

Southern Baptists Reject Peace Plea by Palestinian Pastor

Jamal Bishara of the **Phoenix First Arabic Baptist Church** spoke unsuccessfully against "Resolution 5: On Prayer and Support for Israel" at the recent **Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC)** annual meeting in St. Louis. In a 2002 ground breaking article, "The Cause of the Conflict, Part 1: Fixing the Blame," Chuck Carlson exposed the racist stance by the leaders of the SBC against Palestinians and Muslims. Here are two articles about the latest pronouncements from Southern Baptist Convention that should earn them the title of Christian Zionism's most powerful sect. [Ed.-TEC]

[Southern Baptists debate resolution supporting Israel](#)

[Bob Allen](#) | June 16, 2016, baptistnews.com

The Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution June 14 criticizing the [Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement](#) to put economic and political pressure on Israel to end the occupation of Palestinian lands despite objections by an Arabic pastor.

Pastor Jamal Bishara of First Arabic Baptist Church in Phoenix, Ariz., argued unsuccessfully that parts the [resolution](#) "on prayer and support for Israel" are both biblically and factually incorrect.



Jamal Bishara, pastor of the First Arabic Baptist Church of Phoenix spoke a Southern Baptist Convention favoring Israel while ignoring the plight of Christian and Muslim Palestinians

Bishara, who was born and raised in Nazareth, Israel, said Palestinians have "the right to live peaceably in their land."

"Among the Palestinians you have brothers and sisters who are Christians also," Bishara said.

The resolution cites Bible verses including God's promise to Abraham in Genesis: "I will bless those who bless you, I will curse those who treat you with contempt, and all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you."

It supports "the right of Israel to exist as a sovereign state" and rejects "any activities that attack that right by promoting economic, cultural and academic boycotts against Israel."

Bishara said he was not asking Southern Baptists to oppose Israel but only those who argue the path to security is annihilation of the Palestinian population.

"That is not a stand that Southern Baptists want to take," he said. "We have a message of peace."

"It isolates us and it enters us into the political arena," the pastor said of the resolution. "We are a spiritual entity to bring forth the message of peace to the world."

Other SBC [resolutions](#) oppose requiring women to register for the draft and affirm "In God We Trust" as the national motto.

A resolution on refugee ministry encourages Southern Baptists to care for and share the gospel with refugees who come to the United States, while calling on the government to "implement the strictest security measures possible in the refugee screening and selection process, guarding against anyone intent on doing harm."

A resolution calling for greater evangelistic zeal defends the term "soul winning" in sharing the gospel message. Another resolution encourages ministry to individuals affected by Alzheimer's and dementia.

Other resolutions affirm "biblical sexuality and the freedom of conscience," freedom of the press and voting as an expression of Christian citizenship.

One resolution calls on Southern Baptists to discontinue the display of the Confederate flag. Another condemns the June 12 shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Fla., as an "act of terrorism" and urges compassion and prayer for victims and their families.

Southern Baptists Adopt Controversial Resolution on Israel

Brian Kaylor, Thursday, June 16, 2016, [ethicsdaily.com](#)



Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, spoke for the resolution before its passage. (Screen capture: Recording of SBC resolutions session)

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) messengers adopted in St. Louis on Tuesday during the annual meeting a resolution deemed by some Arab Baptist leaders as unbiblical and harmful to their peacemaking efforts.

The resolution's passage came despite a plea from an Arab Baptist from Israel and amid a focus on racial and ethnic reconciliation.

Titled "On Prayer and Support for Israel," the [resolution](#) aligns the SBC with the secular, modern state of Israel.

It also condemns the "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement" that seeks to draw attention to the plight of Palestinians.

BDS proponents model their actions on the economic boycott efforts used against the South African apartheid regime.

Jamal Bishara, pastor of the First Arabic Baptist Church in Phoenix, offered a passionate speech against the resolution during the floor debate. He was born and raised in Nazareth, Israel.

"There are many different areas here that are not biblical," he said as he pointed to the text of the resolution.

Criticizing the resolution for taking one side and including inaccurate statements about Arab nations, he reminded SBC messengers that "among the Palestinians you have your brothers and sisters who are Christians also."

Bishara also urged a "no" vote since the resolution's "political issues" would "isolate" Baptists from the Arabic community.

