

8155:12/86

**AMERICAN BAPTIST
RESOLUTION ON INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM**

INTRODUCTION

Reminded by the Scriptures that all persons are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) and that God made every race from one stock "to inhabit the whole earth's surface," (Acts 17:26 NEB), we acknowledge our connection to other persons throughout the world. In recent times, these connections have been threatened by the rapid growth of international terrorism, and many people have reacted with horror and fear verging on panic. Terrorism has claimed innocent victims and evoked helpless anger and the desire for revenge.

Terrorism tears at the fabric of society. In many instances, individuals and small groups exercise great influence and power over governments and institutions. Christians regard terrorism as fundamentally immoral and an unacceptable means of addressing real or perceived grievances and righting wrongs.

Acts of terrorism are not new to the history of nations. In the past, they were fewer in number and confined to limited geographical areas. Most persons were untouched by the violence. By the late 1960's terrorists focused on diplomatic personnel and business leaders, and both groups responded with stronger security and other countermeasures. Recently, though, attacks have been more indiscriminate, focusing on tourists, travelers and other innocent victims of all ages. We have only to recall the horrific events of September 11, 2001 to be reminded of the growth of international terrorism both in terms of the means employed and the persons targeted. These developments have engendered fear and a sense of helplessness in many people, particularly in the U.S.A.

As Christians how should we respond to acts of terrorism? What do we know about the political, social, and economic conditions that give rise to such acts? To what extent are religion and ideology contributing factors? How may we address these conditions and contributing factors for the well being of all? How can we live as faithful followers of Christ in a troubled world?

Terrorism covers a wide range of actions, from state sponsored violence to random individual acts, including among the perpetrators, mentally disturbed persons, criminals, insurgent or liberation groups, and governments that oppress their own people. Terrorism involves the use of force and violence targeted intentionally at government officials and civilians to intimidate or coerce others for political ends.

Terrorism often arises because of deep, long standing problems whose root causes have not been understood and addressed to the degree possible. Terrorism also arises because it is perceived to be an effective political tactic.

While military action has been the most common response to terrorism, a comprehensive strategy to counter terrorism must include policies that encourage economic and political development, more open societies, and greater opportunities for all people to improve their lives and contribute to the betterment of the communities in which they live and the societies of which they are a part.

It is likely that, for at least the foreseeable future, some will continue to employ terror in the attempt to achieve their purposes. Given this reality, there will be future situations and actions to which American Baptists will need to respond.

Therefore, we resolve:

1. that we continue to affirm the value of human life and our bond with the whole human family in God's world through Bible study, prayer and examination of our own values, attitudes and responses to terrorist acts;
2. that we condemn the use of terrorism by any and all perpetrators whether individual, group or government;
3. that we, urge our government to be attentive to the economic, social, and political conditions that give rise to terrorism, as well as to the religious and ideological beliefs that are a contributing factor, and to work with other governments, transnational entities, and non-governmental organizations in addressing these conditions and contributing factors;
4. that we recognize, and speak out, when a tendency on the part of the mass media to overplay events has the result of heightening, exaggerating and distorting such events, which can result in increased violence and panic;
5. that we remain vigilant concerning the erosion of civil liberties in the name of security;
6. that we encourage the development of international studies in negotiation, and other peaceful techniques, as methods to be used to resolve terrorist situations and to find acceptable ways of addressing grievances and righting wrongs;
7. that we encourage inter-religious dialogue and partnerships to counter the acceptability of using religious convictions as a justification for terrorist acts;
8. that we seek God's guidance to avoid the temptation to brand or hold responsible an entire racial, ethnic, or religious group for the violent actions of a few;

9. that we not allow ourselves to be victimized by attitudes in our society, whether they be encouraged by government leaders, the media, or others, leading to retaliation or retribution in times of fear and anger. Rather we will hold to our calling as followers of Jesus Christ, forgiving as He forgave seeking justice and reconciliation among all peoples.

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POLICY BASE

American Baptist Policy Statement on Human Rights December 1976

American Baptist Policy Statement on Military and Foreign Policy

December 1978

American Baptist Policy Statement on Peace December 1985

American Baptist Resolution on Citizen Responsibility in the Political

Process June 1982

2. Calls Upon American Baptists to:

a. Participate actively in the political, social and economic life of our society seeking to bring to all of life the insights of our Christian faith while recognizing that our wisdom is finite and that free and open discussion in church and society can enable our understanding to grow and change and deepen.

d. Recognize that true patriotism requires citizens to be critical of injustices and governmental policies detrimental to the common good while being supportive of those values, policies and practices which are good and just.