



**Focus:**  
**Palestine**  
a WCRC Handbook  
**Appendices**

This handbook was written in response to *Action 55* of the WCRC at the 2017 General Conference.

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Katherine Cunningham and Noushin Darya Framke

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World Communion  
of Reformed Churches

# Focus: Palestine

a WCRC Handbook

**Appendices**

Written and Edited  
by  
Rev. Katherine Cunningham  
Noushin Darya Framke

# Appendices

Each appendix section connected to *Focus: Palestine* includes materials either noted in the handbook or related to the discussion in a particular chapter area. They are included here as supplemental materials and as “dive deeper” opportunities for further study or reflection.

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# Focus: Palestine

## APPENDIX A

Solidarity Action Items for Groups and Individuals to Take  
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**The present times call for actions as bold, as faithful, and as resolute.** The time for decision has arrived. "We call out as Christians and as Palestinians to our Christian brothers and sisters in the churches around the world" reads the 2009 Kairos Palestine document. Eight years later, in 2017, in the Open Letter to the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement, the National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine wrote: "Things are beyond urgent. We are on the verge of a catastrophic collapse. This is no time for shallow diplomacy, Christians!" Now, three years later, this is a cry for hope to our brothers and sisters throughout the world. We invite our fellow Christians, their local congregations, churches and international ecumenical organizations, to receive and respond to our common witness, to join the process of confessing, and to initiate processes to formally reject the oppression of the Palestinian people and any use of the Bible to justify this injustice by committing to the following actions:

- **Initiate processes** at local, denominational and ecumenical levels that recognize the present *kairos* and the urgent requirement for decisive action regarding the denial of Palestinian rights and the misuse of the Bible. These actions will express the unity of the church in its commitment to stand up to injustice wherever it is to be found.
- **Engage in study** and discernment with respect to theologies and understandings of the Bible that have been used to justify the oppression of the Palestinian people. Offer theologies that prophetically call for an inclusive vision of the land for Israelis and Palestinians, affirming that the creator God is a God of love, mercy and justice; not of discrimination and oppression.
- **Affirm the Palestinians' right to resist** the occupation, dispossession, and abrogation of their fundamental rights, and join the Palestinians in their creative and nonviolent resistance. The 2005 Palestinian call for Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) provides a framework for economic, cultural, and academic measures and for direct political advocacy as nonviolent means to end occupation and oppression. The purpose of BDS is not to punish or isolate Israel. It is rather to exert pressure on Israel to comply with international law, and to call upon its government and its people, in the spirit of the Word of God, to enter into the ways of justice and peace, thereby affirming its own rights as well as the rights of the Palestinian people.
- **Demand** also that governments and world bodies employ political, diplomatic and economic means to stop Israel's violations of human rights and international law.

- **Oppose anti-Semitism** by working for justice against anti-Judaism, racism and xenophobia; oppose the equating of criticism of Israel's unjust actions with anti-Semitism.
- **Support initiatives** between Israelis and Palestinians and interfaith partnerships that combat apartheid and occupation and create opportunities to work together for a common future of mutual respect and dignity.
- **Come and see** the reality in the Holy Land with compassionate eyes for the suffering of Palestinians, and stand in solidarity with grassroots initiatives on the part of all faiths and secular groups who challenge the occupation and who work for a just peace.

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## **Jerusalem in Modern Christian Thought**

*Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb*

Jerusalem is a city like no other. It is a city that two people view as their national capital while three religions call it holy. In this paper we shall look at Jerusalem in modern Christian thought. There is a vast array of data which demonstrates Christian statements, resolutions, and speeches regarding Jerusalem. To gain a clearer insight on the Christian discourse on Jerusalem, we chose to delve into it from three main axes: Jerusalem in the writings of the World Council of Churches, Jerusalem as addressed by the Holy See, and finally, Jerusalem in the statements of the Holy Land Heads of Churches.

### **A. Jerusalem in the statements<sup>1</sup> of the World Council of Churches**

The World Council of Churches (WCC) was founded in 1948 as an expression of the modern ecumenical movement and as a counter reaction to World War II. Today, the Council has a fellowship of 349 churches, representing some 590 million Christians in about 150 countries across the world. WCC member churches include most of the Anglican/Protestant and Eastern Orthodox churches. The Catholic Church is accredited as observer.

In the first year it was founded, the World Council of Churches, in cooperation with the International Missionary Council, examined the subject of Jerusalem. On 13 June 1949, the Council sent a Memorandum to the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine under the title “The Protection of Religious Interests and Activities in Palestine.”<sup>2</sup> This was in line with the document adopted by the General Assembly on 11 May 1949, stressing that when “studying the question of the internationalization of Jerusalem and the problem of the protection of the Holy Places and free access thereto,” the views of “the Holy See, the Orthodox Patriarchate, Moslem religious authorities and the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs”<sup>3</sup> (including the WCC) should be taken into account.

The Memorandum emphasized that for any political arrangement to be made in what concerns Palestine in general and Jerusalem in particular, there should be three required conditions. Those conditions are:

1. “Human rights and fundamental freedoms, and, particularly, full religious liberty must be safeguarded for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.”<sup>4</sup>
2. “The protection of Holy Places, religious buildings and sites in Palestine and free access thereto should be recognized as a matter of international responsibility.”<sup>5</sup>
3. “All church-owned and mission-owned properties in Palestine that have been occupied by either Arabs or Jews should be returned to their owners.”<sup>6</sup>

The Memorandum was issued upon internal discussions within the United Nations circles. Following the Arab Israeli war, the Nakba of 1948, and the Armistice Agreement, however, this subject was no longer put under investigation; neither at the United Nations, nor at the World Council of Churches. The question of Jerusalem was not deliberated again until after the end of the sixties. It was at the meeting between 12-22 August 1969 in Canterbury, England when the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches noted that it would recommend that “serious consideration be given by the appropriate department of the World Council of Churches to initiating discussions with Christians, Jews and Moslems as to the guardianship of the Holy Places, the status of Jerusalem and the people of the city.”<sup>7</sup>

Real concern for the status of Jerusalem started after the mid-seventies. At its meeting in Berlin in August 1974<sup>8</sup>, the Central Committee asserted that for there to be a satisfactory position with regards to Jerusalem, it should be considered that:

1. “Jerusalem is a Holy City for three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The tendency to minimize Jerusalem’s importance for any of these three religions should (be) avoided.”<sup>9</sup>
2. “Christian Holy Places in Jerusalem and neighbouring areas belong to the greatest extent to member churches of the WCC,” and any proposed solution as to their future “should take into account the legitimate rights of the churches most directly concerned.”<sup>10</sup>
3. “The question of Jerusalem is not only a matter of protection of Holy Places, it is organically linked with the living faiths and communities of people in the Holy City.”<sup>11</sup> Any solution on Jerusalem should thus “take into account the rights and needs of the indigenous peoples of the Holy City.”<sup>12</sup> The Central Committee confirmed its opinion that matters related to jurisdiction over Jerusalem will only find their lasting solution within the context of the settlement of the conflict as a whole.



The General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, at its meeting in Nairobi, Kenya in 1975<sup>13</sup>, reciprocated the motions of the Central Committee, adding that:

1. The monotheistic religions must cooperate to ensure that Jerusalem “is a city open to the adherents of all three religions, where they can meet and live together.”<sup>14</sup>
2. In any agreement concerning Jerusalem, it is crucial to abide by the “special legislation regulating the relationship of the Christian communities and the authorities, guaranteed by international treaties (Paris 1856 and Berlin 1878) and the League of Nations known as the Status Quo of the Holy Places.”<sup>15</sup>
3. It is essential to highlight that “the Holy Places should not become mere monuments of visitation, but should serve as living places of worship integrated and responsive to Christian communities who continue to maintain their life and roots within the Holy City and for those who out of religious attachments want to visit them.”<sup>16</sup>
4. The future of Jerusalem can only be settled in a comprehensive Middle East context and under an international aegis and guarantee.

The Central Committee issued its First Statement, titled “Statement on Jerusalem,” at its meeting in Geneva in August 1980.<sup>17</sup> This was in answer to the Basic Law passed by the Israeli Knesset on 30 July 1980 to annex East Jerusalem to Israel.

In this Statement, the Central Committee expressed its opposition to the Israeli unilateral action of annexing East Jerusalem and declaring the city as its “eternal capital” under its exclusive sovereignty. The Central Committee conveyed that such a decision is contrary to all pertinent UN resolutions; it undermines all efforts towards reaching a just solution of the Middle East problem, and it dangerously threatens regional and world peace.

The Central Committee also emphasized that the issue of Jerusalem should be included in the agenda of official negotiations involving Israel and the Palestinian people on self-determination. Furthermore, the Committee expressed its intention to aid the churches in expressing the concerted and united Christian voice toward fully assuming their role as partners in determining the future character of Jerusalem.

The General Assembly of the World Council of Churches also addressed, at its meeting held in Vancouver in July-August 1983<sup>18</sup>, issues related to the Middle East that were mainly related to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the establishment of settlements in the Occupied Territories, and the political arrests and overall violations and discriminatory Israeli policies. This meeting’s Statement reaffirmed that issues cannot be resolved through the use of force, and stressed on the importance of negotiations between Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the neighboring Arab

states. They stressed the importance of the “implementation of the rights of the Palestinians to Self-determination including the right of establishing a sovereign Palestinian state.”<sup>19</sup>

On the subject of Jerusalem, the Statement stressed that Jerusalem “is a Holy City for the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The tendency to minimize Jerusalem’s importance for any of these three religions should be avoided.”<sup>20</sup> They emphasized that dialogue on Jerusalem should be initiated together with Jews and Muslims towards political processes and a mutually acceptable agreement. Moreover, the Statement called the attention of the churches for the need of actions which will ensure a continuing indigenous Christian presence and witness in Jerusalem. It also called for wider ecumenical awareness of the plight of the indigenous Muslim and Christian communities who suffer from repressive actions of the occupying power in East Jerusalem, and those living in the West Bank and are prevented from visiting the Holy City.

Following the First Intifada [the Popular Palestinian Uprising] and the Haram Al-Sharif (Al-Aqsa Massacre), the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches made an appeal, on August 20th, 1988, to the United Nations Secretary General about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>21</sup> In the appeal, the WCC General Secretary requested to convene the International Peace Conference on the Middle East so as to find a comprehensive solution to the issues pertained, including the question of Jerusalem.

The subject of Jerusalem regained momentum at the WCC timetable in the mid-nineties. After the signing of the Oslo Accords<sup>22</sup>, the Fundamental Agreement between the Holy See and the State of Israel<sup>23</sup>, and the Official Relations between the Holy See and the PLO, the World Council of Churches – in collaboration with the Lutheran World Federation, the Holy See, and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue – organized a conference on the Spiritual Understanding of Jerusalem (1994). The General Secretary of the WCC also visited the Holy Land in 1995<sup>24</sup>, and the issue of Jerusalem was on top of the Central Committee’s agenda.<sup>25</sup>

One of the most affirmative statements of the World Council of Churches, particularly in relation to Jerusalem, was adopted at the WCC Eighth Assembly meeting in Harare from 3-14 December 1998<sup>26</sup>. This Assembly addressed the status of Jerusalem from the framework of International law, starting with the international treaties of Paris (1856) and Berlin (1878), the responsibility of the British Mandate vis-à-vis the Holy Places and the religious communities in Palestine, the UN Partition Plan (29 November 1947) in which Jerusalem was established as a “Corpus Separatum” (with precisely defined geographical boundaries,) and the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194 that specified the special status of Jerusalem. The Statement from this meeting went on to note the fourth Geneva Convention that had defined the Occupied territories, and the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 303 of 9 December 1948, in which the General Assembly had reaffirmed that Jerusalem should be placed under a permanent international regime. Finally, the Statement gave

mention to United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which had demanded Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories, including Jerusalem, thereby reminding the international community of its roles and responsibilities with respect to Jerusalem.

The Statement asserted the following principles regarding Jerusalem:

1. “The peaceful settlement of the territorial claims of Palestinians and Israelis should respect the holiness and wholeness of the city.”<sup>27</sup>
2. “Access to the Holy Places, religious buildings and sites should be free, and freedom of worship must be secured for people of all faiths.”<sup>28</sup>
3. “The rights of all communities of Jerusalem to carry out their own religious, educational and social activities must be guaranteed.”<sup>29</sup>
4. “Free access to Jerusalem must be assured and protected for the Palestinian people.”<sup>30</sup>
5. “Jerusalem must remain an open and inclusive city.”<sup>31</sup>
6. “Jerusalem must be a shared city in terms of sovereignty and citizenship.”<sup>32</sup>
7. “The provisions of the IV. Geneva Convention must be honored with respect to the rights of Palestinians to property, building and residency; the prohibition of effecting changes in population in occupied territories; and the prohibition of changes in geographical boundaries, annexation of territory, or settlement which would change the religious, cultural or historical character of Jerusalem without the agreement of the parties concerned and the approval of the international community.”<sup>33</sup>

The last Statement on Jerusalem by the WCC came out in the context of the Camp David summit with President Clinton, Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Barack in the year 2000. In this “resolution” adopted by the Executive committee in September 2000<sup>34</sup>, the committee encouraged the parties “to have the courage to abandon narrow, exclusive claims in favor of efforts to build an open, inclusive and shared city where free access to Holy Places and freedom of worship is assured for people of all faiths” while at the same time reiterating its conviction that “the solution to the question of Jerusalem is in the first place the responsibility of the parties directly involved, but that the Christian churches and the Jewish and Muslim religious communities have a central role to play in relation to (the) negotiations.”<sup>35</sup>

The last statement by the WCC on Jerusalem came in a letter of its General Secretary, Olav Fyske Tveit, on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017<sup>36</sup>; the same day that President Trump announced his plans to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The General Secretary declared that “Such a Step breaks with the longstanding international consensus, and almost seven decades of established American policy... It also pre-empts a negotiated resolution of this most difficult issue in any final peace agreement,

which must be achieved between Israelis and Palestinians themselves.”<sup>37</sup> The General Secretary calls on the “Us Administration to reconsider its position on this key issue, and to exert its maximum efforts in promoting renewed negotiations among Israelis and Palestinians for a genuine, just and sustainable peace.”<sup>38</sup>

## **B. Jerusalem in the Statements of the Holy See**

The Holy See made no comments on Jerusalem until after WW I. “Referring to the Balfour Declaration, Pope Benedict XV, in the words of *Civiltà Cattolica*, warned that the Holy Places were in danger of falling into the hands of the Jews, supported by Anglo-Saxon Protestants, who wished to establish a Jewish republic in Palestine. Concern was expressed that Zionist rule might have the effect of Uprooting the local Christian Community.”<sup>39</sup> These two issues continued to be the main worries of the Vatican between the two world wars.

The changes resulting from WWII. forced the Vatican to change its stand on Jerusalem. In this second stage, the Holy See was demanding that Jerusalem and its vicinity should be legally accorded and guaranteed an international status. Following the Nakbah and the division of Jerusalem in East and West, Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical on Jerusalem (*In Multiplicibus*) stating that “it would be opportune to give Jerusalem and its outskirts, where are found so many and such precious memories of the life and death of the Savior, an international character which, in the present circumstances, seems to offer a better guarantee for the protection of the sanctuaries. It would also be necessary to assure, with international guarantees, both free access to Holy Places scattered throughout Palestine, and the freedom of worship and the respect of customs and religious traditions.”<sup>40</sup>

This position was reiterated again in the cyclical *Redemptoris Nostri Cruciatu*s, written on 15 April 1949.<sup>41</sup> The pope added: “We very much desire that the many Catholic institutions which have been erected in Palestine to help the poor, to educate youth and give hospitality to visitors, may be enabled, as is fitting, to carry on unimpeded the work they did so laudably in the past. Nor can we omit to point out that all rights to the Holy places, which Catholics during many centuries have acquired and time again defended valiantly, and which our predecessors have solemnly and effectively vindicated, should be preserved inviolate.”<sup>42</sup> The encyclical concluded by asking the faithful “to be even more concerned about the conditions in Palestine,” and to have them “make their lawful requests known, positively and unequivocally, to the rulers of nations.”<sup>43</sup>

“On December 9, 1949, the United Nations General Assembly again adopted a resolution calling for the internationalization of Jerusalem. The resolution was supported by all Catholic states, and the Soviet bloc, which welcomed the Vatican initiative for its own reason. The resolution was stoutly opposed by Israel, Jordan, Britain, the United States and the Scandinavian countries. By a vote of

38 to 14 the General Assembly voted for Jerusalem to be placed under a permanent international regime as a ‘corpus separatum’ to be administered by the United Nations for ten years. With Vatican assistance, a constitution was prepared for the city and a commissioner was appointed to implement it; the commissioner, however, never reached Jerusalem...A final effort to confirm the original partition plan of 1947, which provided for the internationalization of Jerusalem, was advanced by Belgium in 1950 and the Philippines in 1952. Both states were largely Catholic in population and enjoyed Vatican support. However, the United States and Britain vigorously opposed the resolutions, and thereafter the principle of Jerusalem’s international status was not placed at the United Nations agenda.”<sup>44</sup>

After 1967 and following the occupation of East Jerusalem by Israel, it seems that the Vatican had dropped his original idea of the internationalization of Jerusalem.

Pope Paul VI requested that “the people of Jerusalem – Christians, Muslims and Jews – be given a unique political status enshrining the principles of justice and the unique character of Jerusalem. This was obviously not a call for a supra-national body to be installed in Jerusalem but for a constitution, a legal framework, which would ensure freedom, justice, equality and the sacred character of the city. The Pope spoke of the inalienable rights of all persons in the city and condemned economic, religious and political pressures leading to the alarming exodus of Christian Jerusalemites.<sup>45</sup> Yet after Israel and the PLO signed the Oslo Accords, and in line with the political changes in the region, the Holy See took a new course on Jerusalem.

The Vatican signed the Fundamental Agreement with the State of Israel on 30 December 1993<sup>46</sup>. It may be intriguing that the Fundamental Agreement did not have any article specifically on Jerusalem, yet this is indicative of the Holy See’s recognition that East Jerusalem together with its Holy Places is an integral and irrefutable entity of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Thus, the continuing commitment to maintain and respect the “Status quo” in the Christian Holy Places was affirmed in this Agreement, as well as the protection of the Catholic Church’s respective rights and sacred places, such as churches, monasteries, convents, cemeteries and their like. “The State of Israel affirms its continuing commitment to maintain and respect the ‘Status quo’ in the Christian Holy Places to which it applies and the respective rights of the Christian communities thereunder. The Holy See affirms the Catholic Church’s continuing commitment to respect the aforementioned ‘Status quo’ and the said rights.”<sup>47</sup>

In accordance with this step, the Holy See developed – on 26 October 1994 – Official Relations with the PLO (the Palestine Liberation Organization) and established the Bilateral Permanent Working Commission for Palestine. This put into effect the Basic Agreement between the Holy See and the PLO. This Agreement was the premise upon which the PLO-Vatican Agreement took place on 15 February 2000<sup>48</sup>, prior to the visit of Pope John Paul II to the Holy Land.

The status of Jerusalem was noted in the Basic Agreement's preamble (which is not a part of the constitution and therefore not enforceable). It reads: "Declaring that an equitable solution for the issue of Jerusalem, based on international resolutions, is fundamental for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, and that unilateral decisions and actions altering the specific character and status of Jerusalem are morally and legally unacceptable."<sup>49</sup>

The Agreement called for "a special statute for Jerusalem, internationally guaranteed, which should safeguard the following:

1. Freedom of religion and conscience for all.
2. The equality before the law of the three monotheistic religions and their institutions and followers in the City.
3. The proper identity and sacred character of the City and its universally significant, religious and cultural heritage.
4. The Holy Places, the freedom of access to them and of worship in them.
5. The Regime of "Status Quo" in those Holy Places where it applies."<sup>50</sup>

The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the Vatican's position in this Agreement that is in favor of the internalization of Jerusalem. Abraham H. Foxman of the ADL (Anti-Defamation League) considered the Agreement as an intrusion that would deter bilateral negotiations between Palestinians and Israel.

The Holy See held a second round of negotiations with Israel in the past years, and the talks (on the Last Supper site) apparently included topics related to Jerusalem and reached toward almost announcing a "historic" deal between the Holy See and Israel. Yet no articles for such a deal or agreement were officially declared.

### **C. Jerusalem in the Statements of the Holy Land Heads of Churches**

The heads of the 13 officially-recognized Churches in Palestine, as of 1988, have been issuing public statements to the situation in Palestine & Israel.<sup>51</sup> The churches in Jerusalem could not remain untouched by the situation existing in the occupied territories after the outbreak of the first intifada. Although, based on their history, these churches had had little contacts with each other, they were more or less forced during the first Intifada to approach each other and to jointly speak for Justice

and Peace. The most important statements were signed by the Heads of the Christian Communities in Jerusalem. Signatures were from the following church representatives: The three Patriarchs of the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Armenian Orthodox churches, respectively; the Custos of the Holy Land; the bishops of Coptic Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran Churches.

The first Joint Statement of the Heads of Christian Communities in Jerusalem was issued in Jerusalem on 22 January 1988<sup>52</sup>, followed by the second on 23 February 1988<sup>53</sup>. The Heads of Churches addressed this Statement by declaring that this is the voice of the Mother Church of Jerusalem.

We would see a visibly-clear difference in the tone of this Statement when compared with the third Statement that was issued by the Heads of Christian Communities in Jerusalem in June 1989<sup>54</sup>. The third Statement speaks of the deprivation “in Jerusalem and the whole of our country.” Reading this, we find that Jerusalem is no longer a mere reference point of religious identity, but it gained a geographic resonance. This transformation came in accordance with the Palestinian Declaration of Independence proclaimed by the PLO in Algeria on 15 November 1988.

The fourth statement, issued on 23 April 1990<sup>55</sup>, came in the aftermath of the Ateret Cohanim settler group’s forceful occupation of St. John Hospice’s property in East Jerusalem (on 11 April 1990). The Statement pointed out that this act of armed settlement “jeopardizes the integrity and the cultural and religious autonomy of the Christian, Armenian and Muslim Quarters, in violation of the centuries-old status and character of these quarters of the Holy City, honored by all previous rulers of Jerusalem,” and stressed that this action “further endangers the survival of all Christian communities in the Holy City.”<sup>56</sup> The Statement also demanded that the Israeli authorities effect the immediate removal of these settlers and secure the property for its legitimate owners, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. Furthermore, the Heads of Churches unanimously decided to close the doors of the Christian Holy Places on 27 April 1990.

The successive events thus urged the Heads of Churches to draw attention to issues related to Jerusalem. Their fifth Statement (of October 1990)<sup>57</sup> condemned the horrendous Jerusalem killings of the Haram Al-Sharif Massacre on 8 October 1990. The sixth Statement, issued on 20 December 1990<sup>58</sup>, warned of upcoming challenges, and opposed to the repressive actions and deliberate policies of changing the status and demography of Jerusalem. It also opposed to the unlawful violations and continuous practices that aim to cut historic Christian community ties, force taxes, and seize away Church properties therein.

The seventh Statement of 23 March 1991<sup>59</sup> warned of the dangerous threat emanating from the attempt to change the native and pluralistic character of the City of Jerusalem.

In the eighth Statement on May 30, 1991<sup>60</sup>, the Heads of Churches denounced the media's attack on the Franciscan Order, and condemned the dissemination of biased news reports and anti-Christian slogans that were written on the walls of one of the monasteries.

The first ten statements were thus in response to the day-to-day events in the Holy Land in general and in Jerusalem in particular.

Meanwhile, the First Memorandum of the Heads of the Christian Communities with a focus on Jerusalem was issued on 14 November 1994<sup>61</sup>, six months after the signing of the Gaza-Jericho Agreement of 4 May 1994. The Memorandum had 15 points that I will try to summarize (using the original sources) as follows:

1. Jerusalem is a Holy City for the people of the three monotheistic religions, and its unique nature of sanctity endows it with a special vocation that is meant to call for reconciliation and harmony, and not for conflict and disharmony.
2. The Arab-Israeli peace process is on its way toward reaching a resolution of the conflict, and yet Jerusalem has been side-stepped in the process, and therefore it is crucial to reflect on the core issues for resolving the conflict.
3. The positions of both [Israeli and Palestinian] sides are divergent and conflicting.
4. History teaches us that Jerusalem "cannot belong exclusively to one people or to one religion. Jerusalem should be open to all, shared by all. Those who govern the city should make it 'the capital of humankind'."<sup>62</sup> Hence Jerusalem has a universal and inclusive vocation.
5. The Memorandum considered the vision of Jerusalem in both the Old and New Testaments, and acknowledged its foundation for all liturgical traditions and pilgrimages.
6. Jerusalem has been home for Christians over the course of 2000 years, and the local church with its faithful has always been actively present in the City. This continuing presence of a living Christian community is thus inseparable from the historical sites. It is through the "living stone" that the holy archaeological sites take on "life."
7. Jerusalem has two dimensions: On the one hand, it is a holy city due to its link with the history of salvation. On the other hand, it is a holy city due to its local community of Christians as well as its local Muslim and Jewish communities who were born in and live in the native city.
8. The Memorandum henceforth presents the legitimate demands of Christians in Jerusalem in this respect:
  - The right for full freedom of access to the holy places, freedom of worship, as well as rights of property ownership, custody, and worship which churches have acquired through "*firmands*" and protected in the "status quo."



