



# Church of the Brethren

Action Alert  
April 30, 2010

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## 1. Christian leaders critique Arizona immigration law.

Leaders in the National Council of Churches (NCC) and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops are sharply criticizing Arizona's new immigration law. A release from the NCC critiques the law as "fundamentally unjust, dangerous to citizens and non-citizens alike, and a rejection of centuries-old biblical precepts of justice and neighborliness." The Catholic bishops have denounced the law as "draconian" and called on Congress to stop political "gamesmanship" and pass immigration reform.

Bishop John Wester of Salt Lake City, head of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' migration committee, said on April 27 that the Arizona law could lead to ethnic profiling and adversely affect how immigrants are treated nationwide, according to Religion News Service.

Michael Kinnamon, NCC general secretary, last week urged Arizona Governor Jan Brewer to veto the legislation. In an NCC statement dated April 27, he reiterated the view of member denominations and Arizona religious leaders "that this legislation will not contribute to the reform of our nation's immigration system" and may stimulate similar anti-immigrant legislation throughout the country.

**Action idea:** Go to [www.nccusa.org](http://www.nccusa.org) for the full text of the NCC release. Research Church of the Brethren statements related to immigration issues, taking time to read the biblical background cited in the Brethren documents: find the 1982 Annual Conference "Statement Addressing the Concern of Undocumented Persons and Refugees in the United States" at [http://www.cobannualconference.org/ac\\_statements/82Refugees.htm](http://www.cobannualconference.org/ac_statements/82Refugees.htm); find a Newsline report on a 2006 pastoral letter from the church's board at <http://www.brethren.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=7502> (this pastoral letter is no longer available online).

**Action idea:** Pray for insight and guidance on the issue of immigration. Pray for national and state political leaders dealing with the issue, pray for those who work with undocumented

immigrants, and pray for those who may be in danger of incarceration because of their immigration status. Pray especially for the children of undocumented families, who may bear the brunt of this crisis.

## **2. Brethren leader signs letter supporting Christians, minorities in Iraq.**

Leaders of the National Council of Churches including heads of communion and ecumenical officers of a number of Christian denominations have signed a letter of concern for Christians and other minority groups in Iraq. Church of the Brethren general secretary Stan Noffsinger has signed the letter.

The letter has been sent to US political leaders, urging them to take steps to prevent further violence against these groups in Iraq. The letter was sent April 26 to Robert Gates, Secretary of Defense, and Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State.

Expressing concern “about the ongoing situation of violent attacks on minority groups in Iraq, including the Christian community,” the letter requested US leaders to “raise this concern with the Government of Iraq, provincial authorities, and the leadership of the Coalition Forces, urging them to take all possible steps to prevent further incidents of this type. Christians in Iraq have suffered more than a dozen violent deaths so far this year, including a three-year old child in Mosul who died on March 27 after a bomb, placed next to his family’s home, exploded.”

The letter added that “our concern is now particularly acute because it is possible that tensions will increase as various political forces continue to vie for power following the recent elections. We fear that a growing climate of mistrust and animosity will further threaten the fragile Christian community.”

**Action idea:** Find a press release at [www.nccusa.org/news/100427iraqchristians.html](http://www.nccusa.org/news/100427iraqchristians.html), along with links to the full text of the letter. Ask your pastor or church witness chair to post a copy of the release and letter on a bulletin board at your church, to inform the congregation of the violence suffered by Iraqi Christians.

## **3. Resources to monitor Gulf oil spill.**

A Gulf Coast entity that arose after Hurricane Katrina is helping churches follow the clean up effort for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. An e-mail from Oxfam America, one of the organizations taking part in the Gulf Coast Civic Works Campaign, reports that the federal government's interagency response has resulted in FEMA, the Environmental Protection Agency, the US Coast Guard, and others launching a joint website.

**Action ideas:** Keep track of efforts to clean up the spill at the federal joint response website <https://www.piersystem.com/go/site/2931/>. The Coast Guard has posted photos and video at [http://cgvi.uscg.mil/media/main.php?g2\\_itemId=841811](http://cgvi.uscg.mil/media/main.php?g2_itemId=841811).

