

## **Action of the 225<sup>th</sup> General Assembly – July 2022**

### **Call for the distribution of the Study Document on Denouncing Antisemitism and Islamophobia.**

From the Ecumenical and Interfaith Engagement Committee

<https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000904>

#### **Final text:**

- 1. Receive the “Statement Denouncing Antisemitism and Islamophobia” as a study document of the PC(USA).**
- 2. Distribute the document to all PC(USA) churches and mid councils and invite them to a time of study and reflection.**

## **STATEMENT DENOUNCING ANTISEMITISM AND ISLAMOPHOBIA**

### **Introduction**

The General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations (GACEIR) plans, coordinates, guides, and fosters interreligious and ecumenical relations and commitments. The committee is also mandated to call the Church to repair the wounds of antisemitism and Islamophobia and any associated racism and white supremacy.

Given this charge, GACEIR asks the Church to study the following denouncement of antisemitism and of Islamophobia. Presbyterians are called to repent of and make repair for harm we have caused both communities. However, these communities are unique and distinct, thus there is a section concerning our Jewish siblings and a section concerning our Muslim siblings. We offer shared resources for repentance, renewal, and relationship-building with both Muslims and Jews.

We are guided in all this work by the “Interreligious Stance,” adopted by the 221st General Assembly (2014), which states that “many things draw us together in respect for those who have religious commitments different from our own, including the example and person of Jesus Christ, the evident need for religious peace, the necessity of meeting human needs in a world of poverty and want, and the biblical call to solidarity amid our diversity.”[2]

This work of repentance is never complete, but here we commit to begin, by taking action to repair our relationship with our Muslim and Jewish siblings, even as we stand with them against the violence and fear they face today.

### **Denouncing Antisemitism**

We live in a moment of sustained and rising violence directed toward Jews. The FBI has reported that 60.3% of hate crimes based on religious bias in 2019 in the United States were directed against Jews.[3] Antisemitic rhetoric and action has been seen in the White Nationalist Rally in Charlottesville in 2017, the horrific massacre at the Tree of Life Synagogue in 2018, in other shootings and assaults upon Jewish people and their property, and at the Capitol Building Insurrection of 2021.

Most of us can also recount such incidents in our own local communities, and many of us have Jewish friends or family who are increasingly afraid. Antisemitism exists on multiple levels, ranging from consistent, low-level aggression and negative stereotyping, to significant acts of violence against Jews, their religious communities, and their property. All of these forms of antisemitism are on the rise.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) condemns this evil, this sin, and the violence and contempt it generates. Further, Presbyterians recognize we are complicit in the roots and rise of antisemitism. This responsibility can be traced from our interpretations of Christian scripture, a history of violence against our Jewish siblings, and assumptions of Christian centrality and supremacy that continue into our present day.

Anti-Jewish sentiment and behavior by Christians is deeply rooted in problematic language in our holy scripture and in our confessions. For example, in the gospel of Matthew, after Pilate says that he is “innocent of this man’s blood,” Matthew’s crowd responds, “His blood be on us and on our children!”[4] This one verse has been used for centuries to justify violence against Jews and to claim that Jews as a whole people throughout time are responsible for Jesus’ death.

Today, many Presbyterians remain unaware of the ways we have internalized antisemitic attitudes. Our assumptions of Christian superiority have rendered us unable to recognize our own biases and privileges. Even our well-meaning attempt to emphasize unity through an embrace of what we have called the “Judeo-Christian” tradition has subtly nurtured in us the problematic assumption that there is nothing particularly distinct about Jewish identity. An assumption of Christian supremacy is shown when Christians erroneously speak of the God of the New Testament being a God of love, and the God of Hebrew scripture (the Old Testament) being a God of wrath. The same God is represented in both.

Addressing the long history of antisemitism, and our current complicity in it, requires study, confession, and repentance. We desire to heal our broken relationships with our Jewish siblings, to make amends, and to stand with all those who are targeted with antisemitism in any form.