- The right to come to Jerusalem to carry out pilgrimage.
  - The human right of freedom of worship and of conscience; both as individuals and as communities.
  - Civil and historical rights which allow them to carry out religious, educational, medical, and other duties of charity.
  - The right to have their own institutions, such as hospices, institutes, and study centers.
  - The Memorandum highlights that these rights are not to be granted for Christians simply because they are Christian but rather because they are nationals who should have their basic social, cultural, political, and national rights and be on equal footing with the other monotheistic religions in the City.
9. The Memorandum notes that it is necessary to accord Jerusalem “a special judicial and political statute which reflects the universal importance and significance of the City.”<sup>63</sup>

The Memorandum therein demands:

- For the association of the “representatives from the three monotheistic religions, in addition to local political powers, ought to be associated in the elaboration and application of such a special statute”<sup>64</sup> for Jerusalem.
- For the international community to find ways to be engaged in and guarantee the stability and permanence of this statute.

During the Camp David Summit, the Greek Orthodox, Latin, and Armenian Orthodox Patriarchs sent a letter on 17 July 2000 addressing President Bill Clinton, Prime Minister Ehud Barak, and President Yasser Arafat.<sup>65</sup> The letter practically summarized what was in the Memorandum of 1994, with the following additions: The Patriarchs appealed “to ensure that the Christian communities within the walls of the Old City are not separated from each other” (which was in answer to the suggestion for the Armenian Quarter to be joined to the Jewish Quarter). The letter noted that: “We regard the Christian and Armenian Quarters of the Old City as inseparable and contiguous entities that are firmly united by the same faith.”<sup>66</sup>

The letter also suggested to have representatives from the three Patriarchates and the Custody of the Holy Land at the Camp David summit meeting where the future of Jerusalem was to be discussed, so as to safeguard their presence and maintain the rights of the collective churches.

The last Statement on Jerusalem, which was issued by the Patriarchs and Heads of the local Christian Churches on 29 September 2006<sup>67</sup>, had a different context. At that point, the deterioration of the peace process and the forceful policies had simultaneously changed the discourse of the Church Leaders.

As such, the beginning of their Statement that year was about the unilateral political reality and the policy to Judaize the City and exclude the people from the precincts of the holy city. The Statement noted how Jerusalem, surrounded by walls, is no longer the heart of life “as she should be.”<sup>68</sup>

The Patriarchs and Heads of local Christian Churches in Jerusalem called for a concerted effort to search for a common vision on the status of the holy city of Jerusalem; a city in which God’s design is for two peoples and three religions to live in together. They affirmed that in Jerusalem, holy places and human communities are inseparable, and that its future must therefore be decided by common agreement; it must be shared according to a principle of equality by both Israelis and Palestinians or divided “if this be the desire of the two peoples who live there.”<sup>69</sup>

The Statement ended with the recommendation to create an ad hoc committee to reflect on the future of the city, and wherein the local Churches of Jerusalem must be a part.

Although there have been no relevant statements issued about Jerusalem between 2006-2016, the subject of the Holy City regained prominence in September 2017. This statement<sup>70</sup> has come within the context of the supposed Jaffa Gate Deal, and in light of the legislation on the Knesset Constitution, Law and Justice Committee’s agenda. The agenda relates to a previously proposed bill through which the State of Israel would be authorized to confiscate Church properties that are on a leasehold basis. The statement fiercely opposed the tax legislation and confiscation of properties bill, and it underscored that such acts are in flagrant violation of the existing Status Quo of the religious, governmental, and civil entities.

The statement stressed that such bills and legislations cause irreparable harm not only to one church but rather to all churches. They trample on “the delicate fabric of relations between the Christian community and the authorities for decades.”<sup>71</sup>

Upon hearing the reports about “the possibility of changing how the United States understands and deals with the status of Jerusalem,” the heads of Churches wrote an open letter to US President Donald Trump on 6 December 2017<sup>72</sup>. In this letter, the Christian leaders expressed their concern about how such steps regarding the status of Jerusalem would ultimately yield increased hatred, conflict, violence, and suffering. The heads of churches appealed to Trump to continue recognizing the present international status of Jerusalem. They also expressed their hope that Israelis and Palestinians can work toward negotiating a sustainable and just peace, benefiting “all who long for the Holy City of Jerusalem to fulfill its destiny.”

Meanwhile, the latest statement was issued on 25 February 2018<sup>73</sup>. It was signed by the heads of Churches that are in charge of the Holy Sepulchre and the Status Quo; namely the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem Nourhan Manougian, and

the Franciscan Custos of the Holy Land Francesco Patton. This statement conveyed the systematic and offensive campaign that has reached an unprecedented level, “as the Jerusalem municipality issued scandalous collection notices and orders of seizure of Church assets, properties, and bank accounts for alleged debts of punitive municipal taxes.”<sup>74</sup>

The statement further demonstrated that such a step is “contrary to the historic position of the Churches within the Holy City of Jerusalem and their relationship with the civil authorities.” It also expressed that these actions “breach existing agreements and international obligations which guarantee the rights and the privileges of the Christian presence in Jerusalem.” The greatest victims in this, the signatories emphasized, “are those impoverished families who will go without food and housing, as well as the children who will be unable to attend school.”<sup>75</sup>

The sharp rhetoric observed in this Statement possibly makes this the first time that church leaders condemn such acts to the point of describing them as racist and discriminatory against the churches. The statement analogized to Nazism in pointing out that such an abhorrent bill “reminds us all of laws of a similar nature which were enacted against the Jews during dark periods in Europe.” Finally, it noted that “this systematic and unprecedented attack against Christians in the Holy Land severely violates the most basic, ab antiquo, and sovereign rights.”<sup>76</sup> As a measure of protest, the signatories recalled to their previous statement and decided to take the unprecedented step of closing the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for the period of three days.

It is clear that the last three statements come within a context unlike any that preceded them. Ultimately, they are in direct response to tax charges of churches, and in anticipation of the US transfer of its embassy to Jerusalem and its formal recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. One must also acknowledge the other local relevance of these statements, seeing that their timing could potentially salvage the Orthodox Patriarch from accusations of squandering and selling properties in Jerusalem. This last statement in particular has benefited the Patriarch’s image, politically speaking, and reduced the recent discord within the Orthodox Church.

As presented, we may outline the position of the Churches and church bodies on Jerusalem as follows:

1. There are two types of Church statements on Jerusalem:
  - The first type declares the position of the Churches vis-à-vis Jerusalem in terms of its rights and its future character as a holy city. Such statements were often issued in conjunction with political movements on the regional and international fronts.
  - It was in this respect that one of the first statements on Jerusalem was issued in 1949. Pope Pius XXI wrote the encyclical, *Redemptoris Nostri Cruciatu*s, on 15 April 1949

only a few days after the Armistice Agreement took place between Israel and Jordan of 3 April 1949, and which was preceded by the agreement with Lebanon on 23 March 1949, and with Egypt on 24 February 1949.

- The same applies on the letter of the World Council of Churches that dates to 13 June 1949.
  - The reflections soured after the signing of the Armistice Agreement, which turned out to be only a prelude to the peace talks that the United Nations and super powers would lead. It is well-known, however, that Israel at the time boycotted all the meetings which followed the agreement, and that the three major powers, namely the United States, the UK, and France, signed a trilateral agreement to preserve the current political situation.
  - The second type of statements the Churches made were in response to negative incidents that directly threatened the status of Jerusalem. Such examples include the WCC statements against the Israeli unilateral action of annexing East Jerusalem (1980), against the occupation of St. John's Hospice (1990). Other examples include the statement denouncing the writing of anti-Christian slogans (1991), as well as those opposing the Israeli unilateral policies that discriminate against both the Muslim and Christian Arabs.
2. It is striking that no statements were issued by the Churches between the years 1949 and 1967, which was the Jordanian period.
  3. In general, the demonstrated requirements of the Churches vis-à-vis Jerusalem can be summed up as follows:
    - To accord Jerusalem a special status (undefined), with an international guarantee.
      - To maintain and respect the current "status quo," which is an integral component for the Christian communities. It is in this agreement that the Churches regulate the relationship with the authorities and safeguard the rights of the different churches at one spot (the Holy Sepulchre). It is also through the status quo that the churches maintain holy places in Jerusalem, and this is a point not to be underestimated. Any change to this can prompt serious financial repercussions and substantial loss.
    - To guarantee full freedom of access to the holy places, and to ensure the right of worship and pilgrimage.
    - On this point, the Holy See further demanded the human right of conscience, which is a point that has great significance for churches throughout the globe and for whom the human right of conscience between individuals and church communities is crucial. It is worth noting that this also has financial implications, since access to worship and religious pilgrimages are an essential resource for the Churches in the holy land.
    - The right to preserve the continuing presence of the Christian community in Jerusalem.

The Churches are well-aware of the demographic challenges that necessitate for the Christian population to maintain itself in the future – so that the holy land Churches do not turn into stones with no living people.

4. The Churches' efforts were not so much directed at adopting political resolutions in the city so much so that they aimed to determine Jerusalem as a holy place for the three monotheistic religions. It was after the declaration of independence in 1988 that they added that Jerusalem is a city designed for two people. It was only in 2006 when the Churches discussed political terms and expressed their preference for a shared Jerusalem that would be in accordance with a principle of equality by both Israelis and Palestinians. While this was their favored preference, they also added that the City could be divided “if this be the desire of the two peoples who live there.”
5. When reviewing the statements and positions of the Churches regarding Jerusalem from 1949-2006, we would clearly see that the Churches' position has been and continues to be relevant. It is up-to-date with what is going on in the ground, and in line with the international, regional, and local fronts. Ultimately, the ecclesiastic position cannot be separated from the day-to-day political reality.

## **Conclusion**

Today, Jerusalem is undergoing a systematic campaign of Judaization that is led by the Israeli right-wing government, backed up by the Zionist lobby, and joined by American complicity and the involvement of Christian Zionists. Meanwhile, a new type of Islamic-Zionism is emerging, led by some Sunni clerics from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region outlining a Sunni-Israeli Axis over and against a Shiite-Iran threat.

It would be erroneous to assume that the conflict in Jerusalem is merely of a political or demographic nature. Besides its military occupation, Israel have been utilizing the academia to depict Jerusalem either as the City of David, or as the long-awaited Third Temple, or Mount Zion. Zionism has been active in monopolizing an exclusive religious narrative with regards to Jerusalem, while intentionally dismissing its significance for Christians and Muslims alike. This article showcases the centrality that Jerusalem has in Christianity; as a holy City that represents the salvation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. In Christian tradition, the Holy City of Jerusalem is the Mother of all Churches. For Christian Palestinians, Jerusalem is their home where their roots are. Their steadfastness thus makes them a community of living stones, and not dead wood. Christians in Jerusalem continue to hold on to their hope that this Holy City should be a city for two peoples and three religions who can live in peace in this their city they call holy.

# Focus: Palestine

## Appendix C

World Communion of Reformed Churches, December 9, 2020

Chris Ferguson, General Secretary

**What Does the God require from us: Discerning, Confessing in the time of Covid 19 and Beyond;  
Being a Global Koinonia:**

**Introduction to the discernment process.**

In Psalm 11:3 Faced with a seemingly insurmountable crisis the Psalmist asks *"If foundations are destroyed what can the righteous do?"*.

As a Global Koinonia called to Communion and Committed to Justice how specifically are we called to be a communion in these foundation shattering times?

Discerning, Confessing, Witnessing and Being Reformed Together. Verbs in the present tense .Verbs that incarnate what we are called to do as a global family, as regional group and as member churches. This we do together our koinonia is God's Gift to be received and nurtured. A reformed community always reforming according to the word of God.

Rothney has spoken to the centrality of confession in our tradition. We had heard the depth and breadth of the impact of COVID 19 and the its apocalyptic force revealing, unveiling, exposing ,lifting up the unjust and death dealing world order that existed before but has been exacerbated profoundly by the pandemic. We have heard of the call to enter as a *koinonia* leading up to our 2024 General Council in a *processus confessionis* addressing theologically the fundamental challenges to the integrity of our Faith in Jesus Christ and the confession that "The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it" in the face of a world order far from peace, justice, truth and life. Before CVID 19 we heard calls to live out the reality of the Accra Confession and the spirit of the Belhar Confession in addressing the scandal of the death dealing reality of a whole world in the captivity of Babylon and being stirred up in the rising-up through the cries of people and the earth to seek life and respond to Gods call. On top of this all, the specific and very real Covid Pandemic.

At the center of this is discernment: As the Accra Confession said: "The signs of the times have become more alarming and must be interpreted". For our global koinonia this mean we must do the discerning together. We are called to a process that mobilizes, involves, and strengthens and with Gods help empowers the whole global family in our difference and distinctiveness. The process we are undertaking requires a focus on reading the signs of the times that takes seriously injustice and brokenness of our world and our own churches. Our communion is not yet the koinonia God calls us to be.

This process then requires us a theologically and biblically rooted engagement that speaks to global, regional, national and local realities. We must recognize the interconnection between the local and the global. There is no local reality which is not impacted by and shaped by the global world order. There is no global reality that is not constructed through and by local communities and resources.

This crisis and the virtual tools now available also allow and require us to strengthen our koinonia by through the process of discernment circles. Our process continues the crucial process of identifying and engaging all the voice and perspectives and identities that make up our family. This is a work in progress but key to our process is the for us to do our discerning in such a way as to contribute to building a just communion. To foreground the voices and leadership of those in the family who have not been heard or have been impeded or excluded.

Discerning requires us to read the signs of the time biblically and theologically, locally, regionally and globally together to mobilize our whole communion as the a confessing, witnessing family committed to our own transformation and radical change in service to the God of Life.

Our process then focuses on the WHO. As far as we are able this must be the whole communion. Involved and engaged. We do are best All our stories, realities, locations and identities. This WHO include all the partners that God provides. We have a special relationship with CWM. The Lutherans. The WCC. The JDDJ (joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification group of 5 communions), Interfaith partners and social movements and so on.

Our process focuses on the WHAT. The reading of the signs of the time. The COVID 19 pandemic and beyond. Addressing the mandates and calls emerging from Accra, Belhar and the Leipzig General Council. The lived experiences of our churches. A world fallen among thieves. The cries of people and creation.

Our process focusses on HOW. First the discernment circles being launched today. Listening, discerning from the diverse perspectives and distinct realities that make up our one family. Critical theological and biblical reflection. This process will be aided by the input of a statement which allows us to focus and summarize our learnings.

The process involves a rhythm of discernment circles following the liturgical year and putting specific realities in interaction with specific regions and concrete identities and groups within our family. This is a process continuing on to next September and leads to a hopefully face to face convocation or conference where the discernment is articulated and the process further defined to lead us to the 2024 General Council.

In this process of discernment and the team that has been assembled it is clear that all of our ways of being koinonia together are interwoven. So while the discernment circles are focused on discerning, confessing, witnessing and being reformed are also intermixed in reflections and actions during this next year. We do not want to create a false separation being our ways of being koinonia.

The process is mark by urgency to respond to Gods call. Koinonia is our gift. Justice is our responsibility.

Discerning together is a also a gift so that uphold each other to do together that which we ca not do alone and to honour that which each one of us brings to this global family. For indeed when one re-suffers we all suffer and even so when one rejoices we all rejoice.

## WCRC COVID-19 and Beyond Working Paper – Oct 30, 2020

We live in a moment of history that presents us with the conflation of at least three calamitous manifestations: (a) a climate emergency which has brought us face to face with the total destruction of the Earth and the extinction of life as we know it. The devastation of the rainforests, the burning Amazon, the desertification of Sub-Saharan Africa, the floods, hurricanes, and heat waves are the evidence of humankind's hubris to undo what God has created. (b) Today, in far too many cases, national politics is dominated by narrow, ethnic (sometimes Christian) nationalisms, racism, white supremacy, authoritarianism, legitimized bigotry, and religious zealotry. Globally, we are not faring any better. Foreign policies are characterized by bullying instead of respectful negotiation; forceful capitulation instead of common understanding; enforced submission instead of equal partnership; reckless lawlessness instead of respect for international law. Rabid ethnic and religious nationalism instead of inclusive global security, and xenophobic rage instead of an understanding of our common humanity. Imperialist expansionism instead of peaceful co-existence; destructive, unbridled neo-liberal capitalist exploitation instead of planetary security; internationalized thuggery instead of the promotion and protection of human rights, and nationalistic vanity instead of global servanthood. It is a form of international political vandalism. (c) President Trump, who seems to have regarded himself as the chosen leader of all this, was presiding over a decaying empire. And under President Biden, the reality of decaying Empire is not likely to change. And as with all empires facing its own ignominious end, it presents an even greater danger to the world and to its own people, whom it can no longer distinguish from those it regarded as enemies.

On top of all these comes the coronavirus, ushering in crises of fear, uncertainty, and a devastation not seen before. Over against all of it seems to be one force: the global revolution against injustice, imperialist violence, and greed, and for life, global solidarity and human dignity. Our response, therefore, is not simply to a crisis, but to the whole complex of crises upon us today. A complex system of dominant and dominating power coalescing to what we dare to name as global apartheid. An exclusionary, exploitative system of death, a scandalous order of a world fallen among thieves.



The coronavirus has itself destroyed the myth that the pandemic is “the great equalizer.” It has not only exposed the criminal inequalities in health care. It has exposed all the entrenched structural, institutional, and systemic economic, social and political inequalities, and the incessant, comprehensive war against the poor and vulnerable, globally and nationally. Whether we are talking about people of colour in the US, UK, and Europe, or Native Americans in the US, Canada, Bolivia, Brazil, or Chile, the racial element in all this, nationally and globally, is now undeniable. Experts say that poverty, hunger, diseases, and violence exacerbated by the pandemic, including gender-based violence, may dwarf the number of those dying of the virus itself. All this flies in the face of the calls for solidarity the World Health Organization pleads for every day. Oxfam calls it “a care crisis.” The WHO calls it a “moral and political crisis.” Thirty years ago, Jürgen Moltmann spoke of “a God crisis.” It seems more relevant now than ever.

The poor are facing intensifying calamities at every level – from criminal neglect by governments to joblessness to evictions; from overwhelming and unpayable debt to illness and death in vastly disproportionate numbers. To say nothing of spiritual despair. They are drowning in a river of escalating impoverishment, while the rich are not only getting richer, but are profiting shamelessly from the virus itself. Jeff Bezos’s 13 billion dollar profit in one day just a little while ago is staggering, but really only a drop in the bucket of wealth collection and expansion during these times. Meanwhile, by the end of this year, 12,000 people will die of hunger every day – most of them in the Global South, and in the Third World of the empire. In the search for a vaccine we hope will stem the tide, and even turn the forward rush of the virus, the rich have already secured their own safety. The United States has cornered the market for the vaccine by securing contracts worth almost \$7 billion with four pharmaceutical companies for 400 million doses of these vaccines. Other rich countries, like the UK, are doing the same. Poor countries are not only way down the line, they are completely out of sight. Never before has Global Apartheid been so glaring. All the subtlety and obfuscation are gone.

All this is a truthful, if painful description of what the Accra Confession calls “a scandalous world,” only 100 times worse. The Accra Confession is our own creation, and it is solid ground to return to the World Communion’s efforts to respond, and to help our churches respond to the multiple crises we are facing. But the urgency is fierce. So we suggest that in our

application of *Accra* today, we must be done with the harmful civility of theological compromise and pacification. We should no longer be hesitant in our embrace of the radical Reformed tradition and of the radical Calvin. On this basis, we must take a clear, firm stand against the harmful fundamentalist theologies mostly imported from outside to which our people in the Global South have been subjected, and which have caused great harm to our societies. These too, the virus has exacerbated. We must learn to open ourselves to the wisdom of indigenous traditions and religions to which many of our people in indigenous communities are now turning in order to create new ways of common understanding, solidarity and action.

*Accra* is clear: we see the world “through the eyes of the powerless and suffering,” because we know that the real scandalousness of this world is only seen through the eyes of those who see it from the bottom of the well. Paragraphs 5 and 28 speak of “the cries of the people.” But Calvin taught us that when the oppressed cry “How Long?” it is “as if God hears Godself cry.” The cries of the poor are actually the cries of God. Par. 5 speaks of “the woundedness of the people and of creation,” but Calvin also speaks of the woundedness of God. Every injustice inflicted upon God’s children, is a wound inflicted upon God. In doing deeds of justice we are then not only healing God’s wounded children, we are healing the wounds of God. Par. 6 reminds us to look at the “root causes” of the scandalous condition. So our critique of “unjust economic conditions” must become unvarnished, pointed, and well-informed critique of neoliberal capitalism in all its forms. Any response to the coronavirus must not just include a call for a Reconstruction Fund, it must include a call for the immediate cancellation of all Third World debt. The work for a Jubilee Year with all its political and moral implications must be urgently revived. (lev. 25, the Lord’s Prayer, “forgive us our debts” revisited.)

Yet in the midst of all these death-dealing realities is a sign of hope – and we see that in the global Black Lives Matter revolution against empire in the streets of cities and towns across the world. In all their interracial, inter-gender, international inclusiveness they are a hopeful, courageous, iconoclastic energy against submission to empire and against hopelessness. The revolt against the lynching of black bodies is revolt against the lynching of hopeful, meaningful life. This is the world revolution Martin Luther King Jr. saw beginning to unfold in his day, and called for people of goodwill to be “on the right side of the revolution.” It is a revolution

described by Indian lay theologian M.M. Thomas as “the demand of the people for *power as the bearer of dignity* and for significant and *responsible participation in society and social history*.” It is the power of the powerless wresting power from the hands of the powerful. It is, in every sense of the word, a Kairos moment.

So the question for the World Communion is not whether there is a revolution going on, but on which side of the revolution are we? What does it mean to “follow Jesus of Nazareth” as Accra demands? The question is not whether we can discern the signs of the times. Those signs are all too clear. The question rather, said M. M. Thomas, is whether “Christians can see God at work through the revolutions of the world” and whether we are “in the grip of the essential truth” that it is about justice, dignity, life, and the creation of a new humanity.

Accra quite deliberately aligns itself with the Confession of Belhar. But are we ready to show the difference between a Confessing Church and a church with a confession? For Belhar that means “that the church is called to stand where God stands: namely with the poor and oppressed, and against *any and all* forms of injustice.” Standing with them means standing with them in their struggles against injustice and for dignity and life. Spiritual empowerment, encouragement, and comfort remain as a given, but offering “thoughts and prayers” are for unimaginative politicians who have run out of platitudes. We should find ways to join the revolution. The power and destruction of imperialism and the revolt against it is not a Scylla and Charybdis through which the church must try to sail safely. It is a choice we have to make. And we should remember: “Many are called, but few are chosen. And the chosen shall be known by their choices.”

Advent is a time of anticipation and expectation for the God who lies behind the veil (?) to be with us. It is a desire for the divine being to journey with us to reveal Godself to us. The constant sense of wonder that accompanies Advent is that it is not just our desire to journey with God, but God’s desire to journey with us, that God actually wants to pitch God’s tent among us. But as in the Advent story, we too are stalked by life-threatening shadows darkening our hopes and expectations at every level and in every moment. The good news of the angels to the shepherds is shadowed by the death news from Jerusalem as they journey to the Inn and the stables behind it. The journey of the magi is shadowed by the tears of Rachel. The journey of Mary to Elizabeth lights up in the glorious joy of expecting life. Yet this moment is shadowed by the deep knowledge that a sword will go through both their hearts.

Above, and despite it all though, is the star “rising in the East” and journeying across the skies past the place of dark deceit and deadly politics, to “stop over the place where the child was,” the stubborn shining light of hope and joy and life not just hovering over, but enlightening the darkness below, drawing us to what is true and steadfast: Immanuel. God is with us.

And this advent we both prepare to journey with God as well as call on God to journey with us, to pitch God’s tent among us as we journey together in a time that calls for new and deeper forms of solidarity and alliance building.

Advent is a time when we remember several journeys. The journey of Mary to Elizabeth, the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, the journey of the Angel to speak to the shepherds, the journey of the shepherd to see the Christ child, the journey of the Magi and the journey to Egypt to flee the evil designs of Herod. And it reminds of travel and journeying in our time, where travel spreads the virus, where migrant workers are struggling to go home because jobs have dried up, where home is not a safe space but a space of violence and assault.

