

Episcopalians battle over aid to Israel

by [Solange De Santis](#) in the [February 20, 2013](#) issue

A group of prominent Episcopalians is criticizing their church's stand on Israel, urging it to join 15 other denominations that are calling for an accounting of U.S. aid to Israel.

The public letter released on January 18 notes that leaders of 15 religious groups, including Lutherans, Presbyterians and Methodists, asked Congress to take that step last October and that the "voice of the Episcopal Church is woefully missing."

The group includes Nobel Peace Prize recipient Archbishop Desmond Tutu, an Anglican, and former Episcopal presiding bishop Ed Browning. The group also called on church executives to ensure that financial resources are not being used to support Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories.

"Just as this church stood with South Africa and Namibia during the dark days of apartheid," the Episcopal leaders said, "so we recognize that we need to be standing with our sister and brother Palestinians who have endured an apartheid that Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu has described as worse than it was in South Africa."

Episcopal Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori said signing "partisan letters almost always raises the conflict level" and hinders efforts toward reconciliation through dialogue, according to Episcopal News Service.

"Our work must begin by listening to those who live and work and have their being in the midst of the current conflicts and equally attend to the conflicts in our own communities," Jefferts Schori told ENS. "We cannot build a lasting peace by directing or imposing strategies on others. We can encourage nonviolent and transparent methods like those Jesus and his disciple Martin Luther King Jr. did."

Last year, the Episcopal Church rejected boycotts and sanctions against Israel, instead pledging to support "positive investment" in the Palestinian territories.

—RNS

This article was edited Feb. 19, 2013.