### ***Defining Antisemitism***

Expressions of antisemitism[5] change over time and any definition can be inflammatory in our political climate. Because of this, we have chosen to lift up two definitions in order to name and explore the complexity of antisemitism.

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) defines antisemitism in this way: “The belief or behavior hostile toward Jews just because they are Jewish. It may take the form of religious teachings that proclaim the inferiority of Jews, for instance, or political efforts to isolate, oppress, or otherwise injure them. It may also include prejudiced or stereotyped views about Jews.”[6]

One example of PC(USA) teaching prejudice and stereotypes about Jews is found in the development of Christian ideas of superiority over Jews. By the beginning of the third century, it became orthodox Christian teaching that the church had replaced the Jews as God’s chosen people because Jews had refused to accept Jesus as Messiah. The Second Helvetic Confession states, “But now, since Christ the true Messiah is exhibited unto us, and the abundance of grace is poured forth upon the people of The New Testament, the Sacraments of the old people are surely abrogated and have ceased; and in their stead the symbols of the New Testament are placed—Baptism in place of circumcision, the Lord’s Supper in place of the Paschal Lamb and sacrifices.”[7] This sort of theology reinforces an idea of Christian superiority or Christian supremacy: that Christianity and Christians are right, normal, and good, while Jews are marginalized and stereotyped as misguided and wrong, or even as evil, dangerous, and worthy of being feared.

White supremacy also plays a role in contemporary antisemitism. This link is evident in recent shootings and other attacks on Jews by white supremacists. White supremacists target Jews as their common enemy, and yet, Jews are people of many races living around the world. White supremacist ideology includes antisemitic beliefs taken from medieval Christian antisemitism, claiming that Jews are an inferior race or

don't have "pure blood." While antisemitism cannot be reduced only to racism, it has been intertwined throughout history with racism and white supremacy.

To understand antisemitism, we must also acknowledge how Jewish self-understanding is rooted in relationship to the land now called Israel and Palestine. For many Jews, their identity is tied to what we Presbyterians call the Holy Land. Their experience of being a people is shaped by their bonds to each other, to God and Torah (for those who are religious), and to a shared history in the land of Jewish ancestors.

To discuss the relationship of Jews to the land opens up a very complex and nuanced conversation among Jews and non-Jews about whether, or when, anti-Zionism reflects antisemitism. Some believe that criticism of Zionism is never antisemitic because it is criticism of a political system, regardless of Jewish involvement in that system. Others believe that criticism of Zionism implies criticism of the very existence of a Jewish homeland, and carries an embedded lack of concern for the survival and flourishing of the Jewish people (or worse, a desire for their destruction). The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines anti-Zionism as "opposition to the establishment or support of the state of Israel."<sup>[8]</sup> This is more than criticism of policies and practices, or forms of government. To some people, the definition of anti-Zionism is to be against the existence of Israel.

In March 2021, an international group of scholars in Jewish, Holocaust, Israel, Palestine, and Middle East studies published the "Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism" (JDA). The declaration gives guidelines and examples for a nuanced and contextual identification of antisemitism that takes into account the speaker, the situation, and intention. One example is that an expression of hostility toward Israel could be antisemitic, could be "a reaction to a human rights violation, or it could be the emotion that a Palestinian person feels on account of their experience at the hands of the State."<sup>[9]</sup>

The JDA defines antisemitism in this way: "Antisemitism is discrimination, prejudice, hostility, or violence against Jews as Jews (or Jewish institutions as Jewish)."<sup>[10]</sup>

Specifically in regard to Israel and Palestine, the JDA states that antisemitism includes "applying the symbols, images, and negative stereotypes of classical antisemitism to the State of Israel; holding Jews collectively responsible for Israel's conduct ...; requiring people, because they are Jewish, publicly to condemn Israel or Zionism (for example at a political meeting); assuming that non-Israeli Jews ... are necessarily more loyal to Israel than to their own countries; denying the right of Jews in the State of Israel to exist and flourish, collectively and individually, as Jews, in accordance with the principle of equality."<sup>[11]</sup>

The JDA also lists five actions that they do not deem to be antisemitic "on the face of it." Some of these will get widespread agreement among Presbyterians, such as "supporting the Palestinian demand for justice and full grant of their political, national, civil, and human rights" and "evidence-based criticism of Israel as a state."