Each of these Biblical journeys represents human solidarity and resistance to Empire. Each of these journeys can and must be fleshed out in their own right. But there are two common aspects that speak to us in this time. The first is that in each of them salvation is not to be found in the centres of power but rather on the margins and shows us the necessity for us to journey to the margins to be able to find our common salvation.

We know now more than ever that our salvation will not come from Capitol Hill but will emerge from the streets of Ferguson where a wall of clergy worked to separate the protestors from the batons of the police forces. Just as the Biblical story of the Magi showed us our salvation will not emerge from the palace of Herod but instead a manger, we know that we cannot expect hope from the stock exchanges of the world but it will instead emerge from the shanty towns of Central Africa, from the streets of Chile, the protestors in Hong Kong, Thailand and India and the indigenous people in Bolivia. That it will not come from patriarchal power in the institutions of higher learning in the global north but will come from children and babies. That our hope comes from the stable and not from the dog-eat-dog world of

capitalism, promise of a new earth where the wolf and the sheep, the lion and yearling shall lie down together and be led by a child.

And so, we journey with the one who calls us and who is to be found among the impoverished, the enslaved, the disempowered, the dispossessed. That the manger opens for a new space where none existed earlier. And this is the call of advent, to newness to the margins to a God of life that is not to found in the corridors of power.

**Focus: Palestine**  
**Appendix D**

A. Apartheid in the Holy Land: Theological reflections on the  
Israel and/or Palestine situation from a South African  
perspective  
by Jerry Pillay

B: Misleading Theologies  
All Africa Conference of Churches  
First Theological Symposium  
October 2019  
Nairobi Kenya

# Apartheid in the Holy Land: Theological reflections on the Israel and/or Palestine situation from a South African perspective

**Author:**Jerry Pillay<sup>1</sup>**Affiliation:**<sup>1</sup>Department of Church History and Church Polity, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, South Africa**Project leader:** J. Pillay**Project number:** 04653484**Description:**

This research is part of the project, 'African Christianity and Development', directed by Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay, Department of Church History and Church Polity, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, South Africa

**Corresponding author:**Jerry Pillay,  
jpillay@up.ac.za**Dates:**

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I first attempt to draw a comparison between the Israel-Palestine conflict and the South African experience of apartheid. Drawing on other established sources and personal experience, I conclude that, while there may be some differences between the two contexts, in essence, the similar experiences of colonisation and racialisation makes the apartheid comparison compellingly relevant. I then proceed to theologially explore the themes of justice and reconciliation and what it may mean in the context of Israel-Palestine whilst extracting from the South African experience. The article also offers some reflections on the role of the Church in addressing the Israel-Palestine conflict.

## Introduction

The central thesis of this article is that the Israel-Palestine situation shows great resemblances to the experience of apartheid in South Africa which can be seen in the colonisation, the war and the forced displacement of people in Palestine. This article attempts, firstly, to show this apartheid comparison and then proceeds to discuss the theological implications of the issues of justice and reconciliation in Israel-Palestine by referring to the same in the South African context. Drawing from the South African experience, the article also offers some reflection on the role of the Church in the Israel-Palestine context.

## The apartheid analogy

The word 'apartheid' comes from an Afrikaans word meaning 'apartness' or 'separateness'. Many white South Africans who attempt to defend 'apartheid' usually speak of separate development which tends to give a positive connotation to the word. However, it is actually an official policy of racial segregation, involving political, legal and economic discrimination against 'non-white' people. It is a policy or practice of separating or segregating groups. This policy separated white and non-white people in South Africa from 1948 to 1994. Black people had to carry special papers or have permission to live and work in particular areas. Many laws were made that prevented mixed marriages, and black people could not own land in white areas, vote or use the same public facilities as white people. Public toilets, parks, beaches and recreational facilities were restricted in certain areas for white people only; black people would be arrested if they tried to use these facilities.

During the 19th century, the Jewish leadership was partially to influence European nationalism and colonisation (cf. Hussein Al-Rimmawi 2009:375–412). They shared a common desire to establishing the State of Israel on the land of Palestine. This became the paradigm for the foundation of the Israeli state which exists up to this day with great cost to human rights and lives. The Palestinians continue to fight for their independence in the face of Israel's continuation to take Palestinian land.

Hence, the analogy between Israel and apartheid<sup>1</sup> entails a comparison between Israel's treatment of the Palestinians and South Africa's treatment of non-white people during its apartheid era.<sup>2</sup> The analogy is not new. It has been used by scholars, United Nations investigators, human-rights

1.The word 'apartheid' is today used quite broadly. For example, the gap relationship between the Global North and South, economic discrimination, are described as apartheid, but the term really emerged from the experience of colonisation and racialisation in South Africa.

2.Note John Dugard's (2008:13), a special rapporteur on human rights, comment: 'What is happening in the Palestinian territory is that Israel is practicing apartheid but in a very dishonest and concealed manner. At least South African apartheid was open and honest. There were notices to indicate that certain facilities were for blacks and certain facilities were for whites only. In Israel you cannot easily access the law. You just have to take it from some member of the IDF that this is the law for a particular day.'

group and critics of Israeli policy, including Jewish critics and others whose identities fall between and/or outside of these groupings (Cliff 2000:9; Davis 2001; Pollak 2009; Rodinson 1973; Will 2007:412). For example, in 2007, a UN report stated that '[e]lements of the Israeli occupation constitute forms of colonialism and apartheid, which are contrary to international law' and suggested that the 'legal consequences of a prolonged occupation with features of colonialism and apartheid' be put to the International Court of Justice.<sup>3</sup> In 2009, the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa published a 300-page report (Bakan & Abu-Laban 2009) which stated the following:

The State of Israel exercises control in the {Occupied Palestinian Territories}<sup>4</sup> with the purpose of maintaining a system of domination by Jews over Palestinians and that this system constitutes a breach of the prohibition of apartheid. (p. 338)

In March 2011, Richard Falk (2014), special reporter with the UN, said:

The continued pattern of settlement expansion in East Jerusalem combined with the forcible eviction of long-residing Palestinians is creating an intolerable situation ... (and) can only be described in its cumulative impact as a form of ethnic cleansing. (p. 141)

Of course, opponents of the analogy claim that the comparison is factually, morally and historically inaccurate and intended to delegitimise Israel. Opponents state that the West Bank and Gaza are not of the sovereign Israel. Although the internal free movement of Palestinians is heavily regulated by the Israeli government, the territories are governed by the elected Palestinian Authority and Hamas leaders so they cannot be compared to the internal policies of apartheid South Africa. Opponents to this view also state that, unlike the South African context that was explicit about its racial segregation policies, Israeli law is the same for Jewish citizens and other Israeli citizens with no explicit distinction between race, creed or sex. For example, South African Judge Richard Goldstone, a Jew, states that the charge that Israel is an apartheid state is a false and malicious one that precludes rather than promotes peace and harmony. For example, Goldstone wrote in the *New York Times* that the term 'apartheid' is an unfair and inaccurate slander against Israel, calculated to retard rather than advance peace negotiations (Goldstone 2011).

That said, according to the findings of the South African session of the Russell Tribunal, the key word to describe Israeli practices in occupied Palestine was 'apartheid,' at

3. Significantly in response to these realities, the contemporary civil-society movement for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS), Israel has similarly popularised the notion of 'apartheid' in reference to Israel (Bakan & Abu-Laban 2009).

4. 'Occupied Territories' is the Palestinian name for the parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip occupied by Israel. It is territory under the control of a belligerent armed force, not being administered pursuant to peace terms, treaty or other agreement. The term 'occupation' is employed in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to advance the argument that Israel bears ultimate responsibility for the welfare of the Palestinians. The term is also used as part of a general assault upon Israel's legitimacy in the context of a geopolitical narrative that has little to do with Israel's status as an occupier under international law.

least in terms of international law. The findings argue that apartheid's 'legal definition applies to any situation anywhere in the world where the following three core elements exist: (1) that two distinct racial groups can be identified, (2) that 'inhuman acts' are committed against the subordinate group and (3) that such acts are committed systematically in the context of an institutionalised regime of domination by one group over another (Harlow 2013:95.3). It is fairly clear that this is the case in the Israel-Palestine situation. The consequent colonisation, racialisation and stereotyping of the Arab 'other' that has marked the Palestinian population demands an analysis of patterns of racialisation (Bakan 2009:332). The application of the term apartheid, meaning state-sponsored 'separateness of 'races', is consistent with the racial contract framework and draws attention to the exclusionary and violent character of the Israeli Zionist project regarding the indigenous Palestinian population.<sup>5</sup> In fact, most proponents of the one-state solution frame their arguments with reference to or in the context of a challenge to an apartheid-like system (Abunimah 2005; Cook 2006; Davis 2003; Farsakh 2002, 2005; Karmi 2007; Tilley 2005). It is our opinion then that, given the state of practices of systemic differential treatment based on racialised and ethnicised characteristics that affect citizenship and rights, the apartheid analysis has significant empirical validity in the case of Israel-Palestine. Admittedly there may be differences in the analysis of these contexts, but by and large, we see the same disrespect and disregard for human dignity and rights, the same use of the law to demonise and brand others as 'terrorists' and refuse people's rights to adequate economic and educational opportunities as well as the persistent use of the settler mentality which can be compared to the Zionist project and the building of the Apartheid Wall that continues to separate Israeli and Palestinian people.

In December 2012, I was amongst a group of leaders of various churches and church organisations (including women and youth) in South Africa that visited the Holy Land to gain first-hand experience of the Israel-Palestine situation. We were invited to listen to the stories and perspectives of what is happening in Palestine. As we listened to the different sides of the stories shared by church leaders, Muslims, Jews, political representatives, NGOs, soldiers and ordinary local people concerning the situation in Palestine, we were starkly reminded of the apartheid days in South Africa and bemoaned the fact that there seemed to be nothing really holy about the Holy Land. Yet we were encouraged by the initiatives undertaken by Christians, Muslims, Jews and others to find peaceful solutions to the problems of Palestine and Israel.

Mindful of our own history and the ongoing need for healing, reconciliation and peace, we were able to identify and engage with certain experiences in a deeply meaningful and personal way. We also recognised with sadness our own sense of judgment and complicity as Christians in

5. For a compelling account of the unlikely alliance between South Africa and Israel, see Benjamin M. Joseph (1954).



addressing the realities of God's people in this part of the world – often out of ignorance and because of misleading information and untested beliefs. It is for these reasons that we went back and shared with the South African public and Christians in particular what we heard, encountered and discerned together during this journey with our friends in Palestine and Israel. I now wish to share with you some of our personal experiences which enabled the visiting team, and I may add that they were mostly black South Africans, to conclude that what we encountered was nothing short of the apartheid that we experienced in South Africa.<sup>6</sup> I was especially surprised and moved when my fellow black colleagues from South Africa went even further and said that it was worse than they had seen or experienced in South Africa.

In our days in Palestine and Israel, we saw the following for ourselves which can be compared to the apartheid experience in South Africa:

1. They are building infrastructure to reinforce an apartheid system, for example, separate roads for Palestinians and Israelis and especially the wall which brings limited security to Israelis but ultimately steals land, oppresses and separates Israelis and Palestinians from each other. This was also evident in South Africa in which the majority of black people were deprived of their land. The minority white population occupied more than 85% of the land. The implementation of the Group Areas Act essentially prevented black people from living on the land forcibly occupied by the apartheid regime.
2. The different kinds of checkpoints and blockages humiliate, harass and oppress Palestinians psychologically, politically and economically. We were deeply alarmed that foreigners were accorded a far easier passage of travel from one place to another than the Palestinians in their own land. This, too, was the case in South Africa. Local people were not allowed the freedom of travel whereas foreigners could go wherever they wanted. The scars of these experiences are still very prevalent amongst those affected in South Africa.
3. Young Israeli soldiers are used to uphold the military occupation of Palestine. This included some former South African young Jews with whom we had the privilege to speak. The South African government back then depended on the military to sustain the apartheid policy, often using even black people against one another. For example, black policemen were used to arrest those who resisted apartheid or transgressed the apartheid laws.
4. Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories are in direct violation of international law, depriving Palestinians of land, natural resources and freedom. Apartheid in South Africa, indeed, violated international law, and it was the international pressure that finally forced it into submission.
5. Christians are working together in addressing the issues of the occupation. This is evident in the Karios Palestine

6. See Farid Esack's (2008:10) account of his own experience in very descriptive comparison with South Africa where he states that the Israel-Palestine situation is worse.

initiative and in their broad involvement in non-violent resistance to the occupation. The churches in South Africa united to resist the common enemy: apartheid.

6. Christians and Muslims are praying and working together on practical matters to end the occupation. In South Africa, one of the greatest movements against apartheid was the interfaith and ecumenical efforts. It was the involvement and mobilisation of these religious groups that eventual saw the demise of apartheid.
7. The destruction and demolition of homes is, inter alia, incited by the intention to dispossess Palestinians of their land, resulting in a broader picture of ethnic cleansing.
8. The economic impact of the occupation is seen in the following: businesses abandoned because of the wall and blockages, the doors of shops welded and closed, olive fields destroyed, restrictions on movement and the emergence of ghost towns in what used to be thriving communities. Of course, in the South African context, business could never really prosper and the economy could never really develop because only white people were actually allowed to advance in this way.
9. Believers are restricted and/or prohibited from worshipping and visiting places of religious importance to them. In South Africa, believers were not really allowed to join in worship together because of the Group Areas Act, but many churches defied this at times.
10. Water tanks on the roofs of Palestinian homes are evidence of restrictions on the use and provision of water whilst this was noticeably absent from homes in the Israeli settlements. In the South African context, the areas in which the majority of black people lived did not have electricity, water or proper sanitation facilities. The areas were disadvantaged and deprived in favour of others by the apartheid policy.
11. In spite of the resentment and even hatred, we saw signs of hope, resilience and the tenacity of the human spirit in the face of injustice and oppression as well as commitment to a just peace. In this regard, the message of love for the enemy too, albeit expressed in non-violent resistance in the Karios document, is a sterling example of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This, too, was evident in the townships in South Africa. I was often amazed at how people could dance and sing in the midst of oppression, hunger and dehumanising circumstances brought about by the apartheid regime.
12. The arrogance, blindness, insensitivity, self-destruction and illusions of security of the oppressor in the establishment of settlements and the use of military might were noticeable. When things got out of hand in South Africa, the apartheid regime declared 'a state of emergency' and used the might of the law and the military to sustain its policies.

I mentioned the above to further illustrate the comparison between apartheid Israel and apartheid South Africa. The above points are intended to illustrate this more clearly and factually. In sharing these personal experiences, it is important to point out that, coming from South Africa, this was a deeply

painful and emotional experience as we resonated with our own struggles under the apartheid regime. Apartheid was a 'racial enclave policy', manifested in white domination and the oppression of blacks by the creation of the black homelands (Bantustans). The incidents of population transfer, military occupation, nominal self-governance, travel restrictions, residency revoking and the prevention of family unification are all cited as mirrors of what Israel imposes on the occupied territories. As the apartheid regime in South Africa, Israel justifies these measures under the pretext of 'security'. As a Human Science Research Council (HSRC) report (May 2009:17) puts it: 'contrary to such claims, they are in fact part of an overall regime aimed at preserving demographic superiority of one racial group over the other in certain areas.'

South Africa's legend and world icon, Nelson Mandela, knew this, and therefore he stated already in 1997 (BDS 2013:1):

The United Nations took a strong stand against apartheid; and over the years, an international consensus was built, which helped to bring an end to this iniquitous system...but we know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.

Mandela (BDS 2013:2) further compared the situation of Palestine with that of South Africa: 'The histories of our two peoples, Palestinian and South African, correspond in such painful and poignant ways.' He mentioned in 1990 (BDS 2013:2): 'We [*South Africans and Palestinians*] live under a unique form of colonialism in South Africa, as well as in Israel, and a lot flows from that.' 'Just like ourselves they [*the Palestinians*] are fighting for the right to self-determination' (*ibid*). In the minds of many South Africans who have studied, reflected on and experienced the situation in Israel and Palestine, there is this close comparison between that context and the apartheid experience in South Africa, if not worse.

## Theological themes

I shall now turn my attention to theological themes in addressing the situation in the Israel-Palestine situation. Admittedly, there are many theological themes that can be explored in this context such as sin, judgment, creation, humankind, peace and human dignity. However, it is not within the scope of this paper to engage such a wide theological analysis. I shall therefore limit my discussion to theological reflections on justice and reconciliation. My selection of the latter is for the following reasons: 1) Both have been identified as important themes in the struggle against apartheid, 2) they are also significant themes in the Israel-Palestine context, and 3) in a sense, most of the other theological themes are embraced in these two. Even here, I shall draw some comparisons with South Africa whilst acknowledging that the context is different. Nonetheless, it can be compared to a similar apartheid experience which has been addressed in the above section.

## Justice

Justice<sup>7</sup> is a very significant theological theme in the context of the Israel-Palestine situation – as much as it was, and still is, in the South African context. Naim Ateek (1989:74) establishes this point by stating that justice lies at the heart of the Palestinian problem. He makes it clear that what happened in 1948 and 1967<sup>8</sup> is viewed by Palestinians as absolute injustice to them. He furthers the argument by indicating the link to justice in the Bible and the way it is used and politically abused to justify the state of Israel.<sup>9</sup> We notice similar tendencies in the South African experience where the Bible was misinterpreted by some Afrikaner and Zionist Christians to justify apartheid. It is no accident then that the ecumenical Church declared apartheid a heresy and biblically untenable and that the churches that justified apartheid had to repent and denounce their biblical justification of apartheid in order to be accepted into the ecumenical family. Any theology of resistance must uphold the quest for justice because this is the call of God who is just, merciful and loving.

An investigation into the meaning of justice (*tsedeq* and *tsedaqah*) in the Old Testament shows that, in the context of creation, it has wider meaning. Justice for Israel, like all its neighbours in the ancient Near East, manifests itself in the right and harmonious order of creation. In order to understand the peculiar nature of ancient Near Eastern conceptions of justice, it is important to realise that creation does not primarily refer to the origin of the world at the beginning but to a process by which cosmos, order, replaces chaos, not only in nature but in society as well.<sup>10</sup> Creation therefore encompasses two realms, which for us are usually quite distinct: the realm of nature and the realm of society.<sup>11</sup>

Justice for Israel, then, means at least two things. Firstly, it refers to the just order on society, what today would be called the rule of law. This rule of law, according to Near Eastern conceptions, is not simply enacted through legislation. Law codes, if they want to reflect the just order of God, have to be grounded in creation itself. That means that the mere fact that a government has passed a law does not in itself guarantee the justness of that law. If that law is not in accordance with God's order of justice, that law will be legal but not right, not just. This is precisely what was seen in

7. Justice has a variety of meanings that can be described in three modes or types: commutative, distributive and social. It is not within the scope of this article to focus on these debates. The reader is referred to David Hollenbach, the ACCRA Confession (2004) and the Belhar Confession (1986) for more insight and information on justice.

8. For more information on the origins of the Six-Day War, which was fought between 5 June and 10 June 1967 by Israel and the neighbouring states of Egypt, Jordan and Syria, see [www.sixdaywar.co.uk/un-role](http://www.sixdaywar.co.uk/un-role). It is also important to note that five months after the Six Day War, the United Nations Security Council prepared a resolution (242) which, amongst other things, called for the 'withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict' and the 'termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries free from threats or acts of force.' See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_)

9. For a more detailed account about the use of the Bible in the Israel-Palestine context, see Naim Ateek (1989:74–114).

10. For a comprehensive discussion on this, see Walter J. Houston (2010:36–54).

11. For a helpful discussion on this, see Duchrow and Liedcke (1987:47–72).

apartheid South Africa, and it is no less different in the Israel-Palestine situation. The law is used under the guise of 'national security' or 'national interest' but commits all kinds of injustice on the indigenous people of the land. In the case of the State of Israel, this means that the value judgment that determines the good is the value judgment of the (powerful) Israeli Jews. The good for the powerful becomes right and, therefore, law. However, it remains unjust. Paul Tillich (1963) expresses this well:

The justice of a system of laws is inseparably tied to justice as conceived by the ruling group, and this justice expresses both principles of right and wrong and principles by which the ruling group affirms and sustains and defends its own power. The spirit of a law inseparably unites the spirit of justice and the spirit of the powers in control, and this means that its justice implies injustice. (p. 264)

Secondly, where society is part of a universal order, our contrast between nature and society has no meaning. The terms *tsedeq* and *tsedaqah* therefore comprise not only justice in the narrow sense of the term but also, in addition, nature and fertility as the following texts clearly demonstrate (Ps 85:12–14; 65:6–14; 72:3–7; Is 11:1–9; 32:15; 45:8; 48:18; 61:11; Jr 2:23). Justice must also be extended to nonhuman life. Thus economic policies and systems must also be evaluated socially and ecologically on the basis of their benefit and harm to the well-being of all in our interdependent relationships. The Accra Confession (2004) shows this well by linking economic justice, gender justice and eco-justice.

The God portrayed in scripture is the 'lover of justice': 'The King is mighty, he loves justice – you have established equity; in Jacob you have done what is just and right' (Ps 99:4; cf. Ps 33:5; 37:28; 11:7; Is 30:18; 61:8; Jr 9:24). We see in God's dealings with Israel how God seeks justice for his people. In sympathetic response to the groaning of Hebrew slaves (Ex 2:23–24), the God 'who executes justice for the oppressed' and 'gives food to the hungry' (Ps 146:7, NRSV) pushed Moses to become the liberator, smashed the shackles of Pharaoh and led the people to a new homeland. God's deliverance became the paradigm of justice for Israel and continues to be so for us.

The covenants between God and the liberated people were understood largely as God's laws for right relationships. They established a moral responsibility on the part of society and its members to deal fairly with participants in the covenant and to provide for the basic needs of all. They also served as an expression of loyalty to their liberator and as a condition for harmony (*shalom*) in the community (Is 32:17). Injustice was a violation of the covenant and an act of faithlessness. In the light of the covenant, to know God is to show justice (Je 22:13–16; Mi 6:8). Indeed, justice in the prophetic tradition is a spiritual discipline, an act of worship, without which the value of other spiritual disciplines – prayer, fasting, sacrifice – are negated (Is 58:1–10; Hs 6:6; Am 5:21–24).

Faithfulness to covenant relationships demands a justice that recognises special obligations, 'a preferential option' to widows, orphans, the poor, and aliens, in other words, the economically vulnerable and politically oppressed (Ex 23:6–9; Dt 15:2–11; 24:14–22; Jr 22:16; Am 2:6–7; 5:10–12). This tradition of concern for the weak and poor was embodied in the idea of the Jubilee Year (Lv 25). The Jubilee Year prevented unjust concentrations of power and poverty by requiring the return of property every 50 years. Similarly, the Year of Release (Dt 15:1–18) provided amnesty for debtors and liberation of indentured servants every seven years.

Justice is a very strong biblical theme that a Christian is called to take seriously. The reign of God, the central theme in Jesus' preaching, should probably be understood as the fulfilment of the prophetic vision of justice and other dimensions of love (Mt 5:3–12; Lk 6:20–31). Jesus incarnates concern for the rights and needs of the poor, befriending and defending the dispossessed and outcasts. For instance, the Magnificat of Mary (Lk 1:52–53) and Jesus' reading from Isaiah (Is 61:1–2) in the temple (Lk 4:16–21) stress social and economic justice; they seem to be attempts of the early Church to define the exemplary ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the Church itself as the pursuit of justice. The suffering servant, with whom the Church traditionally has identified Jesus, is the one who proclaims justice to the nations (Is 42:1–4; Mt 12:18).

Justice then is at the ethical core of the biblical messages. Hence, it is a moral imperative for Christians, especially in our time. Human beings, as moral agents and agents of social changes, possess the power to make positive moral choices and engage in liberating action aimed at the transformation of society in accordance with the moral norm of justice. Justice demands that we focus especially on meeting the needs of the poor and oppressed, both domestically and globally. Economic policies that allow the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer are not to be tolerated. Economic policies that enable some to get more benefits and others to be deprived must be confronted and resisted with all perseverance. The struggle for social justice is the transformation of existing structures of state, economic order and society so that the poor and oppressed may become full participants in the total life of society. Humankind must thus be actively, radically involved in the creation of the just society. In harmony with divine purpose, the human being (especially the Christian) must be radically involved in the struggle for justice and willing to suffer courageously for the redemption of the human community. This is clearly expressed in a famous sentence from the document produced by an international Synod of Bishops in 1971, *Justice in the World*, (quoted in Thompson 1997):

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation. Working for justice is not peripheral or optional, but rather central and essential for a life lived in relationship with God. Faith affects every aspect of

the believer's life, including the social, cultural, economic and political dimensions. Our faith is not just a weekend obligation, a mystery to be celebrated around the altar on Sunday. It is a pervasive reality to be practiced in homes, offices, factories, schools, and businesses across our land. (p. 188)

To sum up then, justice is a process whereby injustice is overcome, exploitation lifted, oppression removed, rights restored and livelihood assured. The demand for justice permeates all social action, social relationships and social structures. Whatever we do in the struggle for justice, our concrete action should be seen as directed toward social transformation. In other words, there needs to be a vision of an alternative society. What does this mean in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict?