"I am not saying that you vote against Israel," he added. "I am an Israeli citizen. I love Israel and I love the Jews."

As Bishara talked about the need for Christians to follow biblical teachings "to be the peacemakers," SBC President Ronnie Floyd interrupted to urge him to conclude his remarks.

The resolutions committee responded by urging people to support the resolution anyway, calling it similar to past resolutions.

However, no previous SBC resolution mentioned the BDS effort. Additionally, the most similar previous [resolution](#), passed in 2002, called for prayer for both Israelis and Palestinians, rather than just Israelis.

Wes Pastor, lead pastor at Christ Memorial Church in Williston, Vermont, offered his disagreement with how the resolution interpreted Genesis 12.

Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, then spoke for the resolution before its passage.

Yohanna Katanacho, academic dean at Nazareth Evangelical College and professor of biblical studies at Bethlehem Bible College, expressed his disappointment with the resolution.

"I am truly sad that my Baptist brothers and sisters at SBC have made this resolution," Katanacho told EthicsDaily.com "I feel that the statement does not address the Palestinian concerns in any way. It is not a fair statement and is not congruent with the biblical understanding of Israel, justice and missions to all the nations of the world including the Jewish people and the Palestinians."

Katanacho especially expressed concerns that the resolution will hurt peacemaking efforts in which Arab Baptists in Israel and Palestine are actively engaged.

"Their resolution will hinder my peacemaking ministry," he said. "Israel/Palestine needs Christians who are peacemakers. We cannot be fair peacemakers if we don't listen to both sides in a fair way."

"Does God love the Palestinian people?" he added. "Did Jesus die on the cross for them? Can they live like any other nation in their own land? How can we bless Israel without cursing the Palestinians? I am afraid that blessing Israel in a way that ignores the Palestinians is in fact a curse for everyone. It is a program for war, not peace."

Katanacho authored numerous books considering theological issues involved with some of the biblical passages cited in the resolution, especially Genesis 12. As he [explained](#) to EthicsDaily.com last year, that text is often mistranslated in English translations.

"Unfortunately, people abuse the Bible in the name of a political agenda," Katanacho added about the 2016 resolution.

Robert Parham, executive editor of EthicsDaily.com and executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics, contrasted the handling of the Israel resolution with how Southern Baptists dealt with racial issues in the United States.

Floyd led an hour-long multi-ethnic panel called "A National Convention of Racial Unity in America" that included remarks from Jerry Young, president of the National Baptist Convention. SBC messengers also passed a resolution urging an end to flying the Confederate Battle Flag.

"I applaud the Southern Baptist Convention's prioritizing racial reconciliation during its 2016 annual meeting," Parham said. "It was a good day for all Baptists on race relations in America."

However, he noted that "a bad moment also occurred that day." He said that while "the SBC prays for racial unity in the U.S.," in another ethnic conflict "they only want to pray for Israelis."

"The SBC adopted a pro-Israel resolution that ignores the existence and plight of Arab Baptists, Baptists throughout the Middle East as well as other Christians in predominantly Muslim countries," Parham explained. "The resolution is shortsighted, politically charged, biblically flawed and counterproductive to our Baptist and other Christian family members in Israel and the Middle East."

"We need to recognize that Palestinian Baptists are a minority within a minority within a minority in Israel," he added. "As Arabs, they are a minority in Israel. As Arab Christians, they are a minority among Arab Muslims. As Baptist evangelicals, they are a minority among Catholic and Orthodox Christians. They need our prayers and support."

The resolution time on Tuesday ended with an unusual moment as Paul Pressler, the other key leader with Patterson in the rightward shift of the SBC, came to a microphone and complained about not being allowed to speak against the resolution on the Confederate Flag.

Speaking at a microphone after the resolution's passage, Pressler insisted he should have been given special privilege to speak despite the established protocol.

He charged Floyd and parliamentarian Barry McCarty with a conspiracy to stop him from speaking, calling such an action "very bad, illegal, improper and unfair."

Floyd had to ask who Pressler was and then later McCarty ordered Pressler's microphone cut off. With that, the coda might have sounded to Pressler's work at SBC annual meetings.



Brian Kaylor is a contributing editor for EthicsDaily.com. You can follow him on Twitter @BrianKaylor.

Also, this article from the **Washington Post**:
[Southern Baptists go beyond conservative politics at meeting](#)

Press.