Another example of things that are not antisemitic on the face of it is criticizing or opposing Zionism "as a form of nationalism," or advocating for different forms of government ("two states, a binational state, unitary democratic state, federal state, or in whatever form.") Boycott, divestment, and sanctions are also acknowledged by the JDA as "commonplace, non-violent forms of political protest against states," that are not antisemitic on the face of it.

Any of their examples of things that are not antisemitic "on the face of it" can become antisemitic if they include language or images or actions that *are* antisemitic. Looking at context, patterns, the intention of

the speaker, and the general guidelines about antisemitism can help identify when a line is crossed. The general guidelines include making sweeping generalizations and stereotypes about Jews, which could be presented through words (wealthy, stingy, unpatriotic, source of evil or disease) or through images. These antisemitic ideas and images can be explicit or suggestive of stereotypes. For example, “portraying Israel as the ultimate evil or grossly exaggerating its actual influence can be a coded way of racializing and stigmatizing Jews.”[12] “The Zionists” then take the place of “the Jews” in the stereotyped images.

Presbyterians have repeatedly affirmed our conviction that the State of Israel has a right to exist as a homeland for Jews, providing a safe haven for all Jewish people, as we also advocate for national self-determination and safety of the Palestinian people, including Palestinian refugees. Presbyterians have spoken out repeatedly to condemn the actions of the government of Israel in the occupation of Palestinian land and the consistent abuse of the fundamental human rights of Palestinians. Palestinians have lost their land and their homes, the land and homes of their parents, their grandparents, and their ancestors. The Occupation and Israeli Settlement expansion into Palestinian territory increases Palestinian suffering. It is urgent to critique human rights abuses that are happening through the policies and practices of the government of Israel and it is possible to do so without questioning Israel’s right to exist, and without using antisemitic language and stereotypes.

It is right that Presbyterians call the government of Israel to live up to its democratic ideals. It is right that Presbyterians denounce antisemitism whenever and wherever we see it. We can do both. We make a commitment to study, confess, repent, and repair wounds we have caused.

### **Denouncing Islamophobia**

We live in a moment of sustained and rising violence directed toward Muslims. From the Crusades in the Middle Ages to the transatlantic slave trade to European colonialism in the 19th and 20th centuries, Western Christians have a long history of targeting Muslim populations with hostility and violence in the name of empire. Much of the violence and instability in the Middle East arising from U.S. foreign policy and militarism since the end of World War II, including the war on terror, can be viewed as the continuation of Western imperialism and the anti-Muslim prejudice upon which it historically has been predicated.

The PC(USA) condemns Islamophobia as evil, as sin, and denounces the violence and contempt it generates. Further, Presbyterians recognize that we are complicit in the rise of Islamophobia, and in its ongoing presence. We are called by God to confess we are part of a history of Islamophobia that has contributed to pain experienced by our Muslim siblings. We desire to heal our broken relationships with them, to make amends, and to stand with all those who are targeted with intolerance and hatred because of their identity as Muslims.

Islamophobia in the United States cannot be divorced from the events of 9/11 and the violent reactions to it, leading to wars throughout the Middle East and the refugee crisis. The roots of Islamophobia are, however, much older: beginning with the expansion of Islam throughout the Middle East and the reaction it provoked in Europe, most notably in the violence of the Crusades during 1095–1291. These wars against Islam in the Holy Land were started by the Church and fought by Christians against Muslims. They, too, are part of our faith history as Christians. While in many countries, Muslims and Christians are no longer at war, overt and ongoing conflict continues between them in Northern Nigeria, parts of East Africa, Indonesia, and beyond. Elsewhere, the uneasy competition between these two Abrahamic siblings continues in many subtle and obvious ways. Whether conflict is fresh or historic, the memories of

violence and mistrust remain and show up in various stereotypes about Islam that circulate prominently in American Christian circles, even today, claiming that Islam is uniquely and inherently violent, intolerant, monolithic, or misogynistic.