According to Israel's Declaration of Independence, the following is stated (quoted in Ateek 2008):

[*The state*] will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on the principle of liberty, justice and peace as conceived by the Prophets of Israel; will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of religion, race, or sex; will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, education and culture. (p. 162)

From what we have shown above, it can clearly be established that Israel is far from embracing such a vision. In addition to transforming its political goals, Israel needs a new theology, one 'based on the principle of liberty, justice and peace as conceived by the Prophets of Israel; [*that*] will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens' (Ateek 2008:162). In this regard, Ateek advocates the call for a Palestinian theology of liberation, pointing out that such a theology 'is a way of speaking prophetically and contextually to a particular situation, especially where oppression, suffering, and injustice have long reigned' (*ibid*:6). Such a theology is grounded in the nature and character of God, offers resistance to injustice, holds out hope to the suffering and oppressed and calls the Church into action (Kairos Palestine 2009)). The Kairos Document (1985) in South Africa adequately expressed this in its critique of 'state theology' and 'church theology' and called for a 'prophetic theology' that takes sides with the poor and oppressed. The CWM theological statement 'Mission in the Context of Empire' (CWM 2010) also called for a resistance to empire, further stressing the need for a theology of resistance which opposes injustice, sides with the poor and oppressed, works for the fullness of life for all and advocates hope. In my opinion, a theology of resistance has three essential characteristics: (1) It is prophetic as it speaks truth to power, (2) it is positional in that it takes sides with the poor and oppressed, and (3) it is transformative as it works for change in a particular context whilst holding out hope. This is what the theology of liberation proposes to do in the Israel-Palestine context.

In the context of Israel-Palestine, justice would require that Israel respects and implements international laws, returns to the Palestinians some of the land it confiscated in the name of Zionism, accepts Palestinians as partners and sharers of the

land and upholds human dignity and rights. Furthermore, all concerned must put an end to violence, war and conflict. This is what is referred to as just peace, which simply means that one cannot have peace without justice. Shalom is obviously part of humanness in all stages, forms and manifestations of life; it means the intactness or wholeness or integrity of a community (Duchrow 1987:113). The sad tendency is to use military might, as was the case in South Africa and also is the case in Israel-Palestine, to secure peace. This is translated into the acquisition of new territory and the subjugation of its inhabitants. However, the peace is only temporary because it is unjust peace. Peace would only last until those who are weak become powerful enough to challenge the force of the oppressor. This is what we have seen in South Africa under apartheid and what we now see in Israel-Palestine.

Israel and Palestine must be prepared to work towards the acceptance and implementation of democratic processes and structures, whether it be a 'One-State' or 'Two-State' solution.<sup>12</sup> Ateek (2008:168–170) argues quite passionately for a 'Two-State' solution whilst the emerging view today seems to be the 'One-State' solution. It is not our intention to get into this debate except to say that justice requires the implementation of democratic structures and practices. However, justice is not an end in itself, it must lead to reconciliation, forgiveness and healing. This is what I shall focus on in the next section.

## Reconciliation and healing

South Africa has taken initiatives to foster reconciliation and healing within the nation. Nelson Mandela and others who were imprisoned by the apartheid regime surprisingly showed forgiveness and worked for reconciliation and healing rather than vengeance and retribution. Whilst there are critics of this position, it cannot be denied that much is being done to bring the people of South Africa together. Reconciliation is an important theme in the Bible. It is a concept related to forgiveness but with a different goal. The biblical word for reconciliation means 'to come back together with'. It refers to the repair and restoration of a broken relationship which is grounded in the action of God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Eph 2:14–18). Whereas forgiveness rests with the giver, reconciliation is 'a two-way street' – it must involve both parties.<sup>13</sup> It implies a desire to continue a relationship, recognising that both parties need to work together to get along.

Reconciliation in divided societies must be understood as a fundamentally transformative process, one that requires 'changing the motivations, goals, beliefs, attitudes and emotions of the great majority of society members regarding the conflict, the nature of the relationship between the parties,

12.Naim Ateek (2008: 1168–170) argues quite powerfully for a 'Two-State' solution. For a discussion on a 'One-State' solution, see Abunimah (2005).

13.There is often a debate on reconciliation and forgiveness. Which action should come first? Some insist that forgiveness precedes reconciliation whilst others argue that forgiveness is the ultimate goal. Our task is not to focus on this debate but to merely make the point that reconciliation and forgiveness are actions necessary in the overall intention of receiving peace.

and the parties themselves (Aiken 2009:19). Martha Minow (1998) states that, in the context of mass violence, justice must walk the path between the opposing poles of vengeance and impunity – a path that acknowledges the wrongness of the harm to victims, assigns responsibility to perpetrators for their actions and recognises the need to work towards repairing past injustices. The biblical call for forgiveness and reconciliation is not to forget about the past but to remember never to do injustice again.

In order to look at what can be done in the context of Israel-Palestine, I shall now attempt to reflect on some practical things that can be undertaken to foster reconciliation, forgiveness and healing. I refer to these suggestions as theological *praxis* – the ability to translate theological thinking into action. In order to illustrate this, I shall draw from transitional-justice theorists.<sup>14</sup> There is a growing consensus amongst conflict transformation theorists as to what successful reconciliation might entail in deeply divided societies such as Israel-Palestine. Generally speaking, they have identified five such indicators (Aiken 2013:20–22).

Firstly, reconciliation is marked by social learning that develops mutual trust amongst former enemies. It is very difficult to encourage trust building in broken relationships. In the context of Israel-Palestine, trust is diminished in the midst of violence, the failure to keep agreements, constant land occupation and the inability to find a way forward over so many years. It is commendable that Christians and Muslims are working together in trustable relationships to work for peaceful solutions to the Israel-Palestine conflict. This is also one of the memorable visions of the struggle against apartheid. It brought together people from many different faiths to unite in their actions against the evils of the apartheid regime. In the context of Israel-Palestine, Christians need to work hard in drawing Israeli people, especially leaders, into the circle of trust. It is usually such relationships that help to change distrust and suspicion into positive ways of seeking change. However, it should be noted that repentance is a precondition for change; it must precede reconciliation and forgiveness. In the conflict between Israel and Palestine, repentance would correspond to an admission by the government of Israel of the injustice it has dealt to Palestinians in its confiscation of land, its violation of human rights and its systems of domination and oppression (Ateek 2008:184). Such repentance, combined with a willingness to do justice and offer reparation, could open the way to reconciliation and forgiveness. In this, the Church has a very definite role to play.

Secondly, reconciliation in divided societies involves processes of social learning that develop a broader sense of collective identification in which the cognitive boundaries of the Self are expected to include the Other, replacing previous divisions with a sense of shared identity, friendship, trust

14. Transitional-justice theorists have provided some very helpful practical suggestions to bring about transformation in conflict situations. My focus in using some of these is intended to offer practical suggestions as to what Christians can do in similar situations. In attempting this, I shall draw mostly from the work of Nevin T. Aiken (2013).

and common interest. The Bible is very clear about putting the interest of others first. Paul, writing in Philippians 2:3–4, states:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Likewise there are many passages in the Old Testament that speak about taking care of the poor, vulnerable and oppressed people.<sup>15</sup> Clearly, Israel has not taken God's call seriously in their treatment of and disrespect for Palestinians in their own land. It is quite alarming that this is so, given their own history of persecution at the hands of the Nazis. It seems that, after this experience, their survival instinct has driven them to imperialistic tendencies. Referring to the South African experience, Praeg (2000:299) states that, concerning the inclusion of the 'we' in the act of judgment, this historical dimension of the traditional dictum for identity places the contemporary *I* in a relationship with its history that is both ethical and necessary. The Church must continue to exercise a prophetic call for justice so that 'fullness of life' is availed to the Other.

Thirdly, the kind of reconciliatory social learning required in divided societies must also include a corresponding change to the antagonistic societal beliefs that enemies hold about one another and that reinforce their relationships of enmity. Reconciliation requires an extension of the boundaries of moral community amongst former antagonists such that members of the Other are effectively 'rehumanised' (Aiken 2009:21). In essence, this entails the development of a more equitable moral order that values difference but also recognises a common humanity amongst former enemies – the notion that Self and Other should be accorded equal moral worth and are therefore entitled to the same ethical considerations. Most notably, this process involves replacing the previous 'culture of violence' with a new 'culture of human rights' under which both Self and Other are perceived to be equally entitled to fundamental human-rights protections (Aiken 2009). This is evidently what we saw in South Africa. The focus on human rights led to the establishment of processes and actions that brought people and groups together to help pave the way for democracy, nation-building, rehumanisation and, ultimately, reconciliation and healing. In the Israel-Palestine situation, we need to find ways to deal with the dehumanisation of people over such a lengthy period in time. However, this can only work when all concerned are prepared to genuinely shift from a 'culture of violence' to a 'culture on human rights'. This is seriously needed in the context of Israel-Palestine, and the Church can play a significant role in enabling this shift, not just because it is capable of so doing but, most significantly, because the Gospel calls it to proclaim and work for justice.

Fourthly, successful reconciliation is distinguished by social learning that leads to perceptions of the illegitimacy or 'unthinkability' of the use of violent force to resolve future disputes amongst former enemies. Reconciliation enables us

15. Refer to passages indicated in the section on Justice.

to move from a war-system, characterised by deeply divided, hostile and violent relationships, into a peace-system, characterised by just and interdependent relationships with the capacity to find non-violent mechanisms for expressing and handling conflict (Aiken 2009). It is a vision of former enemies becoming integrated to the point that there is a real assurance that the members of that community do not fight each other physically but will settle their disputes in some other way. Ateek, who takes the position of non-violence, argues for this in spite of the fact there are others who have come to believe that passive resistance does not work. In South Africa, the Kairos Document established that there is a place for engaged action based on the theory of a 'Just War'. However, in the South African context, it is clear that strides and changes have been made when people, whether forced or willingly, come to the table and dialogue the way forward toward just peace together. The challenge, of course, is getting them to that place. The Church needs to find effective ways in achieving this, and it needs to call on the international world, including world-wide ecumenical bodies, to intervene and assist. This is being done in Israel-Palestine, but more effort needs to be put into it. Part of the struggle is that Christian organisations are often split on their positions on the Israel-Palestine situation. We need a common voice with joint efforts to resist injustice. This would also require challenging Christian Zionism and the biblical justification that usually comes with it.

Fifthly, changes in structural and material conditions are also considered necessary components of social learning and successful reconciliation in divided societies. Reconciled relationships cannot be sustained effectively if gross disparities in economic well-being or inequitable access to social and political rights persist. This is still a problem in South Africa. Although we have a democratic government, the conditions of poor and needy people have not really changed since the demise of apartheid. The ongoing municipal protests and turmoil in the mining industry are some of the indications of the need to shift and address economic imbalances in South Africa. Former enemies' entrenched animosities will not fade easily with the passage of time but will rather require extended reconciliation processes in order to be challenged and overcome (Staub 2001:17). It does not happen in just one Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) exercise as we did in South Africa. Reconciliation and healing is an ongoing process.<sup>16</sup> Truth-recovery and truth-telling is an important dimension for reconciliation and healing, but this must also be accompanied by initiatives to redress the evils and deprivation of the past. This is where the TRC ultimately failed in the South African situation.

## Conclusion

In this study, I have shown that a comparison between the Israel-Palestine conflict and the South African apartheid

16. For more information on the TRC in South Africa see Megan Shore (2009). Also see the work of Allan Boesak (2005).

experience is, indeed, justifiable. Further, I offered a theological critique of the situation in Israel-Palestine by focusing on the need for justice and reconciliation as in the experience of South Africa. I pointed out that the (ecumenical) Church in South Africa contributed immensely to the dismantling of apartheid by taking sides with the majority of poor and oppressed people, refuting apartheid as a heresy and biblically untenable, prophetically speaking out and acting against injustice, mustering the support of the international world, getting politicians to talk, participating in the TRC and helping in the reconstruction and development of the new South Africa. The Israel/Palestine conflict is still with us and seems to get worse by the days. The Church in Israel-Palestine needs to continue with a similar role. It needs to continue to call on the intervention and support of the international world as it raises awareness and communicates the truth of what is happening in its context. It needs to work for justice and reconciliation as it seeks to bring people together, resist the empirical ambition of Israeli Jews and pave the way for a new *alternative society* in Israel-Palestine where there is just peace and fullness of life for all.

## Acknowledgements

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# ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES (AACC) CONFERENCE DES EGLISES DE TOUTE L'AFRIQUE (CETA)

General Secretariat (HQ): P.O. Box 14205, 00800 Westlands, Nairobi, Kenya  
Tel: +254 724 253 354, + 254 20 4441483 • E-mail: [secretariat@aacc-ceta.org](mailto:secretariat@aacc-ceta.org) • Website: [www.aacc-ceta.org](http://www.aacc-ceta.org)

## First Theological Symposium

Theme: Misleading Theologies

October 23<sup>rd</sup> –27<sup>th</sup> 2019, Nairobi, Kenya

### STATEMENT FROM THE SYMPOSIUM

*“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*

(Matthew 28: 19 –20)

#### **Preamble**

The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) *“The Spiritual Pulse of the African Continent”* was founded in 1963 as a continental ecumenical body for different Christian confessions. It is a fellowship of 193 Church Denominations and Christian Councils in 42 African countries with headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

We, theologians from the five sub regions of Africa, namely; Southern, Eastern, Western, Northern and Central Africa with some from diaspora and ecumenical partners, arising from the maiden All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) 1<sup>st</sup> Theological Symposium that focused on Misleading Theologies (MT) held in Nairobi Kenya from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> October 2019;

**Expressed** appreciation and support for the initiative of the AACC in promoting relevant contextual theological engagements and discourses with theologians within and outside member churches and institutions towards promoting theologies that promote life with dignity;

**Noted** with concern the emergence and surge in theologies that could be classified as misleading on the continent of Africa. Such misleading theologies undermine the sovereignty of Christ, fundamental biblical doctrines and sound theological ethos, but evidently exploit and violate the God-given dignity of vulnerable Christians;

**Observed** with profound indignation the countless people adversely affected by these harmful beliefs and practices induced and sustained by misleading theologies;

**Recognized** the gaps in our churches on wealth and poverty, health and healing, leadership styles, power and authority, gender justice and different government regulations that created spaces and opportunities for the emergence, perpetuation and consumption of misleading theologies, teachings and practices in Africa, taking into cognizance the pivotal role that religion plays in the

continent, knowing its susceptibility to elusiveness and fluidity, thereby misused to oppress and inflict pains on unsuspecting adherents;

**Proclaimed** with strong affirmation that Christ through the Holy Spirit gives and sustains life without demands for payment on the part of the human recipient, but a humble response with gratitude that inspires humanity to deal with kindness and respect with each other and continue to stimulate theological and ecumenical dialogue on issues that militate against fullness of life in Africa.

*We, therefore,*

**Call** on all those who create, import and export all forms of misleading theologies, teachings and practices to humbly denounce, renounce and repent of such acts;

**Call** on all adherents of Christian faith to be wary of such perverted and misguided teachings and practices perpetrated and perpetuated by religious merchants in the guise of bearers of gospel message;

**Call** on all ecumenical fellowships at different levels of our society to put in place helping mechanisms that will safeguard innocent believers from falling preys to these religious misleaders that target the vulnerable population in the name of God;

**Call** on governments at all levels in the continent to promote and safeguard religious freedom and rights of religious minorities as well as to safeguard lives of people put at stake by misleading theologies and practices;

*We, therefore,*

**Having** been further equipped with knowledge on misleading theologies as teachings, doctrines and practices that challenge and misrepresent the sovereignty of Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and apparently violate the inherent human dignity, putting life of people in danger;

**Commit** to promote and popularize true teachings of the word of God, renew and reclaim the prophetic voice of the Church in addressing emerging societal issues that offer prospects for misleading theologies, teachings and practices to thrive in the continent;

**Commit** to sound biblical teaching on health and healing that addresses misleading theologies at local congregations through sensitization and enhancing theologies that empower local congregations in their learning and understanding of theological interpretations on health and healing. Constantly highlighting violations of human dignity resulting from misleading theologies and promote holistic healing practices based on Biblical teachings. Further reiterating the role of holistic pastoral care in accompanying the vulnerable and advocating for justice;

**Commit** to practice and advocate for biblical principles of power and authority that recognize that God is the ultimate giver of power and that religious leaders hold delegated powers. As such, there is need for humility, stewardship and servanthood leadership in leading the church. This is in order to curb outward shows of personalized power and authority, which manipulates and exploits the vulnerable. To further deconstruct misleading theologies relating to women and leadership, people with disabilities and pledge commitment to end discrimination of women and



people with disabilities at all levels of church leadership and progressively work to enhance the space for articulation of the effects of MT on women in the church. That power and authority should not be used as tool of oppression and subjugation rather for the glory of God and selfless service to humanity;

**Commit** to continually teach on wealth and poverty that inspire development of relevant contextual and life enhancing theologies of holistic prosperity, which are sustainable, empowering participatory and inclusive. These theologies emphasize positive work ethic, critical thinking, spiritual discernment and stewardship. To also rethink and address in succinct ways the normalization and glorification of poverty as well as the exaltation of materialism as indicators of God's favor upon humankind;

**Commit** to theological training, pastoral and spiritual formation to meet the needs of the people. Reforms in theological teaching to address issues of misleading theologies, promote ecumenical hermeneutics; develop clear theological roadmaps on the thematic issues of power and authority, health and healing, wealth and poverty, regulation of ministry practices, teachings of stewardship and servant leadership; developing pastoral care models which cater to the holistic human needs;

**Commit** to promote collaborating, consensus on ecumenical issues. Further call for the respect for and adherence to national laws in the pursuit of Religious freedoms. Also, recall and emphasize the role of the umbrella bodies to self-regulate the practice of theology by setting minimum standards on pastoral care.

Commit to use every opportunity to address manifestations of misleading theologies in ways that glorify God and restore victims and perpetrators to wholeness.

**Therefore**, in order to achieve our commitments we ask AACC:

To initiate and lead a study process to develop a publication that articulates a positive theology of wealth, prosperity and sustainable development;

To organize similar symposium as an annual theological event that addresses agreed thematic issues informed by prevailing circumstances based on the existential realities of the people of Africa;

*Ephesians 4:15 "... speak the truth in love..."*

Nairobi, October 2019

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AACC is a fellowship of 155 member Churches and 25 Christian Councils in 42 African countries.  
La CETA est une communauté de 155 églises et 25 conseils chrétiens dans 42 pays d'Afrique.

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**SUB-OFFICES**

**African Union Liaison Office:** Nifasilk Lafto Sub City, Woreda 03, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia • TEL: +251 11 385 10 08 / + 251 11 385 10 95  
E-mail: aaccoffice.au@aacc-ceta.org

**Bureau Régional:** 01 B.P. 2268 - Lomé 01, 1235, Rue de la Paix Bè-Château - Lomé-Togo • Tel: +228 22 21 59 24

Email: bureauregional@ceta-aacc.org

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**Focus: Palestine**

**Appendix E**

**Documents from  
Indo - Palestine  
Solidarity Network  
(IPSN)**

# Indo-Palestine Solidarity Network



## *IPSN Position paper No: 1*

### **Indian network disapproves normalization of Arab nations with Israel: Calls it betrayal of justice**

The decision of the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain and Sudan to normalize relations with Israel came as no surprise to those who are keen observers of Israel's designs in the Gulf region. It lay bare what has been clear to Palestinians for decades: Israel's illegal acts of annexation and apartheid will not deter those countries who have selfish interests from the pursuit of their interests, regardless of whether they are joining hands with the region's most oppressive and fascist country. Nor do they care that their normalization will only add more damnation, and heightened violation of human rights to the Palestinians.

UAE and Bahrain are signatories to agreements which have legal responsibilities as third States under international law to take effective action to oppose Israel's illegal settler-colonial enterprise and other unlawful acts. They have, instead, opted to act in contravention of these responsibilities and embrace inexcusable violations of international law and human rights in the name of geopolitical expediency.

### **UAE normalizes for profit not principle**

Emirati support for the struggle against Israeli colonialism, annexationist-aggression and apartheid was ultimately downed by the magnetism of the profitable partnership between the UAE and Israel's private sectors. Defense, cyber security, and infrastructure corporations have for years made billions in revenue as Emirate-based multinationals in Israel, and vice versa. Exports from Israel to the UAE stand to rise up to \$500 million USD annually, whereas UAE investment in Israel may reach an annual \$350 million USD. Similarly, conversations have taken place at the highest political level between Israeli and Bahraini officials. Economic benefit and "peace in the region" is thus the fig leaf for the abandonment and betrayal of the Palestinian people offered by American, Emirati, and Bahraini proponents of normalization.

### **Bahrain's need to suppress political dissent prompts their deal**

Twenty-six years after Bahrain welcomed an Israeli delegation for the first time, the small Gulf archipelago became the second Arab country to agree to normalize its relationship with Israel. Ever since US President Donald Trump announced on August 13 that the United Arab Emirates

and Israel had agreed to establish diplomatic ties, there had been rife speculation that Bahrain would be next. Bahrain first declared two months ago that it was committed to the creation of a Palestinian state. But it was common knowledge that the island state was always likely to follow the UAE once the taboo had been broken. Home to the US Navy's regional headquarters and connected to Saudi Arabia by a 25km (16 miles) causeway, Bahrain in recent years seemed less reluctant to publicize its relations with Israel. In February 2017, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa met Jewish leaders in the United States and reportedly expressed opposition to the boycott of Israel by Arab countries.

The deal with Israel was slammed by the Palestinians as another betrayal by an Arab state, further undermining their efforts to achieve self-determination and leaving them isolated under a new framework to regional "peace" dictated by Trump's administration that also views Iran as malice. There is no doubt that this represents a grave blow to the Palestinians - and a bleak sense that their cause is no longer a priority for Arab regimes.

Just a few days ago, Sudan and Israel agreed on October 24<sup>th</sup> to normalize relations also in a arm twisting U.S.-brokered deal to end decades of hostility, which was widely welcomed by a number of Arab states. Naturally it once again moved Palestinian anger. President Trump had handed the carrot to Sudan. He would remove Sudan from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism (SST). Sudan has been on the list of 'excluded' states for 27 years. Sudan's economy is in chaos and coping with soaring inflation and massive debt. To be taken off the list of 'terror States' is positive economic news for Sudan. It removes significant barriers to vital banking relationships, eases investors' concerns about status risks, and allows the United States to support debt relief for Sudan at the level of international financial institutions.

The Sudanese people who confront everyday economic hardship and food insecurity find it hard to stomach the political fact that Sudan has, as part of the deal, agreed to pay \$335 million to compensate victims of the 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania and the 2000 attack on the U.S.S. Cole in exchange for the deal. Sudan's people had little voice in the decisions of its abusive and authoritarian government during the long tenure of President Omar al-Bashir when the country had adopted terror ways. The Trump Administration's linkage of SST delisting with its impulse for Sudan to normalize its relationship with Israel has only added to the discomfort of some who feel their hand has been forced on a litigious and unconnected issue.

### **'Saudi pressure**

Saudi Arabia has so far signaled it is not ready to 'normalize'. But people in the know, are aware that the recent deals would not have happened without Saudi support. After all, Bahrain's political agenda is pretty much dictated by Saudi Arabia.

In late 2018, just months before Bahrain agreed to host a US-led conference to unveil the economic part of Trump's so-called Middle East plan; Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait pledged \$10bn in financial support for Bahrain to steady its finances. Besides being financially dependent on its neighbours, Bahrain's new alliance with Israel may help it ingrain its power and squash any resistance to authoritarianism or efforts towards freedom and democracy. It is important to recall that in 2011, during the onset of the Arab Spring uprisings, Saudi Arabia sent troops to Bahrain to suppress anti-government protests. Many of those who rallied against the Bahraini monarch were from the country's majority Shia populations who have long complained of repression. Bahrain assumes that joining the bandwagon led by the US will provide the Bahraini monarchy continued protection against its own people.

### **What should the international community's response be?**

It is critical that the international community intervenes to pressure the UAE and Bahrain to comply with their third State obligations towards Palestine and prevent aiding and abetting Israel in its continuing violation of peremptory norms of international law. It is now time, for the international community and the Palestinian people to collectively rise up and resist this egregious regional normalization, to ensure the realization of our people to self-determination and permanent sovereignty, and to prevent Israeli and regional measures towards the erasure of our people, culture, lands and home.

