

Report of the Reference and Counsel Committee

The function of the Reference and Counsel Committee (RC Committee) is to review and report all original main motions of resolutions together with any recommendations and to prepare and present general resolutions of courtesy and acknowledgment. The authority and operating guidance for the RC Committee are located at S7.51.04 in the bylaws of the Southeastern Iowa Synod.

Pursuant to S7.51.04, resolutions may be submitted forty-five days prior to the Synod Assembly. This year there were two resolutions submitted by the March 25, 2019 deadline. These resolutions have been reviewed, acted upon, and readied for presentation at the Assembly.

It is still possible for resolutions to be submitted to the 2019 Assembly. Please submit your request in the form of a resolution to Lorraine Jordan (jordan@seiasynod.org) at the Southeastern Iowa Synod Center for Ministry. Pursuant to S7.51.04, resolutions received less than forty-five days prior to the Synod Assembly shall be reported to the Assembly as information. At the discretion of the RC Committee these resolutions may be referred to the Assembly for consideration. A resolution reported to the Assembly by the RC Committee as information may be taken up by the Assembly for consideration following a two-thirds vote of the Assembly to do so. Otherwise, all resolutions that are reported to the Assembly as information shall be referred to the Synod Council.

For assistance with a resolution or further information, contact Pastor Mike Schmidt at mike@gracedm.org

Members

The Rev. Michael Schmidt (Grace Lutheran Church, Des Moines)

Judy Huenke-Kremer (St. John's Lutheran Church, St. Donatus)

Dave Hanson (Zion Lutheran Church, Muscatine)

Ben Matthies (Augustana Lutheran Church, Boone)

The Rev. Robin Coughenower (Windsor Heights Lutheran Church, Windsor Heights)

Bishop Michael Burk, Ex Officio

Advisory Members

The Rev. Eric Carlson, *Synod Liaison*

The Rev. Duane Miller, *2019 Assembly Parliamentarian*

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Michael Schmidt

1 **Resolution #1 Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly**

2
3 WHEREAS, we followers of Christ are called by God in our baptismal covenant to work for
4 justice and peace on the earth; and

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6 WHEREAS, the 2019 ELCA Advocacy Policy Priorities includes a commitment to "... work to
7 build broad support for international development and humanitarian aid in Congress.

8 Specifically, we will:

- 9 • Advocate to bolster funding levels to international poverty-focused programs as appropriate
10 in the International Affairs budget;
- 11 • Oppose efforts by Administration or Congress to cut funds to these programs...¹; and

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13 WHEREAS, the United States Government has historically provided direct aid to the Palestinian
14 Authority, through the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and other agents;
15 and

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17 WHEREAS, this aid was severely cut in 2018², and as a result of the Anti-Terrorism
18 Clarification Act legislation enacted in 2018³, which amends that Anti-Terrorism Act⁴. The
19 Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act as written may result in no aid being provided to the Palestinian
20 people by the United States in the future and have a devastating effect on life-saving services
21 affecting over 5 million Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank; and

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23 WHEREAS, one of the institutions directly affected by the cuts is Augusta Victoria Hospital
24 (AVH), a program of the Lutheran World Federation, which is a center of medical excellence in
25 East Jerusalem, providing specialty care for all Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza that is
26 not available in other hospitals; and

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28 WHEREAS, for several years AVH and other East Jerusalem hospitals have been facing cash-
29 flow problems because the Palestinian Authority has not been able to pay the bills of the patients
30 which it refers to these hospitals, with total debt for the six hospitals at \$80 million as of March
31 1, 2019, with AVH debt of \$35 million⁵; and

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33 WHEREAS, in FY 2017, \$25 million in US funding was appropriated by Congress for the
34 hospitals but later repurposed by the Administration and therefore permanently lost to the
35 hospital; and

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37 WHEREAS, future funding is now in doubt because of restrictions placed on aid by the Anti-
38 Terrorism Clarification Act; therefore, be it

¹ <https://blogs.elca.org/advocacy/2019-elca-advocacy-policy-priorities/>, accessed 3/21/2029

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/14/world/middleeast/us-aid-palestinian-civilians.html>, accessed 3/21/2019;
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/24/us/politics/trump-palestinians-aid-cut.html?action=click&module=RelatedCoverage&pgtype=Article®ion=Footer>, accessed 3/21/2019

³ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/2946/text>, accessed 3/22/2019

⁴ <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/2333>, accessed 3/22/2019.