Many would suggest that Islamophobia is rooted primarily in ignorance. While ignorance of Islam is widespread, understanding Islamophobia mainly through a lens of ignorance has limitations. We too often assume Islamophobia can be fixed through education of well-meaning individuals. However, the root of the problem is actually far deeper and systemic, and hardwired into the political and legal systems of this country that are woven through with prejudice. Much of Islamophobia in the United States today is manufactured intentionally for political and financial gain. Since 9/11, these include detentions, deportations, extraordinary extraditions, torture, registration systems (NSEERS), profiling, law enforcement surveillance, counter-terrorism programs, the Muslim ban, and anti-Sharia legislation. All of these actions are fueled by Islamophobia and result in systemic discrimination against Muslims.

Anti-Muslim attitudes and actions among Christians have deep theological roots. Where Christians understand Jesus to be the Child of God and therefore indistinguishable from God's very being, Muslims understand Jesus as a Holy Prophet, just as they do Abraham and Moses before him. Further, Mary the mother of Jesus is revered among many Muslims as an example of piety and faith. But the belief among Muslims that God's truest revelation came in the Qur'an, through the Prophet Muhammad some 600 years after the death of Jesus, is deeply problematic for Christians. For Muslims, it is the Holy Qur'an—not Jesus—that is the final, definitive revelation of God. Christians and Muslims have not always been able to appreciate the contrasts of our beliefs as a shared opportunity to explore our different understandings of God's revelation. On the contrary, throughout our history our theological differences have deepened the divides between us, and, in part, provided the basis for the centuries of violence between us.

Another source of tension between Christians and Muslims is competition with one another. Both Christian and Muslim leaders have, at times, proclaimed their respective traditions to be the only legitimate path to God. This competition has often been tragically violent. Misconceptions about one another, especially those by Christians that stereotype all Muslims as violent pursuers of a militarized *jihad*, has deepened the divide between us. It will take committed action to understand this history and heal the wounds we have created.

Many North American Christians have not chosen to learn about Islamic beliefs and history. Islam emerged in the Arabian peninsula six centuries after the birth of Christianity. Islam has sometimes been interpreted as irrelevant to Christian beliefs and practices, or even hostile to Christianity. And yet, Muslims see Christians and Jews as fellow "People of the Book," recognizing a bond between these three religions that we, too, can claim and learn from. Our ignorance about Islam and our history with Muslims has led some Christians to see all Muslims as a threat. This has led to both widespread acts of violence and to individual acts of hatred.

## *Defining Islamophobia*

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) defines Islamophobia as:

a fear, hatred, or prejudice toward Islam and Muslims that results in a pattern of discrimination and oppression. Islamophobia creates a distorted understanding of Islam and Muslims by transforming the global and historical faith tradition of Islam, along with the rich history of cultural and ethnic diversity of its adherents, into a set of stereotyped characteristics most often reducible to themes of violence, civilizational subversion, and fundamental otherness. Islamophobia must also be understood as a system of both religious and racial animosity that is perpetrated by private citizens as well as cultural and political structures.[13]

CAIR names the ways Islamophobia in our time is shaped by both popular culture and the media, and finds its power in state policies of discrimination and prejudice. Islamophobia occurs on both an individual and internalized level and on a widespread level. This includes attacks upon mosques and Muslim people and anti-Muslim legislation that limits civil rights.