### **Palestinian aspiration is further shattered**

This spate of normalization' deals has done little to console the millions of Palestinians already living under *de jure* annexation in East Jerusalem, under *de facto* annexation in much of the West Bank, as refugees and exiles denied their right of return, or being treated as demographic threats and invaders within Israel's borders. Whether American-backed *de jure* annexation comes now or in 2024, Palestinians will continue to be targeted with deadly force, will continue to watch their homes being demolished, will continue to be denied reunification with their families, will be denied the right to return to their homes and lands, and will be denied the dignity promised to them by an international rules-based order.

### **Restore 1967 is the Palestinian call**

The Palestinian leadership wants an independent state based on the *de facto* borders before the 1967 war, in which Israel occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and annexed East Jerusalem. Arab countries have long called for Israel's withdrawal from already illegally occupied land, a just solution for Palestinian refugees and a settlement that leads to the establishment of a viable, independent Palestinian state in exchange for establishing ties with it.

In effect, the normalization of diplomatic and trade relations between the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Israel reveal a worrying and detrimental trend in regional State practice towards the acceptance and endorsement of Israel's illegal acts against our people including, the closure and collective punishment of the Gaza Strip, enforcement of an apartheid regime over the Palestinian

people as a whole, the annexation of our land, and the erasure of the Palestinian people. The shameful recognition of Israel's illegal acts by both these States must be collectively opposed, by the international community, and the Palestinian people.

### **How can peace be based on veiled militaristic options?**

For now it may seem something like a postscript. But a dimension that does not make too many headlines is that these deals can make the region far more militarized than it already is. UAE and Bahrain have bargained for sophisticated weaponry even against the disinclination of Israel. Sudan will receive weapons to put down the rebels. Israel would rather retain its absolute military supremacy over the entire region and circumvent parallel military forces which may be a threat to Israel in case Arab regimes at some point chose to confront Israel.

### **The Iran factor**

In the meantime, the tensions with Iran will grow. Iran is seen as a threat to the region which is predominantly Shia in composition. Whereas, Iran is unique in the Muslim world because its population is overwhelmingly more Shia than Sunni (Shia constitute 95% of the population) and because its constitution is a theocratic republic based on rule by a Shia jurist. The so-called normalization deals are also meant to build a coalition which will weaken Iran and strengthen the Sunni coalition against Iran. What if Iran finally decides to actualize its nuclear capacities?

### **The Arab countries line up – The Palestinians lose their morale**

Further, one is watching keenly the outcome of the US elections which may prompt more countries to sign normalization deals with Israel. These include Oman, and Saudi Arabia. In effect, they will become Israel's allies no matter how strongly they claim that their deals will prevent a total annexation of Palestinian territory. The West Bank is under de facto annexation. Sooner or later it will shift to de jure status and none of the countries which sign deals will be able to resist the decisions of Israel backed, as they will be, the US.

These developments have raised a number of important questions on the political scene in the Middle East. Does this diplomatic success for Israel mean that the Palestinian question has been completely marginalized in Arab politics? Have Palestinians lost their influence on the normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel? Will the countries that sign peace deals with Israel be able to sidestep the claims of Palestinians, the original holders of the cause, and come up with a "solution" to the Palestinian issue?

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has recorded a notable escalation in Israeli attacks against Palestinians since the recent normalization agreements signed with Arab states. In a report, the PLO disclosed that it had recorded serious Israeli aggressions on Palestinians between 15 September, the date of signing the deals in Washington, and 15 October. The report found that Israel intensified expansion of its settlements, demolition of Palestinian homes, the killing and wounding of innocent people, carrying out raids and detention campaigns, and "systematic aggression" on religious institutions.

The PLO has indicated that the Israeli annexation of occupied Palestinian lands is continuous, adding that it is accompanied by settlers' attacks on Palestinian citizens. According to the report, the Israeli occupation forces opened fire more than 240 times, killing two Palestinians, wounding more than 90 others, detaining more than 480 including children, and have demolished 25 homes and facilities. But the Palestinians are relentless: "...neither prison nor siege have ended the Palestinian struggle for freedom. Palestinians in Gaza, as elsewhere, are determined to claim their rights, no matter how high the price. The discussion touches on the stories of real Palestinians who have paid a high price for their resistance, in all of its forms.

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## **Indo - Palestine Solidarity Network (IPSN) Groups from across the world ask UN General Assembly to act against Israeli apartheid**

More than 450 civil society and human rights groups from across the globe released a letter addressed to the ongoing 75th session of the UNGA asking it to revive its anti-apartheid bodies and take action to end Israeli occupation of Palestine. IPSN joined this action



*Photo: Anne Paq/Activestills.org*

Palestinian civil society, along with scores of other groups, from across the globe launched a campaign on Tuesday, September 22 demanding that the United Nations General Assembly “assume its responsibility for investigating and ending Israeli apartheid, as it did in South Africa.” The campaign coincides with the 75th anniversary commemoration of the first sitting of the UNGA going on at the moment at New York.

The campaign began with the release of a letter signed by 452 civil society organizations from across the globe. The letter said “apartheid is a crime against humanity” and acknowledges the crucial role played by the UN to fight against it in the past.

The letter noted several previous acknowledgments by UN teams about the nature of Israeli policies inside the occupied territories. It quoted the findings of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in December 2019 according to which Israel has “policy and practice of segregation and apartheid” against Palestinians on both sides of the green line. The letter also quoted the South African National Statement in the UN Human Rights Council in June this year which highlights that the proposed “annexation [of parts of the occupied West Bank as announced by Israel] would be yet another example of complete impunity that makes a mockery of this Council and would gravely breach international laws.”

The signatories reiterated the long-held demands of the Palestinian people for the right to self-determination and end of Israeli occupation. It also demanded that the UN General Assembly take steps to end the illegal Israeli blockade of Gaza.

They also asked the members of the UN General Assembly to launch an investigation into the Israeli apartheid regime and hold individuals and states responsible in aiding Israel. It demanded the reconstitution of the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid and UN Center Against Apartheid which were disbanded after the end of apartheid regime in South Africa.

Signatories of the letter also asked for a ban on arms trade and all kinds of security cooperation with Israel by the member states of the UNGA and prohibition of all trade with the Israeli settlements inside the occupied territories.

# Indo-Palestine Solidarity Network



Rifat Kassis  
General Coordinator  
Global Kairos for Justice

Dear Rifat,

## **Palestine Prisoner's Week**

The Indo-Palestine Solidarity Network (IPSN) brings to you a message of solidarity on the occasion of Palestine Prisoners Week. In this connection, we are sending out messages to the Israeli Embassy and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in India. We are also sending a message of solidarity to the Palestinian Embassy.

The two letters that follow are attached herewith.

We are aware that the situation of Palestinians in General, and Palestinian prisoners in particular is grave. Everyday there is news of atrocities, arrests, detentions and the torture of innocents, many of whom are young people- even children. Nearly every family in Palestine has been directly or indirectly by Israel's policy of arbitrary and illegal detention.

It speaks to our hearts and angers us when we see how indifferent the international community is. We are angered by the way in which Israel uses mass detention and imprisonment as a policy to suppress resistance to detention.

During this week, IPSN will try to organize a collective gathering of other activist groups in India who stand in solidarity with Palestinians. Owing to travel restrictions because of Covid, we are not able to send a delegation to the Palestinian Embassy, Israeli Embassy (who we do not expect to welcome us). That is still a plan but for later when Covid recedes. It is really bad in Delhi these days.

Rifat, please convey our solidarity with our Palestinian sisters and brothers at this time, especially those who have family in prison, those who live under administrative detention, children, women, and political prisoners who have spent what seems countless years in prison.

Our letters are for your use in any way you deem fit. If you can, please use it on your website and/or Face book.

Coincidentally, here in India, we are facing a situation in India where anyone who is a critique of the government risks being imprisoned under a law called (UAPA- Unlawful Activities Prevention Act). It is a sibling of Administrative Detention. The arrival of Mr. Modi as our PM has drawn India closer to Israel and deepened our military ties. This is visible in many ways but especially so in Kashmir, which is India's equivalent of Palestine. Those who have seen both places know that in part, Kashmir is even more brutal.

This spells out why Palestine and Kashmir need to coalesce around issues like human rights and prisoners.

In solidarity

Sr. Zita Fernandes  
Executive Secretary

Roger Gaikwad  
President

# Indo Palestine Solidarity Network



To:  
Dr. Ron Malka  
Ambassador of Israel to India and Sri Lanka  
[consular2@newdelhi.mfa.gov.il](mailto:consular2@newdelhi.mfa.gov.il)

Dear Ambassador Malka,

We are writing as the Indo Palestine Solidarity Network (IPSN). Ours is a network of like-minded people drawn from across India committed to justice and freedom for Palestine. We seek an end to the racist-colonialist-apartheid politics of Israel.

2020 was the worst year for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons. Israel has hardened its practices towards Palestinians this year. The prison administration raids and attacks detainees' sections almost every day. Israel's perpetual violations of Palestinians' basic rights have made 2020 the worst year for prisoners in Israeli jails where some 4,400 Palestinians are currently incarcerated

Prisoners are subjected to solitary confinement without humanitarian conditions. In 2020, Israel has passed a law to impose more strict conditions.

It is a matter of distress that a total of 137 prisoners were infected by COVID-19 in Gilboa Prison in northern Israel alone. Israel did not care about the lives of the prisoners and did not take protective measures. There are 360 Palestinians being held by Israel in the prison. According to Palestinian estimates, there are 4,400 Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons, including 39 women and 155 children, and around 350 being held under Israel's administrative detention policy, which allows holding Palestinians without charge or trial.

As a network committed to justice and freedom, we join tens and thousands of democratic and progressive forces of the world and all friends of the Palestinian people, liberation movements, solidarity organizations and movements, in the call for rights and justice. Our call joins thousands of peace-justice loving people to demand the liberty of the prisoners of freedom in the prisons of Zionist colonialism, the first line of the Palestinian resistance in occupied Palestine.

We recognize that the prisoners and detainees are an activist corps engaged in the struggle on the front lines, every day, every hour, minute, and second, confronting with their bodies and their

voices the Israeli brutality and Zionist crimes. They struggle despite the siege, isolation and military force of colonialism to support the steadfastness and leadership of the Palestinian prisoners' movement, stand with the Palestinian struggle within the prisons of the occupation, and urge the liberation of all Palestinian prisoners.

We regret the violation of fundamental rights as enshrined in international law and the Geneva Conventions. Our demand is that systematic policies which include the denial of family visits, denial of visits and communication with lawyers, isolation and solitary confinement, collective punishment, torture, administrative detention without charge or trial, violent raids of prisoners' rooms, confiscation of books, and the continued detention of children and ill patients, a situation that has been intensified in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the threat it poses to the lives of all Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli prisons.

We find it abhorrent that the policy of arrests practiced by the Zionist colonial authority targets the Palestinian people throughout occupied Palestine, in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and occupied Palestine '48, and in the besieged Gaza Strip, where aggression, siege and arrests target even fishermen and farmers in Gaza. The Zionist occupation has encroached upon Palestinian land, from the river to the sea, and targets Palestinian people, every man, woman, youth, elder and child throughout our occupied homeland. This is what unites us with the Palestinian people, inside occupied Palestine and in exile and diaspora, to stand firmly with the struggling prisoners' movement that fights and sacrifices for their rights, because it is a true national leadership that reflects the essence and goal of the Palestinian struggle and the meanings and values of resistance, liberation, equality, self-sacrifice and dedication.

The Palestinian Prisoners' Week between 17-23 April 2021 must be a global occasion for joint struggle confronting colonialism, racism, Zionism, exploitation and imperialism, for a better world, a humane society and an alternative directed by the values of solidarity, collective good and popular liberation.

The IPSN urges seekers of justice to stand with the Palestinian people, the Palestinian prisoners and their valiant resistance on Palestinian Prisoners' Week, which takes place between 17 and 23 April 2021. On this occasion, we condemn the daily Zionist crimes to which they are constantly subjected, including the policies of repression, isolation, collective punishment and deprivation practiced by the prison administration against them. We are convinced that Israel cannot impose peace any longer. A peace based on justice is the only way that Israel will find peace. This requires a mediated dialogue based on fairness.

***Sr. Zita Fernandes***  
***Executive Secretary***

***Rev. Dr Roger Gaikwad***  
***President***

Secretariat: [indopalestinesolidaritynetwork@gmail.com](mailto:indopalestinesolidaritynetwork@gmail.com): +91-9881181350, 149D, Gina, Maina-Curtorim, Salcete, GOA- 403709, India

# Indo Palestine Solidarity Network



TO:

Sri Subrahmanyam Jaishankar  
Minister of External Affairs  
Government of India,  
South Block Raisina Hill,  
New Delhi  
[eam@mea.gov.in](mailto:eam@mea.gov.in)

Dear Minister,

We are writing as the Indo Palestine Solidarity Network (IPSN). Ours is a network of like-minded people drawn from across India committed to justice and freedom for Palestine. We seek an end to the racist-colonialist-apartheid politics of Israel.

As you are probably aware, The Palestinian Prisoners' Week will be commemorated between 17 and 23 April 2021. It is an opportunity for countries around the world which believe in freedom and democracy to join forces against the forces of colonialism, racism, Zionism, exploitation and imperialism, as practiced in Israel against. It is a time to create a breakthrough and extend our solidarity for the freedom and liberation of from the bondages of occupation.

2020 was the worst year for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons. Israel has hardened its practices towards Palestinians this year. The prison administration raids and attacks detainees' sections almost every day. Israel's perpetual violations of Palestinians' basic rights have made 2020 the worst year for prisoners in Israeli jails where some 4,400 Palestinians are currently incarcerated

Prisoners are subjected to solitary confinement without humanitarian conditions. In 2020, Israel has passed a law to impose more strict conditions. Israel did not care about the lives of the prisoners and did not take protective measures when it came to Covid. According to Palestinian estimates, there are 4,400 Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons, including 39 women and 155 children, and around 350 being held under Israel's administrative detention policy, which allows holding Palestinians without charge or trial.

Prisoners and detainees are an activist corps engaged in the struggle on the front lines against Israeli brutality and Zionist crimes. They struggle despite the siege, isolation and military force



of colonialism to support the steadfastness and leadership of the Palestinian prisoners' movement, and urge the liberation of all Palestinian prisoners.

As a network committed to justice and freedom, we join tens and thousands of democratic and progressive forces of the world and all friends of the Palestinian people, liberation movements, solidarity organizations and movements, in the call for rights and justice. Our call joins thousands of peace-justice loving people to demand the liberty of the prisoners of freedom in the prisons of Zionist colonialism, the first line of the Palestinian resistance in occupied Palestine.

The Palestinian Prisoners' Week between 17-23 April 2021 must be a global occasion for joint struggle confronting colonialism, racism, Zionism, exploitation and imperialism, for a better world, a humane society and an alternative directed by the values of solidarity, collective good and popular liberation. The Indian government could lead the call for Israel to abandon brutal policies which include the denial of family visits, denial of visits and communication with lawyers, isolation and solitary confinement, collective punishment, torture, administrative detention without charge or trial, violent raids of prisoners' rooms, confiscation of books, and the continued detention of children and ill patients, a situation that has been intensified in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the threat it poses to the lives of all Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli prisons.

Israel cannot impose peace through militarism and a continuing any longer. A peace based on justice is the only way that Israel will find peace. This presupposes dialogue mediated by nations that see justice as primary. India once led the Non Aligned Movement in support of Palestinian freedom even condemning and boycotting Israel. It is a role we must recover. Our current policies are pro-Zionist. Our military and economic ties with Israel destroy the credentials that put us at the forefront of struggles for democracy. Instead, we find ourselves as partners with Israel's murderous military machines.

We urge you to exercise your influence to be at the forefront of the struggle that forces Israel to surrender its political choices. The situation demands new political choices. At a time when important forces for human rights within Israel have themselves called it an 'apartheid state', India should act to enforce human rights and hasten to end the occupation by pushing an agenda of Boycott-Divestment-Sanctions that will bring Israel to its knees. Until forceful economic, cultural, and academic boycotts are enforced on Israel, Israel will not alter its political choices.

We hope to hear about a robust intervention from the Indian government.

***Sr. Zita Fernandes***  
***Executive Secretary***

***Rev. Dr Roger Gaikwad***  
***President***

Secretariat: [indopalestinesolidaritynetwork@gmail.com](mailto:indopalestinesolidaritynetwork@gmail.com): +91-9881181350, 149D, Gina, Maina-Curtorim, Salcete, GOA- 403709, India

# Indo-Palestine Solidarity Network



Dear IPSN members,

We are writing to you to bring to your attention the commemoration of Palestine Prisoners Day. As part of our solidarity, we have written letters to the Israel Embassy (a protest against their policy of detention without due cause or process). Prisoners in Palestine are rarely common criminals. They are those who resist the Israeli occupation.

Additionally, we have also written a letter of solidarity to the Embassy of Palestine and one to the General Coordinator of Global Kairos for Justice. Please share them widely.

We also hope each of you can organize an event in your own village/town/city. Even if the numbers you get are small, the act of solidarity is important. Do also share with us a message you want us to pass on to our Palestinian sisters and brothers. In this letter we share from the Samidoun Palestine Prisoner Solidarity Network (See below), there is useful information as well as ways in which you can observe the day.

In solidarity,

*Sr. Zita Fernandes*  
*Executive Secretary*

*Rev. Dr Roger Gaikwad*  
*President*

## **Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network**

***The Call for Liberation and Steadfastness (17-23 April 2021)***

***A week of action to support the steadfastness of the Palestinian prisoners' movement and to liberate the detainees from Israeli occupation prisons***



We, in the Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network in Occupied Palestine, today call upon all the democratic and progressive forces of the world and all friends of the Palestinian people, liberation movements, solidarity organizations and movements, to join us in this call for rights and justice. **We call upon you today with a free Palestinian cry to the global conscience to stand firmly and clearly with the Palestinian people's struggle and their legitimate and continuous resistance until victory and liberation.**

This is the call of the prisoners of freedom in the prisons of Zionist colonialism, the first line of the Palestinian resistance in occupied Palestine. The prisoners and detainees are a revolutionary corps engaged in the struggle on the front lines, every day, every hour, minute, and second, confronting with their bodies and their voices the Israeli brutality and Zionist crimes that are fully supported by the United States and its imperialist allies.

Nevertheless, the Palestinian prisoners continue to struggle with exceptional determination and steadfastness, despite the siege, isolation and military force of colonialism. This is a call to support the steadfastness and leadership of the Palestinian prisoners' movement, stand with the Palestinian struggle within the prisons of the occupation, and urge the liberation of all Palestinian prisoners. **We urge all to organize the widest international popular movement to stand with the Palestinian people, the Palestinian prisoners and their valiant resistance on Palestinian Prisoners' Week, which takes place between 17 and 23 April each year.**

We, with our comrades in Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network inside and outside occupied Palestine, carry the message of the prisoners' movement inside the Israeli occupation prisons, and call upon you to participate and join with us in organizing a week of popular and solidarity activities, campaigns, actions and movements in support of the Palestinian prisoners and their just struggle for freedom and liberation. We call upon you to expose the daily Zionist crimes to which they are constantly subjected, including the policies of repression, isolation, collective punishment and deprivation practiced by the prison administration against them.

These systematic policies include the denial of family visits, denial of visits and communication with lawyers, isolation and solitary confinement, collective punishment, torture, administrative detention without charge or trial, violent raids of prisoners' rooms, confiscation of books, and the continued detention of children and ill patients, a situation that has been intensified in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the threat it poses to the lives of all Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli prisons.

At the same time, the Palestinian people in occupied Jerusalem are continuing their popular struggle and steadfastness, confronting the bulldozers of the occupation and the policy of comprehensive ethnic cleansing, uprooting and systematic dispossession of the Palestinian people. This is an official, declared Zionist policy taking place before the eyes of the world since 1947 that has not ceased for one day. Entire Arab residential neighbourhoods are being targeted for displacement, as is the case in Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan, Suhafat, Issawiya, and the neighborhoods and areas of the Palestinian people throughout occupied Jerusalem. At the same time, the occupation forces continue their policy of repression, persecution and arbitrary arrests throughout occupied Jerusalem. Hardly a day passes without violent nighttime arrests and raids that target women, men, students, workers and even children.

It is clear that the policy of arrests practiced by the Zionist colonial authority targets the Palestinian people throughout occupied Palestine, in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and occupied Palestine '48, and in the besieged Gaza Strip, where aggression, siege and arrests target even fishermen and farmers in Gaza. This reality confirms that the Zionist occupation has encroached upon our entire Palestinian land, from the river to the sea, and targets our entire Palestinian people, every man, woman, youth, elder and child throughout our occupied homeland. And that is why our Palestinian people, inside occupied Palestine and in exile and diaspora, stand firmly with the struggling prisoners' movement that fights and sacrifices for their rights, because it is a true national leadership that reflects the essence and goal of the Palestinian struggle and the meanings and values of resistance, liberation, equality, self-sacrifice and dedication.

Confronting the silence and inaction of the so-called "international community," which is well-aware of these facts and the documented details of the crimes committed against our Palestinian people and their liberation movement, and in light of the unprecedented levels of oppression and Israeli occupation crimes, and the collusion of institutions and reactionary states in the region and beyond in seeking normalization and alliance with Israel, we make this global appeal to our friends and comrades, the democratic forces and free people of the world everywhere, to be part of this freedom struggle waged by the Palestinian people and to stand with the spearhead of Palestinian resistance, the struggling prisoners' movement, confronting imperialism, racism and reactionary forces and their proxies in occupied Palestine and throughout the region.

We carry to you today the message of the prisoners struggling inside the prisons of the Zionist occupation. We extend our salutes to all of the activists, strugglers and freedom fighters detained in the prisons of the world. We stand with their just and legitimate struggles to achieve their goals and

salute their sacrifices. We remind ourselves and the world of the suffering of our fellow political prisoners in the prisons of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, Greece, the Philippines, Colombia, the United States and elsewhere, and we call for support for their resistance and liberation. This week of solidarity with our Palestinian prisoners is also a week of solidarity with every prisoner fighting for liberation, social justice and victory over the systems of oppression, exploitation and persecution wherever they are.

On this day, we send our deepest greetings of steadfastness and honour to comrade Georges Ibrahim Abdallah in French prisons. He is an exceptional revolutionary figure, one of the symbols of our resistance and a leader of the Palestinian prisoners' movement. We also demand the liberation of all political detainees in US prisons, including the veteran leaders of the Black Panther movement, and we affirm the depth of the relationship of joint struggle between our Palestinian people and the Black Liberation Movement in the United States. The distance between us does not undermine the realities of our joint struggle, shared goals and common enemy.

**The Palestinian Prisoners' Week between 17-23 April 2021 must be a global occasion for joint struggle confronting colonialism, racism, Zionism, exploitation and imperialism, for a better world, a humane society and an alternative directed by the values of solidarity, collective good and popular liberation.**

**Long live the Palestinian people's struggle for liberation and return!**

**Long live the struggle of the Palestinian prisoners' movement!**

**From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!**

## **Take Action: Suggested Action Items**

**Please join us in taking action of the Week of Struggle!** Your local actions are incredibly important in building the movement that is so necessary for the cause. With the COVID-19 pandemic, many people have been forced to organize indoors and online. We encourage activists and organizers to consider public, outdoor actions that you can take that are safe, creative and mobilizing, as well as letter-writing campaigns to support the prisoners. Here are a few action items. Please share yours with us at [samidoun@samidoun.net](mailto:samidoun@samidoun.net).

### **1. Demonstrations, rallies and street actions – including actions to boycott Israel!**

Have a protest or action to free Palestinian prisoners, support the Palestinian struggle for liberation, stand with the Palestinian resistance and boycott Israel and its complicit corporations. There are many different kinds of actions that you can take that are safe while still getting out on the streets – check out the [Stand Palestine](#) organized by Collectif Palestine Vaincra in Toulouse, France; or the **outdoor informational gatherings in Aachen and Dusseldorf, Germany, organized by [Samidoun Deutschland for Land Day](#) and the [Free Palestinian Students campaign](#)**. With Ramadan approaching, it's important to highlight the campaign to boycott Israeli dates in particular! Include the Palestinian prisoners in your campaign against the agriculture of apartheid.

You can also check out the **civil disobedience actions organized against Elbit, the arms manufacturer**, by [Palestine Action](#) in the UK for direct actions targeting the apartheid war machine.

## 2. Letter Writing Actions

Support the steadfastness of Palestinian prisoners by writing letters to them. **You can send them directly to Israeli prisons** — making clear not only to the prisoners but also to the prison administration that the world is watching and Palestinian prisoners are not isolated. Click here to download [one list of addresses for Palestinian prisoners](#) – part of the [#FreePalestinianStudents campaign](#).