⁵ "Questions and Answers, Augusta Victoria Hospital and the East Jerusalem Hospitals Network", by Jerusalem Program, LWF World Service, March 15, 2019, which see.

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RESOLVED, that the Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly encourages ministers of Word and Service and ministers of Word and Sacrament to learn more about these issues; and to encourage congregation members to learn more and to engage in advocacy to request the President of the United States and all applicable legislators to amend the Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act of 2018 to remove legislative barriers to future funding of US humanitarian assistance to West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem;

RESOLVED that the Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly memorialize the 2019 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to request Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and synodical bishops, to request the President of the United States and all applicable legislators to restore the FY 2018 funding to the East Jerusalem Hospitals, and continue funding at 2018 levels until the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is resolved;

RESOLVED that the Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly memorialize the 2019 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to request Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and synodical bishops, to request the President of the United States and all applicable legislators to amend the Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act of 2018 to remove legislative barriers to future funding of US humanitarian assistance to West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

*Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Christine Cowan, chair
Southeastern Iowa Synod Peace Not Walls Working Group*

The Committee of Reference and Counsel recommends adoption.

1 **Resolution #2 Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly**

2
3 WHEREAS, we followers of Christ are called by God in our baptismal covenant to work for
4 justice and peace on the earth; and

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6 WHEREAS, the 2019 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Advocacy Policy
7 Priorities includes a commitment to "... work to build broad support for international
8 development and humanitarian aid in Congress. Specifically, we will:

- 9 • Advocate to bolster funding levels to international poverty-focused programs as appropriate
10 in the International Affairs budget;
11 • Oppose efforts by Administration or Congress to cut funds to these programs..."¹; and

12
13 WHEREAS, The United States Government has historically provided direct aid to the
14 Palestinian Authority, through grants to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency
15 (UNRWA) for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and other agents; and

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17 WHEREAS, US financial support to UNRWA for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, was
18 reduced in January of 2018, creating a fiscal crisis for the agency, and stopped altogether in fall
19 of 2018² ; and

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21 WHEREAS, the impact of these cuts will threaten "general education for 525,000 students,
22 essential primary health care for 3 million patients and food assistance for 1.7 million refugees"³.
23 therefore, be it

24
25 **RESOLVED**, that the Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly encourages ministers of Word and
26 Service and ministers of Word and Sacrament to learn more about these issues; and to encourage
27 congregation members to learn more and to engage in advocacy to request the President of the
28 United States and all applicable legislators to restore funding at 2017 levels or higher for FY
29 2018 and beyond to the UNRWA for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, until the
30 Israeli/Palestinian conflict is resolved;

31
32 **RESOLVED** that the Southeastern Iowa Synod Assembly memorialize the 2019 Churchwide
33 Assembly of the ELCA to request Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and synodical bishops, to
34 request the President of the United States and all applicable legislators to restore funding at 2017
35 levels or higher for FY 2018 and beyond to the UNRWA for Palestine Refugees in the Near East,
36 until the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is resolved.

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38 *Respectfully submitted,*

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40 *Rev. Christine Cowan, chair*

41 *Southeastern Iowa Synod Peace Not Walls Working Group*

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43 *The Committee of Reference and Counsel recommends adoption.*

¹ <https://blogs.elca.org/advocacy/2019-elca-advocacy-policy-priorities/>, accessed 3/21/2029

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/31/world/middleeast/trump-administration-aid-palestinian-refugees-.html?module=inline>, accessed 3/21/2019

³ <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/unrwa-faces-greatest-financial-crisis-in-its-history-following-2018-funding-cuts-commissioner%E2%80%91general-tells-fourth-committee-press-release/>, accessed 3/22/2019.



Questions and Answers

AUGUSTA VICTORIA HOSPITAL (AVH)

and the EAST JERUSALEM HOSPITALS NETWORK

What is Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH)? Augusta Victoria Hospital is a center of medical excellence in East Jerusalem, serving the five million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. As one of the six hospitals in the **East Jerusalem Hospitals Network**, AVH offers specialized care not available in other hospitals in the West Bank and Gaza, including radiation therapy for cancer patients and pediatric hemodialysis.

AVH receives patients from the West Bank and Gaza referred by the Palestinian Ministry of Health. Approximately 30% of the cancer patients treated at AVH are from Gaza. Augusta Victoria Hospital is accredited by the Joint Commission International for its outstanding quality. AVH, located on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, is also fully licensed by the Israeli Ministry of Health. Augusta Victoria Hospital is owned and operated by the **Lutheran World Federation (LWF)** and supported by the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)** and several other member churches of the LWF around the globe.