They note four ways in which Islamophobia can be identified in organizations or individuals:

1. If they allege that Islam and Muslims are inherently or uniquely violent, misogynistic, inferior, intolerant, primitive, static, authoritarian, homophobic, manipulative, self-righteous, devious, or that Islam is the antithesis of civilization;
2. If they allege that Islam is an existential threat to the U.S. and/or the 'West' and that Muslims, or their representative institutions, are part of a plot to overthrow the 'West' or America;
3. If they support unequal treatment under the law for Islam or Muslims; and
4. If they allege that violent groups which falsely and perversely claim a religious cover possess the correct understanding of Islam.[14]

A recent survey of a cross section of U.S. Muslims, conducted by the Othering and Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of 9/11, reveals how Islamophobia is experienced today. The survey can be found [here](#) and is recommended for further study. In particular, we note that three-quarters of total respondents reported experiences of Islamophobia, with Muslim women particularly affected.

A second definition of Islamophobia comes from the Haas Institute at UC Berkeley:

Islamophobia is the belief that: Islam is a monolithic religion whose followers, called Muslims, do not share common values with other major faiths; is inferior to Judaism and Christianity; is archaic, barbaric, and irrational; is a religion of violence that supports terrorism; and is a violent political ideology. Islamophobia forms the basis of an ideology that views Muslims as a threat to 'Western' civilization. Further, Islamophobia is contingent upon the construction and reification of a homogenized Muslim 'other' who should be viewed suspiciously, scrutinized, dehumanized, and excluded from Western or Judeo-Christian societies. Islamophobia has been expressed in prejudicial views, discriminatory language, and acts of verbal and physical violence inflicted upon Muslims, and those perceived to be Muslim. Islamophobia has manifested in a policing regime that engages in the profiling, surveillance, torture, and detention of people along racial/ethnic and religious lines, and has justified the militarization of foreign policy ...

This definition is accompanied by [a study](#) of recent examples of Muslim views being seen as a threat to Western civilization, leading to the rise of anti-Sharia law in state legislatures.

Presbyterians recognize that incidents of Islamophobia often depend upon institutionalized racism and systems of white supremacy that have thrived in our society. The link between the two is clearly evident in racist attacks on mosques and Muslim community centers by white supremacists. Like other forms of racism, Islamophobia is often driven by misuse of Christian symbols and Christian scripture.

We invite all in our Presbyterian family into a path of self-examination, repentance, and renewal in our relationships with Muslim people. We confront our assumptions of Christian superiority and our prejudice against Muslims and Islam. In this time, in which Islamophobia continues to threaten our Muslim siblings, we confess the harm we have done and offer genuine repentance through actions that begin to repair this relationship. We are determined to work with our Muslim siblings for a world in which they are not at risk or afraid.

### **Working to Repair Our Relationships with Jewish and Muslim People: A Practical Guide**

We as Presbyterians recognize that our willingness to confess our complicity in antisemitism and Islamophobia must be matched by our active and intentional efforts to stand with—and in defense of—our Jewish and Muslim siblings. We do this every day, and especially in this time when both antisemitism and Islamophobia are on the rise globally and in our own country. The time for Christians to speak out boldly and act decisively on behalf of our Jewish and Muslim siblings is now.

#### ***Congregations and councils are invited to participate in a time of study and reflection by taking the following actions:***

1. Establish honest, respectful, and healthy relationships with our Jewish and Muslim neighbors and friends.

Churches are encouraged to:

- Develop (deeper) relationships with Muslim and Jewish people through dialogues, dinners, youth encounters, food banks, refugee resettlement, and so on, in partnership with mosques, temples, and other organizations.
- Learn to appreciate Muslim daily piety in dress, prayer, and food, and consider how it anchors and shapes their daily life. Learn to appreciate the unique practices and rituals of our Jewish siblings and how this anchors and shapes their daily life.
- Listen closely to Jewish and Muslim friends and leaders, especially when they carefully name assumptions, attitudes, or behavior of ours that they find thoughtless, hurtful, or destructive of our common commitment to mutuality and friendship.
- Learn about the love of and respect for Jesus, Mary, and the prophets that is prominent in the Qur'an. Learn to respect the uniqueness of the Hebrew scriptures and their interpretation by rabbis, and denounce theologies of replacement that Christians have taken from the New Testament.

2. Stand publicly with Muslims when they are targeted because of their Muslim identity. Stand publicly with Jews when they are targeted because of their Jewish identity.