**In addition, Samidoun Palestine is in touch directly with the families of Palestinian prisoners. Take photos of your letters and send them to us via email at [samidoun@samidoun.net](mailto:samidoun@samidoun.net) or via WhatsApp at +32466904397.** You can even send us a voice note to broadcast on the radio stations transmitted to the prisoners. **Letter writing actions can be held in person (even outdoors) or virtually/remotely over any meeting solution.**

## 3. Creative Actions

Creative actions are a wonderful way to spread the word and highlight the struggle of the Palestinian prisoners – even when you are engaging in physical distancing and health precautions. The banner hung by **Samidoun España in Madrid at the University metro station** highlighted the struggle of Palestinian students, while the **campaign to [symbolically rename streets after Georges Abdallah](#)** internationally commemorated his birthday and amplified the demand for his liberation.

These actions only require one, two or a few people. **You can even simply poster and sticker around your neighbourhood.** Contact us via email at [samidoun@samidoun.net](mailto:samidoun@samidoun.net) or via WhatsApp at +32466904397 if you are looking for image ideas or resources!

## 4. Online/Virtual Events and Webinars

We still have plenty to share with each other via online events and webinars, which can enable us to connect easily and freely across borders and barriers. Host a webinar or event — or a cultural gathering with poetry and music — highlighting the struggle of Palestinian prisoners.

**Please note: Samidoun has speakers that can participate in your webinars in Arabic, English, French, German, Dutch, Spanish and other languages. Contact us via email at [samidoun@samidoun.net](mailto:samidoun@samidoun.net) or via WhatsApp at +32466904397 to inquire about a Samidoun speaker!**

**Focus: Palestine**

**Appendix E**

**Text**



# Indo-Palestine Solidarity Network



## *IPSN Position paper No: 1*

### **Indian network disapproves normalization of Arab nations with Israel: Calls it betrayal of justice**

The decision of the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain and Sudan to normalize relations with Israel came as no surprise to those who are keen observers of Israel's designs in the Gulf region. It lay bare what has been clear to Palestinians for decades: Israel's illegal acts of annexation and apartheid will not deter those countries who have selfish interests from the pursuit of their interests, regardless of whether they are joining hands with the region's most oppressive and fascist country. Nor do they care that their normalization will only add more damnation, and heightened violation of human rights to the Palestinians.

UAE and Bahrain are signatories to agreements which have legal responsibilities as third States under international law to take effective action to oppose Israel's illegal settler-colonial enterprise and other unlawful acts. They have, instead, opted to act in contravention of these responsibilities and embrace inexcusable violations of international law and human rights in the name of geopolitical expediency.

### **UAE normalizes for profit not principle**

Emirati support for the struggle against Israeli colonialism, annexationist-aggression and apartheid was ultimately downed by the magnetism of the profitable partnership between the UAE and Israel's private sectors. Defense, cyber security, and infrastructure corporations have for years made billions in revenue as Emirate-based multinationals in Israel, and vice versa. Exports from Israel to the UAE stand to rise up to \$500 million USD annually, whereas UAE investment in Israel may reach an annual \$350 million USD. Similarly, conversations have taken place at the highest political level between Israeli and Bahraini officials. Economic benefit and "peace in the region" is thus the fig leaf for the abandonment and betrayal of the Palestinian people offered by American, Emirati, and Bahraini proponents of normalization.

### **Bahrain's need to suppress political dissent prompts their deal**

Twenty-six years after Bahrain welcomed an Israeli delegation for the first time, the small Gulf archipelago became the second Arab country to agree to normalize its relationship with Israel. Ever since US President Donald Trump announced on August 13 that the United Arab Emirates

and Israel had agreed to establish diplomatic ties, there had been rife speculation that Bahrain would be next. Bahrain first declared two months ago that it was committed to the creation of a Palestinian state. But it was common knowledge that the island state was always likely to follow the UAE once the taboo had been broken. Home to the US Navy's regional headquarters and connected to Saudi Arabia by a 25km (16 miles) causeway, Bahrain in recent years seemed less reluctant to publicize its relations with Israel. In February 2017, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa met Jewish leaders in the United States and reportedly expressed opposition to the boycott of Israel by Arab countries.

The deal with Israel was slammed by the Palestinians as another betrayal by an Arab state, further undermining their efforts to achieve self-determination and leaving them isolated under a new framework to regional "peace" dictated by Trump's administration that also views Iran as malice. There is no doubt that this represents a grave blow to the Palestinians - and a bleak sense that their cause is no longer a priority for Arab regimes.

Just a few days ago, Sudan and Israel agreed on October 24<sup>th</sup> to normalize relations also in a arm twisting U.S.-brokered deal to end decades of hostility, which was widely welcomed by a number of Arab states. Naturally it once again moved Palestinian anger. President Trump had handed the carrot to Sudan. He would remove Sudan from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism (SST). Sudan has been on the list of 'excluded' states for 27 years. Sudan's economy is in chaos and coping with soaring inflation and massive debt. To be taken off the list of 'terror States' is positive economic news for Sudan. It removes significant barriers to vital banking relationships, eases investors' concerns about status risks, and allows the United States to support debt relief for Sudan at the level of international financial institutions.

The Sudanese people who confront everyday economic hardship and food insecurity find it hard to stomach the political fact that Sudan has, as part of the deal, agreed to pay \$335 million to compensate victims of the 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania and the 2000 attack on the U.S.S. Cole in exchange for the deal. Sudan's people had little voice in the decisions of its abusive and authoritarian government during the long tenure of President Omar al-Bashir when the country had adopted terror ways. The Trump Administration's linkage of SST delisting with its impulse for Sudan to normalize its relationship with Israel has only added to the discomfort of some who feel their hand has been forced on a litigious and unconnected issue.

### **'Saudi pressure**

Saudi Arabia has so far signaled it is not ready to 'normalize'. But people in the know, are aware that the recent deals would not have happened without Saudi support. After all, Bahrain's political agenda is pretty much dictated by Saudi Arabia.

In late 2018, just months before Bahrain agreed to host a US-led conference to unveil the economic part of Trump's so-called Middle East plan; Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait pledged \$10bn in financial support for Bahrain to steady its finances. Besides being financially dependent on its neighbours, Bahrain's new alliance with Israel may help it ingrain its power and squash any resistance to authoritarianism or efforts towards freedom and democracy. It is important to recall that in 2011, during the onset of the Arab Spring uprisings, Saudi Arabia sent troops to Bahrain to suppress anti-government protests. Many of those who rallied against the Bahraini monarch were from the country's majority Shia populations who have long complained of repression. Bahrain assumes that joining the bandwagon led by the US will provide the Bahraini monarchy continued protection against its own people.

### **What should the international community's response be?**

It is critical that the international community intervenes to pressure the UAE and Bahrain to comply with their third State obligations towards Palestine and prevent aiding and abetting Israel in its continuing violation of peremptory norms of international law. It is now time, for the international community and the Palestinian people to collectively rise up and resist this egregious regional normalization, to ensure the realization of our people to self-determination and permanent sovereignty, and to prevent Israeli and regional measures towards the erasure of our people, culture, lands and home.

### **Palestinian aspiration is further shattered**

This spate of normalization' deals has done little to console the millions of Palestinians already living under *de jure* annexation in East Jerusalem, under *de facto* annexation in much of the West Bank, as refugees and exiles denied their right of return, or being treated as demographic threats and invaders within Israel's borders. Whether American-backed *de jure* annexation comes now or in 2024, Palestinians will continue to be targeted with deadly force, will continue to watch their homes being demolished, will continue to be denied reunification with their families, will be denied the right to return to their homes and lands, and will be denied the dignity promised to them by an international rules-based order.

### **Restore 1967 is the Palestinian call**

The Palestinian leadership wants an independent state based on the *de facto* borders before the 1967 war, in which Israel occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and annexed East Jerusalem. Arab countries have long called for Israel's withdrawal from already illegally occupied land, a just solution for Palestinian refugees and a settlement that leads to the establishment of a viable, independent Palestinian state in exchange for establishing ties with it.

In effect, the normalization of diplomatic and trade relations between the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Israel reveal a worrying and detrimental trend in regional State practice towards the acceptance and endorsement of Israel's illegal acts against our people including, the closure and collective punishment of the Gaza Strip, enforcement of an apartheid regime over the Palestinian

people as a whole, the annexation of our land, and the erasure of the Palestinian people. The shameful recognition of Israel's illegal acts by both these States must be collectively opposed, by the international community, and the Palestinian people.

### **How can peace be based on veiled militaristic options?**

For now it may seem something like a postscript. But a dimension that does not make too many headlines is that these deals can make the region far more militarized than it already is. UAE and Bahrain have bargained for sophisticated weaponry even against the disinclination of Israel. Sudan will receive weapons to put down the rebels. Israel would rather retain its absolute military supremacy over the entire region and circumvent parallel military forces which may be a threat to Israel in case Arab regimes at some point chose to confront Israel.

### **The Iran factor**

In the meantime, the tensions with Iran will grow. Iran is seen as a threat to the region which is predominantly Shia in composition. Whereas, Iran is unique in the Muslim world because its population is overwhelmingly more Shia than Sunni (Shia constitute 95% of the population) and because its constitution is a theocratic republic based on rule by a Shia jurist. The so-called normalization deals are also meant to build a coalition which will weaken Iran and strengthen the Sunni coalition against Iran. What if Iran finally decides to actualize its nuclear capacities?

### **The Arab countries line up – The Palestinians lose their morale**

Further, one is watching keenly the outcome of the US elections which may prompt more countries to sign normalization deals with Israel. These include Oman, and Saudi Arabia. In effect, they will become Israel's allies no matter how strongly they claim that their deals will prevent a total annexation of Palestinian territory. The West Bank is under de facto annexation. Sooner or later it will shift to de jure status and none of the countries which sign deals will be able to resist the decisions of Israel backed, as they will be, the US.

These developments have raised a number of important questions on the political scene in the Middle East. Does this diplomatic success for Israel mean that the Palestinian question has been completely marginalized in Arab politics? Have Palestinians lost their influence on the normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel? Will the countries that sign peace deals with Israel be able to sidestep the claims of Palestinians, the original holders of the cause, and come up with a "solution" to the Palestinian issue?

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has recorded a notable escalation in Israeli attacks against Palestinians since the recent normalization agreements signed with Arab states. In a report, the PLO disclosed that it had recorded serious Israeli aggressions on Palestinians between 15 September, the date of signing the deals in Washington, and 15 October. The report found that Israel intensified expansion of its settlements, demolition of Palestinian homes, the killing and wounding of innocent people, carrying out raids and detention campaigns, and "systematic aggression" on religious institutions.

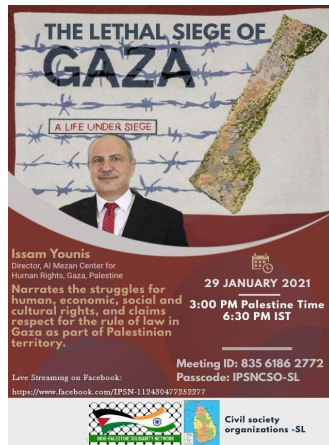
The PLO has indicated that the Israeli annexation of occupied Palestinian lands is continuous, adding that it is accompanied by settlers' attacks on Palestinian citizens. According to the report, the Israeli occupation forces opened fire more than 240 times, killing two Palestinians, wounding more than 90 others, detaining more than 480 including children, and have demolished 25 homes and facilities. But the Palestinians are relentless: "...neither prison nor siege have ended the Palestinian struggle for freedom. Palestinians in Gaza, as elsewhere, are determined to claim their rights, no matter how high the price. The discussion touches on the stories of real Palestinians who have paid a high price for their resistance, in all of its forms.

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## The Lethal Siege of Gaza



A statement from the Webinar held on January 29, 2021 at 3:00 PM Palestine Time & 6:30 PM IST

**-Hanzala Ali-**

*Is it an irresponsible overstatement to associate the treatment of Palestinians with [the] criminalized Nazi record of collective atrocity? I think not. The recent developments in Gaza are especially disturbing because they express so vividly a deliberate intention on the part of Israel and its allies to subject an entire human community to life-endangering conditions of utmost cruelty... If ever the ethos of “a responsibility to protect,” recently adopted by the UN Security Council as the basis of “humanitarian intervention” is applicable, it would be to act now to start protecting the people of Gaza from further pain and suffering.*

**-Richard Falk (in 2007)**

Gaza Strip, a narrow slide of a landmass, that coastlines the Mediterranean Sea and borders Israel and Egypt, has been put under restrictions by Israel for decades, but in the last decade and a half, we have witnessed what after decades of strides for human rights, appears to be a slip down in history—a siege of medieval ages where imperial mad conquerors would starve a people unto death or burn a city down to ashes, to achieve lofty titles of *conquerors*. With an area of about 360 sq. kms and population density the 9982, Gaza an open-air prison, is one of the biggest humanitarian crises of our time. Taking note of the urgency of the situation, **Indo-Palestine Solidarity Network** in alliance with civil society organizations of Sri Lanka held a webinar on “The Lethal Siege of Gaza” on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 06:30 PM Indian Standard Time.

The session opened with our moderator, the noted Human Rights and Christian political activist John Dayal setting the context of webinar within many struggles that the dispossessed have waged across the world, particularly the on-going historic farmers’ protest in India. Against the inhumanity of the oppressors, John Dayal rallied for a congress of “*larger humanity*”, a larger civil society.

The on-going *siege* of Gaza is a form of “collective punishment”, a fact that must beckon international community to hold Israel accountable for *war crime*. Our speaker, Issam Younis, Director of Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, Gaza, Palestine, referred to a May 2010 report by the BBC which revealed how Israel, through its siege, has allowed only minimum calorie intake by Gaza’s million and a half inhabitants. The report is telling for it reinforces what international community has been saying for long i.e., Israel has been blatantly imposing severe forms of collective punishment in Gaza, in direct violation to Geneva Convention IV. This “counting calories” is oddly reminiscent of the Jewish experience itself when the Jewish communities themselves were subjected to controlled malnutrition.

In the recent years, as our speaker pointed out a *regime of permits* has been instituted, where ailing inmates of Gaza have been forced to wait in line to get permission to leave Gaza for medical attention. Human rights organizations, like al-Dameer have chronicled exponential increase in the incidence of cancer (especially among children), rise in miscarriages and birth defects, particularly in Gazan areas which have witnessed devastating Israeli aggression. Gaza’s water has for long been *unfit for human consumption* due to high nitrate level. It has induced a lethal blood disorder in young children and newborns called me the moglobinaemia, or the “blue babies” phenomenon. Not only water but Israeli aggression, as independent researchers have proven since 2009 (notably New Weapons Committee Report), has contaminated Gaza’s soil.

Despite the overwhelming evidence of war crimes in Gaza, international community has been despairingly apathetic to the plight of about 1.7 million Gazans, with about 80% of its population depended upon foreign aid. To a just eye, the essential moral issue for both—the inmates of Gaza and Jews in the gas chambers, is same. Perhaps, then no other people have better claim to the legacies of Nuremberg trials, than the Gazans. In closing, let us recall Palestinian Poet, Mahmoud Darwish’s cry “Besiege your siege”, a cry that takes new meaning when it serves as an epigraph to the BDS movement.

## **YouTube of the webinar in three parts**

### **The Lethal Siege of Gaza**

Part 1 - <https://youtu.be/0PCpBb2xsR4>

Part 2 - <https://youtu.be/euWWRRSa-r4>

Part 3 - <https://youtu.be/yMO8MEKnOYc>





## **ANGRY TEARS!**

### **Expressing our anguish over Israeli Apartheid during COVID-19 Times**

Our dear Palestinian Brothers and Sisters,

While we in India are experiencing various expressions of the partnership of right wing fundamentalists and corporate economy manipulators, our sufferings are nothing compared to the cruel apartheid practices of the Israeli powers in Palestine. The coronavirus pandemic has given the Israeli oppressors yet another weapon to inflict their ongoing apartheid repression on Palestinians.

#### **No heed given by the Israeli Government to COVID-19 concerns for Palestinians**

During the middle of 2020, concerned voices had articulated the accentuated sufferings of the Palestinians during COVID-19 times. An article entitled “Health system’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic in conflict settings: Policy reflections from Palestine,”<sup>1</sup> stated:

As the COVID-19 pandemic spreads, concerns are particularly serious in conflict and humanitarian settings. Tackling the pandemic in those countries is challenging due to the fragility of socioeconomic and health systems. Palestine is one of those countries that is facing compounding challenges, instability, fragility, living conditions, poverty, and mobility, all of which are caused by multifactorial etiology. The Pandemic shows triple tragedies; virus (COVID-19 Pandemic), ongoing Israeli occupation (Politics), and Intra-Palestinian divide (Policies).

However, the political and humanitarian conditions in Palestine are complex and play a major role in the health system’s ability to face outbreaks, including the COVID-19. The dire humanitarian situation in Palestine including: poor socioeconomic and living conditions, deteriorated WASH services and a crippled health system, hinder

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<sup>1</sup>“Health system’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic in conflict settings: Policy reflections from Palestine,”<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17441692.2020.1781914>

**Secretariat: 149/D, Gina, Maina-Curtorim, Salcete, Goa 403709, India**  
**E-Mail [indopalestinesolidaritynetwork@gmail.com](mailto:indopalestinesolidaritynetwork@gmail.com). Mobile: +91-9881181350 & +91-832-2787667**

Palestine's ability to prepare and respond to the COVID-19. The ongoing political instability and geographical separation between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are major causes of these challenges and are resulting in worse humanitarian conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. These protracted humanitarian needs in addition to the large prevalence of NCDs among Palestinians, increase the risk of the COVID-19 spread and the disease burden (OCHA, [2020b](#)), particularly among vulnerable groups including: Palestinian refugees who live in overcrowded and miserable camps, people from poor socio-economic backgrounds, prisoners confined in jails, patients who need urgent treatment, and pregnant and lactating women (OCHA, [2020a](#)).

In the conclusion, the article went on to say:

The political situation in Palestine threatens the health security of Palestinians in time of the Pandemic. The 72 year long ongoing Israeli occupation on Palestine is causing a dire humanitarian situation. The deteriorated living conditions in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem including: overcrowdedness, building restrictions, raids and arrests, home demolitions by Israel, absence of freedom of movement throughout Palestine in addition to over 13 years of the siege on the Gaza Strip, all impede Palestine's ability to control the spread of COVID-19. Moreover, the WASH system infrastructure in Palestine has been destroyed as a result of Israel's regular attacks and its full control of all water resources in Palestine. The high levels of poverty and unemployment in Palestine (largely among refugees) means that they are unable to take necessary preventative measures against COVID-19. These humanitarian difficulties are expected to deteriorate further as a result of COVID-19. Local and international human rights and advocacy organisations must put pressure to end Israel's practices, mainly an immediate release of the imprisoned and besieged people who are at high risk. Palestinians are in a high need for financial and food support in order to alleviate the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic and prevent any further economic collapses and food insecurity, especially among vulnerable populations including refugees and people in inaccessible areas.

### **Israeli Government exploits the COVID-19 situation for its apartheid strategy**

However all such observations fell on the deaf ears and blind eyes of the Israeli government. They used COVID -19 as a shield for continuing their apartheid strategies.

#### 1. Crackdown on Palestinian Initiatives

Ramzy Baroud has exposed the vicious acts of the Israeli Government in his article of January 13, 2021 entitled, " Covid-19 under Apartheid: How Israel Manipulates Suffering of Palestinians." He has stated:

"... the Palestinian coronavirus crisis is compounded by the fact that Palestinians live under Israeli military occupation, a state of apartheid and, as in the case of Gaza, an unrelenting siege.

**Secretariat: 149/D, Gina, Maina-Curtorim, Salcete, Goa 403709, India**  
**E-Mail [indopalestinesolidaritynetwork@gmail.com](mailto:indopalestinesolidaritynetwork@gmail.com). Mobile: +91-9881181350 & +91-832-2787667**

Worse still, starting early last year, the Israeli military conducted several operations in various parts of the occupied territories to crack down on Palestinian initiatives to provide free COVID-19 testing. According to the Palestinian rights group, Al Haq, as early as March 2020, several field clinics were shut down and medical equipment confiscated in the Palestinian town of Khirbet Ibziq in the Jordan Valley, in the occupied West Bank. This pattern was repeated in East Jerusalem, Hebron and elsewhere in the following months.”

## 2. Circumventing Geneva Convention requirements

Article 56 of the Geneva Convention requires Israel to carry out “the prophylactic and preventive measures necessary to combat the spread of contagious diseases and epidemics” in consort with local Palestinian officials. Article 60 goes on to assert that even if others are responding to a medical crisis, that aid “shall in no way relieve the occupying power of any of its responsibilities” to give healthcare to the protected population. However the Israeli government uses the Oslo Accords as an excuse to refrain from fulfilling this responsibility stating that under the Oslo Agreement from the 1990s, direct services like healthcare was transferred to the responsibility of the then newly created Palestinian Authority.

We are glad that Special rapporteurs to the United Nations Human Rights Council have argued that it really doesn't matter what the parties agreed to at Oslo, it cannot override the Geneva Convention: “The Oslo Accords must be interpreted and applied consistent with international law, and cannot derogate from its broad protections. The ultimate responsibility for health services remains with the occupying power until the occupation has fully and finally ended.”

## 3. Refusing to follow WHO Guidelines

As Ramzy Baroud puts it,

Perhaps, the overcrowded Israeli prisons remain the glaring testimony of Israel’s mishandling of the COVID-19 outbreak. Despite repeated calls by the United Nations and, particularly, the World Health Organization, that states should take immediate measures to help ease the crisis in their prison systems, Israel has done little for Palestinian prisoners. Al Haq reported that Israel “has taken no adequate measures to improve provision of healthcare and hygiene for Palestinian prisoners” in line with the WHO “guidance for preventing COVID-19 outbreak in prisons.” The consequences were dire, as the spread of COVID among Palestinian prisoners continues to claim new victims at a much higher ratio compared with Israeli prisoners.

**Secretariat: 149/D, Gina, Maina-Curtorim, Salcete, Goa 403709, India**  
**E-Mail [indopalestinesolidaritynetwork@gmail.com](mailto:indopalestinesolidaritynetwork@gmail.com). Mobile: +91-9881181350 & +91-832-2787667**

Moreover, since the outbreak of the pandemic in late February, the IPS has restricted visits to its facilities, leaving the over 4,000 Palestinian prisoners and inmates completely cut off from the outside world. Even telephone contact with their families during the COVID-19 pandemic has not been allowed.

#### 4. Giving Apartheid a deeper dimension

Ramzy makes a very pointed observation that the Israeli attempt at manipulating Palestinian suffering as a result of the pandemic should also challenge our view of the fundamental relationship between Israel and the Palestinians. Israel's apartheid in Palestine runs much deeper than its physical manifestation through giant walls, fences and military checkpoints that cage in Palestinian communities and segregate them from one another. Israeli apartheid "reaches almost every facet of society where Israeli Jews, including settlers, are treated as superior, while Palestinian Arabs, whether Christian or Muslims, are denied their most basic rights, including those guaranteed under international law."

#### **Apartheid in the Vaccination Programme**

Now that vaccines against the corona virus are available, we are again shocked by the apartheid approach of the Israeli government. Writing a report for AP News, on the pandemic, Joseph Krauss has indicated that Israel is denying vaccines to Palestinians in the West Bank. "Israel's vaccination campaign will include Jewish settlers living deep inside the West Bank, who are Israeli citizens," he reported, "but not the territory's 2.5 million Palestinians" (Joseph Krauss, "Palestinians left waiting as Israel is set to deploy vaccine," AP, December 17, 2020).

However the Israel government has claimed that for months it has been offering and providing assistance to the PA to fight the pandemic, but it is the Palestinians who repeatedly rejected offers of aid and even blocked sick people from the territories from going to Israeli hospitals. The Israeli government has gone on to say that it shipped 100 vaccine doses in response to a request from the Palestinians, and that another shipment was also on the way (Netael Bandel, "After Denial, Israel Says It Provided COVID Vaccines to Palestinian Authority," Haaretz, January 13, 2021). The Palestinian Ministry of Health denied, however, that it had received any COVID-19 vaccinations from Israel. The World Health Organization has also stated that the Israeli Health Ministry had dismissed a request made in "informal discussions" by the international body to allocate vaccines to inoculate Palestinian frontline healthcare workers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.timesofisrael.com/palestinians-hope-for-vaccines-by-march-knock-israel-for-not-providing-doses/>

**Secretariat: 149/D, Gina, Maina-Curtorim, Salcete, Goa 403709, India**  
**E-Mail [indopalestinesolidaritynetwork@gmail.com](mailto:indopalestinesolidaritynetwork@gmail.com). Mobile: +91-9881181350 & +91-832-2787667**

We along with international bodies condemn the Israeli government's decision to bar Palestinians from receiving the vaccine. It is evidence of the "institutionalized discrimination that defines the Israeli government's policy towards Palestinians."

While some Israelis, like the former Israeli Ambassador, Alan Baker, agree that international law does "place an obligation on Israel" to help in the provision of vaccines to Palestinians, they say that such aid is conditional: Palestinians must first release several Israeli soldiers who were captured in Gaza during and after the 2014 war. However the irony is that Israel holds over 5,000 Palestinian prisoners, including women and children, hundreds of whom are imprisoned without trial or due process.

