

HOW TO GET YOUR MESSAGE HEARD BY WASHINGTON'S POLICYMAKERS

It is important to set the proper tone in an advocacy visit, phone call, or letter. How you present yourself and your case plays an extremely important role in whether or not you are an effective advocate in advancing the cause of Israeli-Palestinian peace. Policymakers will be interested in what you have to say if you take a fair and balanced approach, in line with the compassionate peacemaking-voice of the churches, to tough questions on the Middle East.

Make clear that your policy recommendations are based on policies passed by the national policymaking bodies of your church and others. Language in CMEP resources and ecumenical letters/statements are carefully prepared. Your use of specific language from these resources in your advocacy will help you avoid pitfalls and difficulties.

- **Present your hope for a positive future for both Israelis and Palestinians.** Many within Congress are growing tired of groups and individuals holding up the suffering of only one party to the conflict to the exclusion of the other and will be refreshed by your balanced approach. There is also growing recognition that the conflict is not a zero-sum game—there can be no winner and loser—and that a two-state solution is in the best interest of both peoples and the United States.
- **Avoid references to historical occurrences in the Middle East as much as possible.** They spark controversy and easily detract from the point you wish to make.
- **Present data from reliable, mainstream sources.** The reality for many people in the Middle East is bad enough – numbers and claims need to be unbiased and accurate.
- **Express the importance of your religious faith, but don't be excessive in your use of religion or self-righteous.**
- **Recognize that there is pain for both Palestinians (separation barrier, settlements, home demolitions, land confiscation, checkpoints, military incursions) and Israelis (suicide bombings, rocket attacks, countries and groups seeking their destruction.)**
- **The United States has a long history of friendship with and support for Israel. It is not helpful to make assertions questioning that relationship. The U.S. should be a friend to Israel, as well as to the Palestinians.** It is also not helpful to make generalizations about the so-called “Jewish lobby”. There are differing views within the Jewish community on U.S. policy toward Israel, just as there are differing views among Palestinians about governance of a future state of Palestine.
- **Avoid analogies, especially with South Africa's history of apartheid and Bantustans.** It is not helpful or effective to make comparisons to situations that took place in very different contexts and have very different solutions than that of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- **The role of Hamas in Palestinian politics and governance has created complexities for U.S. aid to the Palestinians and diplomatic relations.** The churches share the widespread dismay with Hamas' use of violence and failure to recognize Israel. While there may be various messages coming out of Hamas about its positions, it is best to let that debate continue within Palestinian society and to focus on the necessity for Palestinian unity and for U.S. actions that ease the humanitarian situation, help moderate Hamas and reduce intra-Palestinian friction.