Churches are encouraged to:

- Participate in and/or initiate public interreligious expressions of unity, mourning, and thanksgiving, as demonstrations of solidarity.
- Speak out immediately and boldly against words and behavior that are anti-Muslim or anti-Jewish. It is important to act both in private and public solidarity with our Muslim and Jewish neighbors, especially when they are the victims of Islamophobia and antisemitism.
- Refuse to participate in the condemnations of all Muslims for the extreme actions of a few. Refuse to participate in the condemnations of all Jews, particularly when connected to a critique of the State of Israel. Renounce violence against Jews that is done in reaction to Israeli actions.
- Show up prepared to offer a litany, prayer, or other public statements when requested, but do so with the purpose of supporting others rather than calling attention to ourselves.

3. Learn about the history of Christian antisemitism and Islamophobia, and the historic relationship between Presbyterians, Muslims and Jews, and teach about this in our churches.

Churches are encouraged to:

- Learn from historical sources, mission co-workers, ecumenical partners and interfaith friends, and, most important, from Muslims and Jews themselves about the many complex histories with Christians over the centuries, around the world, and in the United States.
- Learn and teach about the violence that Christians have perpetrated against Jews since the beginning of Christianity itself, and against Muslims from the time of the Prophet Muhammad, continuing on through the Crusades and the Inquisition, through pogroms and forced conversions, through the holocaust and into contemporary times.
- Take responsibility when someone misuses Christian scripture or teachings to justify violent actions. Confront the misuse and publicly offer corrections to such teachings.
- Study the connections between antisemitism and Islamophobia and white supremacy in our country, both historically and in the present.

4. Learn about Christian scriptural and Presbyterian theological foundations of antisemitism and Islamophobia.

Churches are encouraged to:

- Learn about, confess, and repent of the theologies that have been used to justify violence and hatred against Jews and Muslims.
- Explore occasions for open exchange and dialogue with Jews about our shared scriptural texts, Rabbinic and Christian interpretations, as well as practices and traditions of faith.
- Explore occasions for open exchange and dialogue with Muslims about the Qur'an, and learn about the Prophet Muhammad who received that scripture from God.
- Look with honesty at ourselves, and understand how part of the enmity between Christians and Muslims and Jews in North America is due to Christian arrogance about our own understanding of God and scripture, and our ignorance about Muslim and Jewish theologies and practices.



## Endnotes

1. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2019/topic-pages/incidents-and-offenses>
2. The Interreligious Stance, p. 1, Introduction. <https://www.pcusa.org/resource/interreligious-stance-44700/>
3. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2019/topic-pages/incidents-and-offenses>
4. Matthew 27:25, NRSV
5. In this report, we have chosen to use the unhyphenated form of antisemitism, with great care. The prior tradition of hyphenation reflected 19th century pseudoscience that created false racial categories, but the word has been consistently used to denote hostility and prejudice against Jews. This resource explains more. <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/antisemitism/spelling-antisemitism>.
6. <https://www.adl.org/anti-semitism>
7. *PC(USA) Book of Confessions*, Second Helvetic Confession, 5.177
8. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anti-Zionism>.
9. Ibid. Preamble.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. <https://islamophobia.org/research/islamophobia-101/>
14. Cair's 2019 Islamophobia report, *Hijacked by Hate*. <https://ca.cair.com/losangeles/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2019/05/CAIR-Islamophobia-Report.pdf>, pp. 10–13.

## Rationale

During an address at Howard University in 2011, Dr. Cornel West said, “Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.” We love because God first loved us. Scripture shares that the greatest gift is the gift of love, and they will know we are Christians by our love. Thus, by design our work is guided by an ethic of love, a love understood not as mere sentimentalism but as a decision to pursue and promote God's justice.