## **4. Churches for Middle East Peace hails ‘turning point.’**

Warren Clark of Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) is hailing a “turning point” in recent days regarding efforts to re-launch Israel-Palestinian peace talks. The talks have been suspended since late 2008, he wrote in an e-mail alert. Churches for Middle East Peace is an alliance of a number of Christian denominations and organizations including the Church of the Brethren.

“Last week envoys from the White House National Security Council and the office of Senator Mitchell traveled to Jerusalem and met with Israeli and Palestinian authorities,” Clark wrote. “They received whatever assurances were needed from the two sides to permit Senator George Mitchell to return late in the week. After Mitchell met with Prime Minister Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Abbas, he reportedly issued them each invitations to start ‘proximity’ talks in two weeks.”

If talks start soon it will be a significant accomplishment, CMEP states. “Talks were almost launched in early March, only to be derailed by the Israeli announcement of plans for 1,600 new housing units in East Jerusalem. While Netanyahu has said he will not rescind the building permits issued or promise to freeze all new construction in East Jerusalem, in fact no new permits have been issued. There is a de facto freeze on new construction in East Jerusalem, at least for now.”

CMEP hails talks as a way to address Palestinian and Arab concerns by putting the US in a position to make suggestions, help work around problems, and hold both sides accountable for answers to proposals.

**Action ideas:** Keep up with the work of Churches for Middle East Peace by joining CMEP’s Facebook group or sign up for regular e-mail updates at <http://action.cmep.org/t/7858/signUp.jsp?key=510>. See the CMEP website at [www.cmep.org](http://www.cmep.org).

## **5. CPT-Palestine endorses boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement.**

The Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) group in Palestine is endorsing the “Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions” movement, announced in a release on April 19. The movement has been called for by Palestinian nongovernmental organizations responding to what is perceived as a “solidifying” of the military occupation by Israel.

Initiated by members of the Historic Peace Churches, CPT enlists the whole church in an organized, nonviolent alternative to war, placing violence-reduction teams in crisis situations and militarized areas around the world at the invitation of local peace and human rights workers.

“The international community has long called for Palestinian society to resist the violence of the occupation nonviolently, so we, as members of an international peace organization, believe that when Palestinians mount nonviolent campaigns against the occupation, we are morally obligated to support them,” said the CPT release.

“We affirm the words of Palestinian Christian leaders in their Kairos Document: ‘These advocacy campaigns must be carried out with courage, openly and sincerely proclaiming that their object is not revenge but rather to put an end to the existing evil, liberating both the perpetrators and the victims of injustice.’”

**Action idea:** CPT-Palestine is recommending a number of online resources for those who want to gain a better understanding of the current issues in Palestine/Israel:

The Kairos Palestine Document available at [www.kairopalestine.ps/?q=node/2](http://www.kairopalestine.ps/?q=node/2)

"Palestinian Civil Society Calls for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel Until it Complies with International Law and Universal Principles of Human Rights 9 July 2005" at [www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/52](http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/52)

"Who Profits from the Occupation?" at [www.whoprofits.org](http://www.whoprofits.org)

A 2009 report by a fact-finding committee of South African social scientists at [http://www.hsrc.ac.za/Media\\_Release-378.phtml](http://www.hsrc.ac.za/Media_Release-378.phtml)

Neve Gordon's reflection, "Boycott Israel: An Israeli comes to the painful conclusion that it's the only way to save his country," at <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/aug/20/opinion/oe-gordon20>

A critique of Gordon's position by peace and human rights activist Uri Avnery at <http://zope.gush-shalom.org/home/en/channels/avnery/1251547904>

"Palestinians, Jews, citizens of Israel, join the Palestinian call for a BDS campaign against Israel" at <http://boycottisrael.info/content/points-unity>

A video clip by Israeli-American rap artist Invincible at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=MepX0PcjzFA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MepX0PcjzFA)

Alternative Information Center director Michel Warschawsky's "Yes to BDS!" at [www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article1733](http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article1733)

For more information about the witness ministries of the Church of the Brethren, contact:

Global Mission Partnerships

1451 Dundee Ave.

Elgin, IL 60120

[mission@brethren.org](mailto:mission@brethren.org)

800-323-8039 ext. 230.