at this time against violence and occupation by increasing our advocacy and action in support of a just solution to the crisis.

The crisis in the Holy Land not only has political dimensions but spiritual as well. The loss of hope and desperation has led many to believe violence is the only adequate response to the situation. The religious leaders in the region have called upon the international religious community to work with them in promoting non-violence and programs of reconciliation that will help build bridges between the conflicting communities and serve as models for future conflict resolution. CMSM, through the Shalom Strategy and our history of collaborating with diverse organizations around the world through our missionary institutes, can offer assistance to the church leaders who seek to promote reconciliation and peace-making.

CMSM has been consistent in its appreciation of the needs and desires of both the Palestinian people and the Israelis for a just peace that provides the security necessary for both people to live in mutual respect for the rights and aspirations of one another.

### **Call for Action**

1. CMSM supports the "Resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian Crisis" adopted by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in June 2001 that calls for an end to all violence and a return to peace negotiations. In collaboration with the U.S. Bishops, Churches for Middle East Peace, the Maryknoll Office of Justice and Peace, and other partner organizations, we will advocate for a just peace that includes
  - 1) security and firm recognition for the State of Israel;
  - 2) a Palestinian state that both meets the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and that can provide for their economic well being;
  - 3) a just resolution of the tragic and long-standing refugee situation within the standards of international refugee law and with genuine humanitarian concern for the future peace, security, and respect for the basic human rights of the refugees;
  - 4) a final status for Jerusalem that respects the legitimate political aspirations of both Israel and the Palestinians and that protects the religious freedoms of all people, but especially the religious communities that live and worship in Israel and Palestine;
  - 5) withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from the occupied territories in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions and application of international law to the circumstances of the present occupation, and an end to all systemic violence and acts of terrorism by both sides, including an end to the economic blockade of Palestinian areas;

- 6) a more balanced approach by the U.S. government in seeking a just peace in the region.

CMSM will use its corporate voice as an advocate for a just U.S. policy, maintaining contact with the appropriate American, Israeli and Palestinian officials.

1. In light of Israel's use of U.S.-supplied attack helicopters and fighter jets, CMSM calls on the United States to initiate an investigation and to halt the future transfer of any such military equipment, pending an investigation of their use against civilian targets.
2. CMSM will continue its vigorous advocacy for the political and human rights of all Palestinians in the conflict. But at this time, when the decreasing Palestinian Christian community feels increasingly isolated, the national office will maintain even closer contact with partners in the Holy Land (the Latin Patriarch's Office, Catholic Relief Services, the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, Rabbis for Human Rights, and other groups) in order to have access to the most credible and accurate information available and to be able to communicate that information to CMSM members and, when possible, to the appropriate U.S. government officials and the U.S. media, so that the voice and experience of these Palestinian Christians will be heard as well. Member institutes are encouraged to explore opportunities for solidarity with the Palestinian Christians through programs sponsored by the Latin Patriarch, CRS, and other development and service organizations to show solidarity to this minority in an already oppressed community. The Justice and Peace Office will provide resources as requested.
3. CMSM has endorsed a National Prayer Vigil for Peace in the Middle East. Each member institute is invited to participate in these national vigils that set aside one day each month to pray for peace in the Holy Land. The Justice and Peace Office will provide resources for institutes that want to participate in their ministries and in prayer in their own local religious communities.

**The Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)** serves the leadership of the Catholic orders and congregations of the 20,000 vowed religious priests and brothers of the United States, ten percent of whom are foreign missionaries. CMSM provides a voice for these communities in the U.S. church and society. CMSM also collaborates with the U.S. bishops and other key groups and organizations that serve church and society.