For the past four years, the writing team of the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations (GACEIR) has prayerfully undertaken the task of writing a Presbyterian response to the growing wave of antisemitism and Islamophobia. In particular, the writing team has sought to address the roots of antisemitism and Islamophobia—in our scripture, our confessions, our theology, and our history—in order to understand, to confess, and to repent. To support our churches and mid councils, resources are also submitted to deepen our study and action to fight antisemitism and Islamophobia.

This report is a revision of an earlier version submitted to the 224th General Assembly (2020). We have taken into account comments submitted by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) and input from the Israel Palestine Mission Network (IPMN).

Christian belief that all human beings are divine image-bearers to one another grounds our efforts to combat Islamophobia and antisemitism. Hospitality is the act of recognizing the image of God in others. As Christians, we are taught to welcome the stranger and to be blessed and not threatened by difference. We are called to provide nourishment, care, and protection to all.

In the nearly two decades since the 9/11 attacks, political and religious leaders have used Islamophobia to fan the flames of fear and hatred of Muslims. The FBI has reported that 60.3% of hate crimes based on religious bias in 2018 in the United States were directed against Jews.[1] Presbyterians must show up in public ways to make our support for both communities known.

The fear felt by our Jewish and Muslim siblings in the face of unchecked antisemitism and Islamophobia in our time is real, and both have historical roots in Christianity. When Christians do not know the antisemitism and Islamophobia woven into our history, we are unable to come to our Jewish and Muslim siblings with repentance, and seek repair for this history.

Antisemitic ideas have been embedded in our scriptures and our confessions. We have often, intentionally or unintentionally, promoted ideas of Christian superiority over Jewish people. Presbyterians have also had misconceptions about the Qur'an and the value and the beauty of Muslim ways of faith and life. Contemporary theology, biblical study, and liturgy that affirm our ongoing kinship with Jewish and Muslim peoples will begin to repair and strengthen our interfaith relationships, bring renewed understanding and appreciation for the uniqueness that each community brings.

In preparation for the 225th General Assembly (2022), GACEIR is working to follow the recommendations laid out here, providing ongoing resources that deepen this essential work of the PC(USA) on the ground to fight antisemitism and Islamophobia. We are committed to deepened partnership with our Muslim and Jewish siblings in this process. This is an important step in repairing our relationships with Jewish and Muslim people, and to nurture the conditions of flourishing for all.

## Other Comments

### Advice and Counsel—from the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP)

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) advises that the 225th General Assembly (2022) **approve** Item ECU-06.

This statement affirms the reality of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia as sins committed by the Christian community and allows for the possibility of critical engagement on issues of social justice, particularly regarding Israel/Palestine.

It is consistent with the position of the 221st General Assembly, and re-affirmed in the 2014 resolution “On Equal Rights for all Inhabitants of Israel and Palestine, and for Conversation with Prophetic Voices” which:

Views with respect the integrity of the religious faiths of Jews, Muslims, and other peoples, the value of non-coercion in religious life, and the benefits of public toleration of religious diversity to diminish extremism, discrimination, and bigotry (Minutes, 2010, Part I, p. 1025).

It further affirms the “salient values” delineated in the 2016 report “Israel/Palestine: For Human Values in the Absence of a Just Peace”:

1. The dignity of all persons, despite our universal capacity to do harm;
2. Self-determination of peoples through democratic means;
3. The building up of community and pursuit of reconciliation;
4. Equality under the law and reduction in the separation that fosters inequality;

5. Recognition of our complicity and the need for confession and repentance; and
6. Solidarity with those who suffer.

### Advice and Counsel—From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC)

The Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC) **supports this resolution while recommending the use of “anti-Jewish” rather than “anti-Semitic,”** as the latter encompasses other people groups in addition to our Jewish siblings.

## Additional Resources

A Public Litany

[A Public Litany.pdf](#)

Biblical and Confessional Grounding for the Statement

[Biblical and Confessional Grounding for Our Commitment to Combat Antisemitism and Islamophobia.pdf](#)

Foundations of Christian Antisemitism

[The Foundations of Christian Antisemitism.pdf](#)

Foundations of Christian Islamophobia

[The Foundations of Christian Islamophobia.pdf](#)