### **Angry Tears!**

**And so dear Palestinian sisters and brothers, we, the members of the Indo Palestine Solidarity Network, are pained that injustice upon injustice is heaped upon you under the apartheid Israeli regime! We are in spirit with you as you undergo the cruelties of political, economic, social, military, and even COVID -19 manifestations of apartheid. We are in spirit with you as you continue to resist the injustices meted out to you at the Knesset, in courts of law, at travel checkpoints, in prison houses, during the forceful occupation of your land, the demolition of your houses and destruction of your fields, and during international talks and alliances. Our tears of solidarity are mixed with our breath of anger and our earnest prayer: "How long O Lord? Enable us to attain our exodus freedom from the Israeli pharaohs!"**

**Secretariat: 149/D, Gina, Maina-Curtorim, Salcete, Goa 403709, India  
E-Mail [indopalestinesolidaritynetwork@gmail.com](mailto:indopalestinesolidaritynetwork@gmail.com). Mobile: +91-9881181350 & +91-832-2787667**

# Adopting the IHRA Definition of “Antisemitism”: A Brief Overview of What this Means and Entails

Hanzala Ali



IPSN Position paper No: 2

“If they come for me in the morning, they will come for you in the night.”

— Angela Davis

In the last few years, there have been concentrated efforts in Europe and North America to make institutions adopt International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s *working definition* of “antisemitism”<sup>1</sup>. Though the calls have been *only* to adopt the “definition” (*just* the definition), the “definition” serves as synecdoche for the guidance document that accompanies it even when there’s a lack of formal position(s) on the guidance document in these states. It has deservedly created an outcry. This beckons us to look closely into the issue. This paper is an attempt to take a brief but hopefully, a succinct overview of the debate surrounding it and lasting implications of attempts to adopt it.

## The IHRA Definition:

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance which describes itself as “the only intergovernmental organization” mandated to focus *solely* on Holocaust-related issues “so with evidence that the scourge of antisemitism is once again on the rise, we resolved to take a leading role in combating it.” Its website states that in order to meet its professed aim it adopted

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<sup>1</sup> I use the word “antisemitism” (in double quotes) to refer to what is understood to be its meaning as per the IHRA document. When used without quotes, I use the term in the sense as it is understood by the civil society, international law and other monitoring bodies. There’s no single definition of the term to which this cluster of the group agrees upon. But for purpose of clarity, one can say that it is understood *to be a kind of racial hatred and religious bigotry against the Jews for being Jews.*

a [non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism](#) in 2016. It is of use to us to quote the definition in its entirety here:

**Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.**

It says at the very outset (equating in its simplistic logic a religion to a nationality or more importantly a nationality to a religion) that targeting “the state of Israel, as a Jewish collectivity” is a manifestation of antisemitism. But goes on to qualify “...that criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.” It seeks to clarify itself by illustrating eleven examples of what can be read as manifestations of antisemitism, and that as we go further in discussion undoes the very qualification it established in its introductory paragraph. Let’s take a look:

1. Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
2. Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.
3. Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
4. Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).
5. Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
6. Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
7. Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.
8. Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
9. Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
10. Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
11. Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

The IHRA definition along with the eleven examples of manifestations of “antisemitism” is referred to as the IHRA document. Of the eleven examples given as manifestations of “antisemitism”, six of them are concerned exclusively with the State of Israel. Due to its inordinate focus on Israel, the IHRA document itself is more controversial than the definition. To unpack the long term-effects of adoption of this document we need to focus on two key areas under which this document can be studied. First, it being a kind of a *speech code*. This invites us to see its effects on *the right to freedom of speech*, a founding principle of democracy. Therefore we need to see its effect on the same since its adoption. Secondly, its specific targeting of a group for protection violates the *rule of law* (founded on the premise of law’s commitment to equality for all), the first thing enshrined in all liberal democracies. By making a specific group *more equal than the others*, it ensures certain *preference* and an unmistakable impunity to the State of Israel. Let’s take a look on both the accounts.

1. **An Attack on the *Right to Freedom of Speech*:** The IHRA document has been criticized most on this aspect, yet the criticisms have not been intellectually vigorous enough to truly take a stock of the danger it represents. Let’s enter the debate by taking into account the nature of its adoption (i.e., its procedure followed) in the European states and the US. It has been generally promoted / adopted by the executive branch of the State. In the U.K., by the executive orders of the Conservative Government and in the USA, by an executive order by the Trump administration. In both the countries, it has not been ratified by the legislatures. It can be said that any form of democratic deliberation which forms the hallmark of consensus-building on any issue in a democracy was completely absent. It is therefore not surprising that many scholars and civil rights and liberties activists are hopeful that it will be struck down when challenged in a court of law.

Rebecca Ruth Gould in what was called the first scholarly treatment of IHRA Definition of “antisemitism” “Legal Forms and Legal Legitimacy: The IHRA Definition of Antisemitism as a Case Study in Censored Speech”, described how since its adoption by the IHRA and easy compliance to it by the governments in the European states, it has functioned as a *quasi-law*. This is essential to understand as to how something which has not been legally ratified in these states has managed to censor speech so overwhelmingly.



Gould defines, a quasi-law as “a document, definition, code, or policy that a government-backed regulatory body has adopted to guide its deliberations and policies.” (4) It mimics dimensions of a law per se (i.e., normative law) but lacks democratic legitimacy for it never went through the process to gain it. One may wonder as to how then it managed to function in a democratic state with so little opposition. The answer to this riddle lies in the exact of nature of this law and the sites of its functioning. It is at least at the face value, morally laden. The IHRA document itself draws on the social consensus of the liberal states that seeks to delegitimize or to erase discrimination. Secondly, it functions or operates in the *quasi-public* bodies like the universities, associations and agencies which are neither open to drawing public mandate on issues (as public bodies should) nor seen as simple functionaries of the governments. Had it been either of the two, the IHRA document would have seen more précised and concentrated opposition than it has seen yet. This is not the space to recount numerous events (that sought to critically engage with the practices of Israel), which have been cancelled in the Universities, but suffice it to say that the list is long.

It is extra-ordinary how the definition (notwithstanding the greater vagueness of the guidance document) assumes total homology between words and the realities they describe. It appears to be impossibly naïve and unassuming about the complexities of human speech and myriad forms in which it manifests like parody, irony and satire. It seeks to reduce racism to rhetoric, and rhetoric to reality, without understanding the real damage that racism inflicts and the insidious ways in which it works in a society. The intended audience of this paper is activists who have worked for Palestinian rights, and so might see the IHRA document (not erroneously) as one in a series of acts that aims to give impunity to Israel. It is that but it is not *just that*. This document and the fact that something as imprecise as this could even get an audience let alone such ready acceptance, must alert us to the fact that something very fundamental has changed in our perception about the state and polity itself.

The document draws its sanction from the long-drawn liberal consensus around hate speech and the need for its regulation. This regulation can either be through the state or quasi-public bodies. To understand this better let us remind ourselves that the proponents of the IHRA documents have used few strands of the Critical Race Theory that sought censorship to create positive legislations against hate speech. Universities,

which unlike any other institution have a statutory duty to create space for freedom of speech and expression, were the first to fall to this kind of censorship. This is because certain consensus on regulating speech already existed in these circles, and thereby in societies at large. I do not have space to critically engage with this strand in a wholesome manner, but I do wish to warn the readers to not to take the episode in isolation. There's a shockingly naïve belief and growing consensus in the post WWII societies, that a positive legislation surrounding perceived "racist" speech can combat racial hatred. What kind of a state that would be where such censorships can exist? There's a difference between freedom of speech and other civil liberties in a democracy. It is something more fundamental and basic for any state claiming to be a democracy, for it is the first sphere available for access for the marginalized and often the only civil liberty. Gould rightly says, that "while other values are necessary to a stable and prosperous society, non-viewpoint-punitive expression within public discourse on this view is a sine qua non for democratic governance" (28).

2. **A Violation of the Rule of Law:** The IHRA document when criticized on substantive grounds is found to be in violation of the rule of law. It singles out one group for a protection that is not accorded to others. This is a group for which nationality, political ideology and religion conflate with one another. This might have been up till now the most concentrated effort to make Zionism and Judaism identical. According to the example seven of the guidance document, "Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor" is deemed to be "antisemitic". It is a State of which many members of the Jewish community itself are highly critical of. It is strange that a group's right to self-determination can be endorsed so uncritically without taking into account that it is exercised at the expense of the Right to Return of another group, a right ensured to the refugees in the International Law. The International Law itself by extension, if one follows the IHRA logic, would be "antisemitic". In a decolonized world, a world which no longer sees itself as a white man's playground, rational humans will critically look at a state whose nationality can be claimed as a birthright despite being born outside it while those who were born there or whose family members have a living memory of having lived in it are either being driven off or prevented from returning.

It is then no surprise that a group of 122 [Palestinian and Arab intellectuals](#), academics and journalists entered the debate surrounding antisemitism with an open letter condemning the IHRA document. The letter must be read alongside the IHRA document to understand what is at the stake when Israel-advocacy groups mindlessly seek to conflate “antisemitism” with the opposition to the practices of the State of Israel. The signatories ask that the fight against antisemitism must be “deployed within the frame of international law and human rights.” This is an important difference between the IHRA document and the letter. The letter, while acknowledging the threat of antisemitism as real and dangerous, calls it to be “a part and parcel of the fight against all forms of racism and xenophobia, including Islamophobia, and anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian racism”. The letter reaffirms a basic tenet of laws of modern states i.e., equality for all.

A simple glance at the document would prove that it is not a work of serious scholarship. It has enabled special interest groups namely that which are over-determined by Israel advocacy to act as proxies for the state, and grants them inordinate amount of coercive power. In any society marked by historical inequalities someone can always appropriate other group’s suffering for rhetorical ends. By invoking long history of the Jewish persecution by clever rhetorical determiners, the IHRA document and Zionism is equal to Judaism argument seek to epistemologically conflate protection of a settler colonial and racist enterprise to justice for a historically long-persecuted group. It ensures an *epistemological trap* for any Israel-critical speech. In order to escape accusations of antisemitism, it will be incumbent on it to give long prefaces acknowledging the Jewish suffering. But as the Jeremy Corbyn case proves that even that will not be enough. For small organizations that have been working to document Israel’s oppressive practices, a charge of “antisemitism” would be catastrophic. Even if it is not criminally charged of the same, it might lose in the battle of perceptions in a society that has long given up on critical thinking and differentiation.

It is interesting to see that the link between a group’s suffering and its appropriation for rhetorical ends might in reality have little or no empirical claim. The important thing is it should be able to invoke appearance of such identification. It is interesting to see how the Republican Party in the USA whose members have on numerous occasions delivered speeches of brazen hatred against the Jewish community has not been subjected to a tenth of the scrutiny that Congresswoman Ilhan Omar has been. Its

unaffiliated functionaries like Proud Boys are unapologetically antisemitic but the party gets characterized in the Israeli media as steadfast friends of the Jews. In reality, what such an identification of “antisemitism” with Zionism does is that it pays little or no heed to the real dangers of antisemitism.

Most critics see the IHRA document and its mindless promotion as an escalation in the long history of discrediting Palestinian struggle by Israel-advocacy groups. It is, undoubtedly a response (and a panicked one!) to the growing acceptance of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement in the civil society. The letter by the Palestinian and Arab intellectuals pointedly draws attention to this. It reaffirms the BDS movement as “fundamentally a legitimate non-violent means of struggle for Palestinian rights.” The path is going to be increasingly difficult for civil-rights and civil-liberties groups and Israel-critical or pro-Palestine groups in the times to come.

In closing, let us remind ourselves that in the struggle for a just and humane world, what is most difficult usually is the most needed.

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## “Dismantling barriers of Separation”



Our Zoom meeting on “Dismantling barriers of Separation” was a stimulating and unique encounter. We chose 9<sup>th</sup> November to organize it because it commemorates the “International Day Against the Wall”.

Manal Shqair, Advocacy and Campaigning Officer, Stop the Wall, analyzed the political, social, economic and economic dynamics of the wall, noting especially its humanitarian dimensions. It is

a question of human rights, she observed and called for global advocacy and campaigning to isolate the Israeli apartheid regime from its multiple atrocities. The Stop the Wall (STW) Campaign’s aim to tear down the Wall is aligned with the Palestinian desire for liberation -for those inside and in exile, the young and old, those who have died, and those yet to be born.

Deenbandhu Manchala, an Asia Area Executive of the Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and an eminent theologian-writer, spoke on the Walls that separate people on the basis of caste in India. He drew parallels between the visible Walls of separation and the Invisible Walls of Caste. He identified how Dalits are pushed to the margins. Some of us recalled the 1989 violence when caste Hindus constructed a 30 meter long wall to segregate Dalits from the village. The wall was later described as "wall of untouchability". There are such walls being constructed between people of caste and the Dalits.

Jude Sutharshan showed how Tamils, who have been systematically discriminated against since independence, are no more a cause to conflict in Sri Lanka than are Palestinians against the abuses of racist-colonialist apartheid by Israel. The fundamental cause to the civil war in Sri Lanka is the nation's inability to forge a just political system that accommodates diverse ethnic groupings. Of course, this is not just a problem in Sri Lanka, but a global problem. Ethnic allegiance is no respecter of state borders, which have been arbitrarily drawn. The struggle for cultural identity is now the world's most potent anti-systemic force, the great destabilizer.

Lakshman Gunashekhara, a senior journalist from Sri Lanka underlined why it is important for oppressed peoples to unite against instruments of oppression anywhere. He called for the international community to be peacemakers with justice as the foundation. Building mutual solidarity through dialogue and learning from each other’s struggles is crucial.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHx1Y8076i8>

# Focus: Palestine

## Appendix F

Global Regional and Ecumenical Bodies  
with Statements, Resources or Policies on Palestine/Israel  
with focus on

### **Churches of the Global South and the WCRC Action 55 Mandates**

The initial phase of research for Action 55 in 2018, combined with the 2021 research tasks assigned by the Secretariat of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, surveyed materials available in digital format and publicly posted at the websites registered through the member churches of the WCRC.

The research was carried out in 2021 by Katherine Cunningham and Noushin Framke, authors of *Focus: Palestine*. They focused on the member communions of the regions of the Global South, including Africa, Asia, Latin America, Pacific and the Caribbean, per the current instructions of the Secretariat. That methodology shaped the citations in the appendix found here. The original phase of research from 2018 is found in Appendix G, which focuses more on North America actions, along with other theological and policy statements of that time.

The researchers/authors looked at every live website from those Global South regions and their member churches, along with ecumenical bodies that are related partnership organizations. Some may not have entries because of the language limitations of the researchers. Additionally, when found through a church search, there are materials that appeared in digital forms of journals or newspapers related to a country. Where there were extensive statements on Palestine or Israel or social/political/religious issues related to the Holy Land, we chose to highlight some of those in the appendix and provide the search links to other materials.

Additionally, *in some cases*, if a country or a specific church was facing human rights violations, political turmoil, land disputes, physical attacks or indigenous rights concerns that interconnect with parallel dynamics in Palestine or Israel, links to information on those issues are noted as an interconnection struggle. Some of them are highlighted in the text of *Focus: Palestine*.

It is important to emphasize that the lack of a statement in the appendix for a particular church does not mean there are no statements or resources that fit within the parameters of Action 55 and its mandates. There are likely materials in the minutes or committees of a particular member church that are not posted digitally or need to be included in their original languages/translations, and are outside the research framework for this handbook. However, such materials are important and need to be included. The research team recommends supplying those materials as digital links to the WCRC for later updates to this appendix.

# Africa

The *Ubuntu theology and philosophy* forms an important spiritual and cultural core of beliefs and practices that shape African social and justice connections. Exploring its relationship to advocacy on Action 55 mandates and the call by Palestinians for justice, human rights and freedom would be important to pursue. *Ubuntu* is a dimension of African justice and advocacy in *kairos* theology, including its expression the *Kairos South Africa* and *Kairos Palestine* documents.

UBUNTU: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu\\_philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_philosophy)

Includes footnotes to the references there

In Angola, it is known as *gimuntu*, Botswana (*muthu*), Burundi (*ubuntu*), Cameroon (*bato*), Congo (*bantu*), Congo Democratic Republic (*bomoto/bantu*), Kenya (*utu/munto/mondo*), Malawi (*umunthu*), Mozambique (*vumuntu*), Namibia (*omundu*), Nigeria (*mutunchi*), Rwanda (*bantu*), South Africa (*ubuntu/botho*), Tanzania (*utu/obuntu/bumuntu*), Uganda (*obuntu*), Zambia (*umunthu/ubuntu*) and Zimbabwe (*Ubuntu*, *unhu* or *hunhu*). It is also found in other [Bantu](#) countries not mentioned here.<sup>[3][4]</sup> The concept of "I am because we are", sometimes translated as "humanitude", also has equivalents in non-Bantu-speaking Africa: Burkina Faso (*maaya*), Cote d'Ivoire (*maaya*), Equatorial Guinea (*maaya*), Guinea (*maaya*), Gambia (*maaya*), Ghana (*biako ye*; [Akan](#)),<sup>[5]</sup> Liberia (*maaya*), Mali (*maaya* ([Bambara](#))/*de ya*), Sierra Leone (*maaya*),<sup>[3]</sup> Nigeria (*iwa* in [Yoruba](#) and *agwa* in [Igbo](#)).<sup>[6]</sup> In addition, it is called *boroterey* in the [Songhay languages](#) and *nite* in the [Wolof language](#).<sup>[7]</sup>

Definitions:

There are various definitions of *ubuntu*. The most recent definition was provided by the African Journal of Social Work (AJSW). The journal defined *ubuntu* as:

*A collection of values and practices that Black people of Africa or of African origin view as making people authentic human beings. While the nuances of these values and practices vary across different ethnic groups, they all point to one thing – an authentic individual human being is part of a larger and more significant relational, communal, societal, environmental and spiritual world*<sup>[3]</sup>

[Archbishop Desmond Tutu](#) offered a definition in a 1999 book:

*A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, based from a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed.* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu\\_philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_philosophy)

Note the book by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Michael Battle on *Ubuntu Theology*

<https://www.amazon.com/Reconciliation-Ubuntu-Theology-Desmond-Tutu/dp/0829818332>

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## Botswana

Interconnected Justice:

Mention that church needs to express spirit of *botho* and love 26 Feb 19

<https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/posts/on-botho-a-binding-social-force-amongst-the-batswana-people>

When professional negotiations or personal interactions break down due to a lack of respect, someone who feels attacked will invoke *botho* as a reminder to the other person that they deserve



greater consideration. Botho means we are all human and therefore deserving of respect. Invoking botho in defense of your dignity asks of the other person to bring this shared ideal back to the forefront of his or her thoughts. Botho, however, is deserving of more than just temporary revival and should be brought back to the forefront of society's collective consciousness as well.

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## Cameroon

Interconnected Justice:

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-appeals-to-un-human-rights-must-be-upheld-in-cameroon>

<https://www.pcusa.org/news/2020/10/13/stated-clerk-denounces-immigration-officials-plan/>

<https://www.pcusa.org/news/2019/12/2/stated-clerk-issues-call-prayer-cameroon/> refugees/displacement

<https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/931476/download>

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4187720>

Interconnected Justice: Liberation Theology

Abstract

Relations between Christian churches and the state in Cameroon in the past two decades have been marked by intense conflicts. The churches' pronouncements and positions on major national issues-such as reforms aimed at institutionalizing democratic governance, human rights, and the rule of law-have increasingly been at variance with those of the state. Mainline churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church, and the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, have been at the forefront of efforts to see a truly democratic society take root in Cameroon. While these churches are making this contribution, local Pentecostal churches maintain a more or less neutral position on political issues. This paper examines these relations in the context of the ongoing political and social transition in Cameroon, and posits that liberation theology has become a viable strategy in the churches' desire to promote democracy in Cameroon.

Robert Mbe Akoko and Timothy Mbuagbo Oben

Africa Today

Vol. 52, No. 3 (Spring, 2006), pp. 25-48 (24 pages)

Published By: Indiana University Press

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Democratic Republic of Congo

Interconnected Justice: Violence

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/rape-in-conflict-dr-congo-cgi-pg2.pdf>

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## Egypt

Evangelical Church of Egypt, Synod of the Nile--to be considered in Middle East section

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## Lesotho

Lesotho Evangelical Church

Participation in Pilgrimage for Peace and Justice

<https://lecsakereke.wordpress.com/2019/12/16/2019-pilgrimage-of-justice-and-peace/>

WCC related

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## Mozambique

Evangelical Church of Christ in Mozambique (Igreja Evangélica de Cristo em Moçambique)

Interconnected Justice:

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/649488?seq=1>

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## Nigeria

Interconnected Justice:

"It reflects the suffering of Nigerians and members of the body of Christ as a result of negligence, insecurity and lack of commitment expressed by instituted authorities in the nation."

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/for-nigerian-churches-and-people-challenges-came-on-many-fronts-in-2020>

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## Rwanda

Presbyterian Church in Rwanda (Eglise presbytérienne au Rwanda)

"Wounds are Deep, but Reconciliation is Deeper"

<https://www.theoutreachfoundation.org/updates/2019/4/11/the-presbyterian-church-of-rwanda-april-2019-update>

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## South Africa

Citations in this section have been gathered from specific websites of member churches and other ecclesiastical or secular sources.

**[Resolution To Provincial Synod: Church Of The Province Of Southern Africa](#)** 10 year anniversary of Kairos Palestine in a

- A black liberation journal - Zionism, White Supremacy and the Palestinian Revolution - <https://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/archive-files4/lkJul82.pdf>
- Apartheid and the Church - 1972 - REPORT OF THE CHURCH COMMISSION OF THE STUDY PROJECT ON CHRISTIANITY IN APARTHEID SOCIETY -  
<https://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/archive-files3/rep19720000.037.052.008.pdf>
- Pro Veritate - Christian Monthly 1975 - "Is Justice the Property of the Privileged?"
- South African Council of Churches Commitment Statement: <http://sacc.org.za/month-may-action-palestinian-churches-people/>
  - Statement on imminent annexation:
  - <https://sacc.org.za/statement-on-imminent-annexation-of-palestinian-west-bank-by-israel/>

- <https://mailchi.mp/29f642bc896d/media-statement-272020-sacc-cautiously-welcomes-reopening-of-churches-5021486>
  - <https://kairossouthernafrica.wordpress.com/2012/12/08/kairos-sa-press-release-from-jerusalem-8-december-2012/>
  - <https://sacc.org.za/statement-on-imminent-annexation-of-palestinian-west-bank-by-israel/>
  - <https://www.globalministries.org/ncc-statement-of-south-african-and-african-american-church-leaders-on-israel-and-palestine/>
  - <https://bdsmovement.net/news/iaw-letter-sa-council-churches-all-churches-sa>
  - <https://methodist.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/SACC-Statement-on-President-Trumps-Stand-on-Jerusalem.pdf>
  - 
  - Twitter feed by South African Council of Churches on Palestine and Israel  
<https://twitter.com/officialsacc/status/1276070679474036737?lang=en>
  - <https://anglican.ink/2019/09/27/anglican-church-in-southern-africa-synod-adopts-anti-israel-pro-bds-resolutions/>
  - [Settler Colonialism in S. Africa and Israel - pp12-17 -Ikwezi \(journal\) 1977](#)  
<https://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/archive-files4/lkDec77.pdf>
  - [Useful Blog: https://marthiemombergblog.com](#)
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## Zimbabwe

Interconnected Justice: Land dispossession/confiscation; indigeneity

Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Harare Synod

LAND REFORM PROGRAM - <https://www.ccaphararesynod.com/papersonccap.htm>

Zimbabwe's Land Reform Program, which started in the year 2000 has resulted in many of our church members and also DRC members leaving the farms. Our church's survey shows that a quota of our membership has become displaced without any hope of returning to the home lands or getting any gratuity from the employers. The church buildings on the farms were taken over by the new occupants of the farms, and are now used for other purposes.

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## Kairos South Africa

Dangerous Memory document 2015 at the 30th anniversary of South African Kairos document.