Which hospitals are part of the East Jerusalem Hospitals Network? Makassed Islamic Charitable Hospital, Red Crescent Maternity Hospital, St. John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital, Princess Basma Rehabilitation Center, St. Joseph's Hospital, and Augusta Victoria Hospital.

What kinds of services does AVH offer? Augusta Victoria Hospital has the following care centers and departments: Cancer Care Center, Hematology and Bone Marrow Transplantation Center, Kidney Care Center, Surgery and Ear, Nose and Throat Care Center, Community Care Department, Specialized Center for Child Care, Skilled Nursing and Long-Term Care Facility, Laboratory Medicine Department, and the Diagnostic Radiology Department. In 2018, AVH had 20,918 inpatient admissions, 21,064 dialysis sessions, 17,590 chemotherapy sessions, and 24,570 radiation sessions.

What is the relationship between AVH and the United States? Augusta Victoria Hospital is able to operate because of the support of LWF member churches, like the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and longstanding partnerships with countries like the United States. In the last decade the US government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), invested nearly \$10 million in AVH to bolster its capacity as a cancer center. In addition, the US government provided over several years tens of millions of dollars in aid to help cover the costs of the cancer patients and others referred to AVH and the other East Jerusalem hospitals by the Palestinian Authority.

Why are the East Jerusalem Hospitals facing a cash crisis? For several years, AVH and other East Jerusalem hospitals have been facing cash-flow problems because of the inability of the Palestinian Authority (PA) to pay on a regular basis the bills of the patients it refers to these hospitals. From 2017 onwards, the PA introduced regular monthly



payments, but there is still a considerable debt to AVH and the other East Jerusalem hospitals related to the patient referrals. As of 1 March 2019, the total debt owed to the six hospitals amounted to approximately USD 80 million and for AVH alone the PA debt was over USD 35 million.

How is Augusta Victoria Hospital affected? The delays in the PA payments of its debts to AVH, due in part to the cut of the 2017 US funding, prompted a severe cash-flow crisis for AVH. It is the intention of the Lutheran World Federation to continue to provide life-saving treatment to patients from the West Bank and Gaza, but the accumulated PA debt makes it increasingly difficult to pay pharmaceutical suppliers for cancer medications, pay staff, and avoid further interruption in the treatment of patients. Already AVH has been forced to curtail the intake of cancer patients due to the lack of funds.

How are US funding cuts related to the Palestinian Authority's patient bills? AVH and the five other East Jerusalem hospitals rely on funding each year from the US and the European Union (EU) to cover approximately half of the costs of patients referred to these hospitals by the Palestinian Authority. The US Congress approved USD 25 million for the financial years 2017 and 2018 to be paid to the PA to help cover the bills of the West Bank and Gaza patients that are treated in the East Jerusalem hospitals. The annual support of the U.S. and the European Union is needed to avoid financial crises that lead to the interruption of critical medical services provided by the East Jerusalem hospitals.

In March 2018, the US Congress passed the Taylor Force Act in order to strengthen restrictions on aid to the Palestinian Authority in annual appropriations legislation. It is important to note that the Taylor Force Act includes a specific exemption for the East Jerusalem Hospitals Network. Congress, through this exemption, recognizes the vital role of Augusta Victoria Hospital and the other East Jerusalem hospitals and includes this exemption in order to ensure that cancer patients and others are not harmed by the Act.

What can be done to address this situation? The Palestinian Authority, Israel, the United States and the international community have an interest in ensuring that the six East Jerusalem hospitals continue to function and play a role in promoting Palestinian access to quality health care. In addition to providing life-saving specialty-care services, AVH and the other East Jerusalem hospitals are helping to foster a constructive environment for future peace negotiations toward a two-state solution and shared Jerusalem. In light of the Administration's decision to cut the FY 2017 funding to the East Jerusalem hospitals, it becomes all the more urgent in the short-term to encourage the Administration to release the FY 2018 funding. The PA, Israel, the U.S. and European Union need to work together to find long-term solutions for the sustainability of these services. They need to address the accumulated PA debts to the six East Jerusalem hospitals, promote reforms of the Palestinian health system, promote ways to increase funding locally, and work to secure ongoing international assistance.

(Q&A updated 15 March 2019)