[Kairos South Africa 30th Anniversary: Dangerous Memory and Hope for the Future](#)

World Council of Churches

- Detention and deportation of WCC African theologian and leader, Dr. Isabel Apawo Phiri, by Israel

<https://pief.oikoumene.org/en/news-events/news-from-wcc/wcc-israeli-action-towards-wcc-leadership-unjust-discriminatory-and-misinformed>  
<https://zh-cn.facebook.com/UnitedAction/posts/dr-isabel-apawo-phiri-associate-general-secretary-of-the-world-council-of-church/1369612336424021/>  
<https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/israel-detains-and-deports-respected-african-theologian>

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## Asia

Research through Christian Conference of Asia

<https://www.cca.org.hk>

Ecumenical partners of CCA

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian\\_Conference\\_of\\_Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Conference_of_Asia)

<https://www.cca.org.hk/?s=Palestine>

<https://www.cca.org.hk/news-and-events/philippine-church-leaders-statement-for-just-peace-in-palestine/>

<https://www.cca.org.hk/news-and-events/stop-israeli-armys-incursion-into-beit-sahours-peace-park/>

<https://www.cca.org.hk/news-and-events/international-day-of-peace/>

Related peace issue-nuclear weapons: <https://www.cca.org.hk/news-and-events/cca-endorses-joint-interfaith-statement-welcoming-the-coming-into-force-of-un-treaty-on-prohibition-of-nuclear-weapons/>

### ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE

Declaration of People's Forum held in Mumbai 16-21 January 2004

[Building Peace with Justice](#) statement and language

Includes Churches' Response to Militarization, Nuclearization and Arms Race in Asia and

Churches in Action for Moving Beyond Conflicts and Reconciliation

Support for the Kairos Palestine document 2009

<https://www.cca.org.hk/news-and-events/palestinian-christians-call-to-end-the-occupation/>

CCA [On status of Jerusalem 2017](#)

Mathews George Chunakara further stated that Jerusalem now is a microcosm of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. By excluding Palestinian voices from the Jerusalem debate, U. S support Israel's position to close the doors for others and intensify gross human rights violations which impact on the lives of Palestinians.

CCA General Secretary said that CCA reiterates the position of the international ecumenical community that “Jerusalem could become a force of stability and coexistence rather than a source of division and conflict. This could be aided by international encouragement for a special religious and political status of Jerusalem.”

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## China

[China Christian Council](#)\*\* (available only in original language)  
[Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China](#)

Face to Face Bethlehem 2018

<http://www.hkcccc.org/Event/viewEvent.php?eid=00001070>

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## India

Citations in this section are drawn from member church websites as well as other ecclesiastical, partner organizations and secular sources.

Newspaper report on Kairos Palestine education gathering: [A helping hand - Frontline](#)

Kashmir and Palestine article [https://theprint.in/opinion/why-kashmiris-palestinians-are-left-pondering-what-realism-better-governance-couldve-brought/553433/](https://theprint.in/opinion/why-kashmiris-palestinians-are-left-pondering-what-realism-better-governance-couldve-brought/553433/Why_Kashmiris_Palestinians_are_left_pondering_what_realism_better_governance_could've_brought)[Why Kashmiris, Palestinians are left pondering what realism, better governance could've brought](#)

Ha'aretz: ['Kashmir is Palestine': Why both India and Pakistan want to push this ominous comparison | Opinion](#)

[Kashmiri and Palestinian activists stand against Indian envoy at Harvard](#)

[Kashmir and Palestine: The story of two occupations](#)

ISEN video on World Week for Peace 2011:

[India Solidarity Ecumenical Network-Kairos Palestine for the World Week of Peace in Palestine-Israel](#)

See Appendix G for statements of the Indo-Palestine Solidarity Network, a coalition of secular and faith-based activists and advocates educating and working for justice and freedom for Palestinians.

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## Indonesia

Citations in this section are drawn from member churches websites and from other ecclesiastical, partner organizations and secular sources.

Indonesia politically and religiously split on Palestine and Israel:

- [Jokowi's unenviable position](#)
- [Jokowi's UN speech: Playing it safe on Palestine](#)
- [Indonesian president: No normalization with Israel until Palestinians have state](#)

Interconnected advocacy

Human rights abuses in West Papua <http://wrc.ch/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/PCC-40DaysForWestPapua.pdf>



Religion map in Indonesia (2010), Protestants are shown in yellow and Catholics in pink. **Christianity** is [Indonesia's](#) second-largest religion, after [Islam](#). Indonesia also has the second-largest Christian population in Southeast Asia after the [Philippines](#), the largest [Protestant](#) population in Southeast Asia, and the fourth-largest Christian population in Asia after the [Philippines](#), [China](#) and India. Indonesia's 28.6 million Christians constitute 10.72% of the country's population in 2018, with 7.60% [Protestant](#) (20.25 million) and 3.12% [Catholic](#) (8.33 million).<sup>[1][2]</sup> Some provinces in Indonesia are majority Christian (Protestant or Catholic).

(Source: Wikipedia, *Christianity in Indonesia*)

World Week for Peace 2018 (WCC program) <https://www.ucanews.com/news/philippine-christians-observe-israel-palestine-peace-week/83503>

[Indonesian pilgrims want progress on Israel travel ban](#)  
[Not all Indonesians banned from entering Israel](#)

Evangelical Alliance (seems to include some churches part of WCRC)  
Statement on relationship to Evangelical Churches in Palestine which would include Baraka Pres:  
[Evangelical Churches and the Palestinian Authority: A New Opening in Jesus' Backyard | The Exchange | A Blog by Ed Stetzer](#)

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## Japan

Church of Christ in Japan

[Korean Christian Church in Japan](#)

- United Church of Christ has this statement on KCCJ and human rights advocacy: [Korean Christian Church in Japan](#)
- 
- [Japan helps WFP Maintain Food Assistance to Families in Palestine Amidst Funding Crunch - Press Release](#)

BDS movement actions in Japan—secular organizations

<https://asiatimes.com/2018/09/japan-must-be-aware-of-real-nature-of-bds-ahead-of-2020-olympiad/>

Mentions these initiatives by Japan BDS

To date, Japan BDS' known activities have included the following:

Pressuring Honda Israel to cancel a 2018 racing event that it sponsored in Israel;

Demanding that Daimaru Department Store in Tokyo withdraw Israeli wines from a 2018 Mediterranean food festival it hosted;

Pressuring Hitachi to withdraw its bid for Jerusalem's light-rail project;

Persuading SoftBank to withdraw its sponsorship of a 2018 security expo in Kawasaki that was organized by Israeli and international corporations; and

Pressuring Japanese artists not to perform in Israel.

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## Korea

[Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea](#)

Letter to Middle East Council of Churches [Letter from the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea to the Middle East Council of Churches](#)

National Council of Churches in Korea Alternative Pilgrimage 2015

[Koreans visit Holy Land for alternative pilgrimage](#)

Interconnected land and justice issues—Reunification movements in Korea and peacebuilding

[NCKK publishes Korean translation of a resource on 70 years of conflict in Korean Peninsula](#)

Reunification Korea--<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/statement-on-peace-and-reunification-of-the-korean-peninsula>

[Church leaders meet and agree to advance peace on Korean Peninsula](#)

Role of Protestant Churches in resisting occupation by Japan: interconnected history

[Koreans protest Japanese control in the "March 1st Movement," 1919 | Global Nonviolent Action Database](#)

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## **Pakistan**

[Presbyterian Church of Pakistan](#)

[Human Rights statement](#) and [Peace and Interfaith Harmony Statement](#) of Minority Forum

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## **Philippines**

[United Church of Christ in the Philippines](#)

[Listings of “Pastoral statements”](#) archived by year, back to 2014

Interconnected justice concerns: Anti-Terrorism Laws violating human rights

Red Tagging the church and human rights <https://www.uccpchurch.com/a-mockery-against-freedom-and-sovereignty/>

<https://www.uccpchurch.com/stop-the-attacks-stop-the-killings-end-impunity/>

Forced entry in churches <https://www.uccpchurch.com/cobstatement/>

Intensified militarization in the Philippines/similarities to Palestine: <https://www.uccpchurch.com/we-deplore-the-evils-of-deceptions-and-intensified-militarization/>

United Evangelical Church of Christ

[PHILIPPINE CHURCH LEADERS’ STATEMENT FOR JUST PEACE IN PALESTINE](#) - 2010

[Duterte’s Forces Have a New Target: University Students](#)

The government in the Philippines has announced a decision to end a 32-year agreement barring security forces from a prestigious campus. Students say they won’t be intimidated.

World Week for Peace 2018 (WCC program) <https://www.ucanews.com/news/philippine-christians-observe-israel-palestine-peace-week/83503>

WCRC report on human rights abuses in Philippines--Chris Ferguson

responds <http://wrc.ch/news/churches-civil-groups-amplify-calls-to-stop-human-rights-abuses-in-philippines>

**Interconnected Justice—confronting racism and freedom for minorities**

[https://www.globalministries.org/messages\\_of\\_solidarity\\_for\\_racial\\_justice/](https://www.globalministries.org/messages_of_solidarity_for_racial_justice/)

Note the number of Asian churches which responded relating their own struggles to the issues of racial violence, justice and freedom, most of which came from Asia.



# Latin America

## Chile

Invest Palestine

<https://investpalestine.ps/the-palestinian-diaspora-in-latin-america/>

Signing a Memorandum of Understanding between Kairos Palestine and the Palestinian Federation of Chile

<https://www.kairospalestine.ps/index.php/kairos-news/kairos-palestine-and-the-palestinian-federation-of-chile>

Pro-Israel caucuses which are mentioned in the handbook text specifically:

<https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/israel-christian-allies-caucus-no-50-established-in-honduras-652327>

The caucuses are part of the Israel Allies Foundation (IAF), which works to mobilize political support for the Jewish State based on shared Judeo-Christian values. The network originated in 2004 with the Knesset caucus, expanded to the US two years later, and has since expanded around the world. There are currently caucuses in six continents and 50 countries, and 1,200 parliamentarians around the world involved in the program – including in several Muslim-majority countries and in parts of southern and central Africa.

Rise of faith-based pro-Israel diplomacy and org's:

[Christian leaders from Latin America, Europe praise Jerusalem Day](#)

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# Caribbean

## Cuba

Global Kairos for Justice/Kairos Palestine BDS toolkit: Cuba essay

<https://bdstoolkit.org/cuba>

Civil society support for sanctions 2020 <https://mondoweiss.net/2020/07/latin-american-leaders-support-call-for-sanctions-on-israel/>

# Middle East

Israel/Palestine

[Baraka Presbyterian Church](#)

Meet our Pastor: <https://barakachurch.com/?p=38>

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Film about Patriarch Sabbagh, the Peoples Patriarch in Palestine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuSuuaCHQPQ>

EAPPI/WCC Faith Under Occupation <https://www.eappi.org/en/resources/publications/faith-under-occupation-2012>

NGO Monitor [anti-Palestinian advocacy] Good links to MECC and other policy and funding actions

[https://www.ngo-monitor.org/ngos/middle\\_east\\_council\\_of\\_churches\\_mecc/](https://www.ngo-monitor.org/ngos/middle_east_council_of_churches_mecc/)

Middle East Council of Churches

MECC/WCC 2013 Christians in the ME statement

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/statement-on-christian-presence-and-witness-in-the-middle-east>

It is Apartheid say former Israeli ambassadors to SA

<https://www.groundup.org.za/article/israeli-ambassadors-compare-israel-south-africa/>

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# Pacific

**Australia**

National Council of Churches of Australia [RESOLUTIONS](#) settlement products

[Uniting Church in Australia](#)

<https://uniting.church/grief-for-the-holy-land/>

<https://uniting.church/creative-solidarity/>

Palestine Israel Ecumenical Network <https://pien.org.au> <https://pien.org.au/about/>

These are highlights of the advocacy and education on Palestine/Israel from PIEN Australia

<https://pien.org.au/2021/05/24/piens-letter-to-the-pm-re-sheikh-jarrah-and-recent-hostilities/>

<https://pien.org.au/2021/05/11/kairos-palestine-pleads-join-the-palestinian-christians-resist-the-ethnic-cleansing-of-east-jerusalem/>

<https://pien.org.au/2020/06/16/annexation-by-increment-a-threat-to-peace-for-israelis-and-palestinians/>

<https://pien.org.au/bds-campaign/>

<https://pien.org.au/speaker-tour/> <https://youtu.be/LHIB5mYshHo>

[Essay: Oh, little town of Bethlehem](#)

### **French Polynesia**

Maōhi Protestant Church (Eglise Protestante Māōhi)

Interconnected Justice:

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/394110/pacific-churches-call-for-decolonisation-of-french-polynesia>

### **New Zealand**

[https://www.presbyterian.org.nz/sites/default/files/publications/spanz/Final\\_SPANZ\\_Nov\\_2019\\_Issue\\_77\\_lores.pdf](https://www.presbyterian.org.nz/sites/default/files/publications/spanz/Final_SPANZ_Nov_2019_Issue_77_lores.pdf)

See page 23 for quotes from Karo Wilson, Face-to-Face in Palestine

“While it was confronting, and at times extremely upsetting to see what life is like for Palestinians living under occupation, it was necessary to experience that to fully understand the situation. It definitely opened my eyes. It made me realise that sometimes there is a disconnect between what we think we know and reality.

“One of the biggest things I brought back with me is to not always believe what you read in mainstream media. The situation for Palestinians living under Israeli occupation is dire... there are huge injustices being played out every day. Yet because Israel is monopolising the narrative, many people have no idea what is going on.”

“Sometimes we get so focused on mission being to bring people to God,” she says. “However, mission also calls for us to be advocates for those who have no voice of their own. The Bible demands a care and concern for those who are marginalised, oppressed and discriminated against. To be Jesus-like, we too must be prepared to speak out against powers that aim to treat others in this way.”

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/hawkes-bay-today/news/israel-debate-rages-in-letters-to-editor/OZXSKWZCMPPE453MJJ32BY2DTY/>

New Zealand co-sponsors UN resolution condemning settlements

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/nzs-backing-of-un-resolution-condemning-israels-palestine-settlements-embarrassing/NUZ2ZZIEIB6GTYXHPBLQN6XNP4/>

NZ Church World Service on Demolition of Khan Al Ahmar

<https://cws.org.nz/cws-opposes-demolition-of-khan-al-ahmar-west-bank/>

NZ Presbyterian Church responded in solidarity with Muslims after mosque killings in Christchurch, NZ

<https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/solidarity-following-mosque-attacks-christchurch>

### **Vanuatu**

[The Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu](#)

Interconnected Justice:

Video: violence is a sin <https://www.facebook.com/UnitingWorld/videos/violence-is-a-sin/2691887084383941/>

Interconnected Justice: Decolonisation

Anti-colonial movement: *Praying for Independence: The Presbyterian Church in the Decolonisation of Vanuatu*, Helen Gardner

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41999474?seq=1>

### **Interconnected Justice: Pacific Conference of Churches**

PCP JUSTICE STATEMENT

<https://www.pacificconferenceofchurches.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/PCC-Call-for-Justice-and-Righteousness-.pdf>

There is no excuse for violence.

In recent months we have witnessed across the Pacific, the use by governments, of police and security forces, to deprive the people of their right to speak freely and without fear.

From the West, where 63 people have been jailed by Indonesia for speaking of freedom in West Papua and the Moluccas Islands, to the east where a police officer was imprisoned on brutality charges in Samoa.

But perhaps it is in Papua New Guinea and Fiji where the security forces – especially the police – are so often used as an extension of the ruling party to quell dissent among the populace.

When it is possible for politicians to use the police to arrest political rivals and private citizens, who voice concern about State policy, an injustice is committed.

Interconnected Justice: Pacific Conference of Churches Decolonisation quote

PCC General Assembly Statement of Solidarity with Tannah (West) Papua (2018)

WE, the 11th general assemblies of the Pacific Conference of Churches representing 30 Member Churches and 9 National Council of Churches, having gathered at Mangere in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand resolve as follows:

That as we reflect on the theme, “Singing the Lord’s Song in a Foreign Land,” we also hear the cries of our communities who struggle to sing the Lord’s song as songs of freedom and justice in their own land. We reaffirm our commitment to the struggle for self-determination of our brothers and sisters in Tannah Papua and express our strong support for their inclusion in the United Nations list for decolonisation.

We call on Pacific churches to set aside Sunday, December 3rd 2018 as a day on which to remember West Papua in liturgy and prayer.

We call on our churches to wear red and black every Wednesday in support of freedom in Tannah Papua.

We call on Indonesia to immediately stop its blatant disregard of the indigenous people of Papua which is clear in its ongoing human rights violations and continued attempts to manipulate the population of Papua through forced migration.

We call for an end to the exploitation of indigenous land in Tannah Papua and demand greater education and employment opportunities for the native population.

Support for Kanaky

PCC General Assembly Statement of Solidarity with Kanaky

WE, the 11th general assemblies of the Pacific Conference of Churches representing 30 Member Churches and 9 National Council of Churches, having gathered at Mangere in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand resolve as follows:

That as we reflect on the theme, "Singing the Lord's Song in a Foreign Land," we also hear the cries of our communities who struggle to sing the Lord's song as songs of freedom and justice in their own land. As our sisters and brothers in Kanaky (New Caledonia) approach the second referendum on independence from France, we call the churches in the Pacific to pray for Kanaky's sovereignty and self-determination, which they deserve.

WE pray for a peaceful process and call for the an honest, free and fair referendum

Central Pacific Council of Churches PIN newsletters

<https://cpcucc.org/wp14/ministry-teams/wider-church-ministry/zaatar/>

**Pacific Conference of Churches** <https://www.facebook.com/Pacific-Conference-of-Churches-Secretariat-432821093498034/>

Interconnected Justice: Advocacy on Papua New Guinea, Samoa , Freedom issues, Regional and International Climate Justice issues

**Partnerships for Peace: EAPPI story**

[International Day of Peace 2015 - UnitingJustice Australia](#)

**ACT Peace--Australia**

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VUdyCS48sDrQGnQaidS3mIxrMj\\_peTR-/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VUdyCS48sDrQGnQaidS3mIxrMj_peTR-/view)

Act for Peace in Palestine/Israel

Act for Peace supports the Middle East Council of Churches' Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees in the operation of primary health care clinics in the Gaza Strip. The Gaza health centres were established in 1952 in Shijaiya, Darraj and Rafah localities, and provide vital health care services in poor, densely populated and isolated areas. These health centres provide primary health care services to close to 100,000 vulnerable and economically disadvantaged people, supporting baby and mother care, nutrition and dental care, in addition to laboratory testing services, clinical examinations and the provision of free prescribed medicine. Especially notable is our partner's work in tackling childhood anaemia and malnutrition, as well as their comprehensive package of services to expectant mothers and young babies. The health program has helped to stabilize health conditions in target localities, increase the quality and scope of services, and improve health knowledge and awareness amongst the population.

Act for Peace also facilitates the deployment of Australians to the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). EAPPI is a global program of the World Council of Churches, run in conjunction with local churches and Palestinian NGOs and communities. The program's mission is to accompany Palestinians and Israelis in non-violent actions and concerted advocacy efforts to end the occupation of Palestine. The Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) spend three months a year working with vulnerable communities, monitoring and promoting the protection of human rights. In 2011, Act for Peace funded the deployment of three Australian EAs to flashpoints in the West Bank. Accounts from the Australian EAs can be found on the blog section of our website.

PCUSA newsletter *Mission Crossroads*

[http://onlinedigitalpublishing.com/publication/?m=60707&i=699465&view=articleBrowser&article\\_id=3970904&ver=html5](http://onlinedigitalpublishing.com/publication/?m=60707&i=699465&view=articleBrowser&article_id=3970904&ver=html5)

***The white man's gospel:***

***By decolonizing, Pacific Islanders are writing a new story***

by Theresa Fox | Mission Crossroads

March 26, 2021

At its heart, the Reweaving the Ecological Mat initiative, now coordinated by the [Pacific Conference of Churches](#), is about reclaiming the Pacific identity, an identity intimately interwoven with the land, seas and skies, but stolen by a racist gospel. Stolen as well by neoliberal development models that glorify the “good life” of more money, more personal assets, more food and drink. This pursuit of the good life has decimated forests, plundered seas, ripped the skies. This model came from the Western world, which the white man came and told us was good, models that prescribed how we needed to deal with the trees, the fish, the land. Cut them all up, empty the ocean, gouge out the land until its insides lay bare, as if they were mere resources to be bartered and traded.

We believed the models that eventually stole our forests and water sources. Anecdotal evidence suggests women across the Pacific islands still walk miles to water sources and increasing water scarcity forces people to drink dirty water. Our men die young and our children are orphaned by the noncommunicable disease epidemic sweeping through our region just like Category 5 Yasa and Category 3 Ana — the former gutted us in Fiji with the worst winds on record, the latter drowned us with unprecedented floodwaters. The good life we chased, trading our forests, our land and skies for change — climate change. Now we stand but a shade of our glorious past, ancient civilizations of wonder and power, who sailed the oceans with nothing but the guide of stars — defeated. The only way we can stop the harmful effects of history is to make things right by choosing to cut off the tentacles of racism, propagated by church systems over thousands of years through decolonizing theology. Already, the decolonization of theology is a growing movement. As we decolonize, we also reconsider neoliberal models of development and redefine what “good life” means to us. We in the Pacific Island region are regrowing a new normal, a new story — and the churches are involved in this process.

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# Focus: Palestine Appendix G



World Communion  
of Reformed Churches

**Study guide**

**For the engagement of the**

**World Communion of Reformed Churches**

**On the Middle East, with special reference to Palestine, Israel**



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- Peace and Justice in Israel and Palestine- Church of Scotland
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- Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem
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### 4. What our Churches can do?



## **How to use this report?**

This Study Guide is drawn up based on the mandate of the 26th General Council of the World Communion of Reformed held in Leipzig, Germany from 29 Jun to 7 Jul 2017.

In April 2019, the WCRC Secretariat set out to complete an abbreviated study guide with the following intent:

1. Engage in a survey of WCRC Related churches to identify solidarity actions with Palestine
2. Put together a study guide on the Palestinian struggle as per the General Council 2017

A questionnaire was drawn up and distributed to selected member churches. Required information was then obtained through direct contacts and secondary research.

This Study Guide provides the rationale, and theological basis for WCRC action for peace with justice in Palestine and Israel and in the region as a whole. It conforms to the GC mandate and its resolutions on Middle East. The General Council:

1. Affirmed that with respect to the situation of injustice and suffering that exists in Palestine, and the cry of the Palestinian Christian community, that the integrity of Christian faith and praxis is at stake
2. Instructed the Secretariat to initiate a programme to:
  - Collect studies and materials that speak to the cry of the Palestinian people, and try to transform the conflict to make it a just and peaceful society, making them available to member churches; and
  - Undertake study and discernment, using the resources available from member churches and the ecumenical movement, regarding theology that has been employed to legitimate the oppression of the Palestinian people, recognizing that such a study might result in the need for prophetic action;
3. Encouraged member churches to examine their mission, education, and investment relationships with Israel and Palestine in light of the witness of Palestinian Christians and to respond as they understand the Re- formed Communion's commitments to human rights and the protections of international law;
4. Instructs the Executive Committee to encourage and support (with practical help from member churches) delegations to visit the region to connect with the present day Christian community—the “living stones”—of the Holy Land, to witness their situation

and express support for their desires for freedom and self-determination; and

5. Encouraged the Executive Committee to seek to strengthen initiatives for dialogues, civil peace services, mediation, conflict prevention and transformation.

This guide lifts up the cries of the Palestinian People. It does not say anything new, it points to what our members and partners have already said and calls our communion and the wider ecumenical movement to listen to the cries of the Palestinian People.

## **Hearing the Cries of the Palestinian People**

### **Kairos Document - A moment of truth- - A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering**

#### **Introduction to the Kairos Document:**

Kairos Palestine is a Christian Palestinian movement which advocates for ending the Israeli occupation and achieving a just solution to the conflict.

The Kairos Document is the word of Christian Palestinians to the world about what is happening in Palestine.

#### **About the Document**

“Our word is a cry of hope, with love, prayer and faith in God. We address it first of all to ourselves and then to all the churches and Christians in the world, asking them to stand against injustice and apartheid, urging them to work for a just peace.”

We proclaim our word based on our Christian faith and our sense of Palestinian belonging – a word of faith, hope and love.

We declare that the military occupation of Palestinian land constitutes a sin against God and humanity. Any theology that legitimizes the occupation and justifies crimes perpetrated against the Palestinian people lies far from Christian teachings.

We urge the international community to stand with the Palestinian people in their struggle against oppression, displacement, and apartheid.

We demand that all people, political leaders and decision-makers put pressure on Israel and take legal measures in order to oblige its government to end its oppression and disregard for international law.

We hold a clear position that non-violent resistance to this injustice is a right and duty for all Palestinians, including Christians.

We support Palestinian civil society organizations, international NGOs and religious institutions that call on individuals, companies and states to engage in boycotts, divestment and sanctions against the Israeli occupation.

“Everything that happens in our land, everyone who lives there, all the pains and hopes, all the injustice and all the efforts to stop this injustice, are part and parcel of the prayer of the Palestinian Church and the service of all her institutions.”

<https://www.kairospalestine.ps/>

### The Theological Issues Raised

- Affirms one good and just God
- Offers a hermeneutical lens for the reading of scripture

We believe that the Word of God is a living Word, casting a particular light on each period of history, manifesting to Christian believers what God is saying to us here and now. For this reason, it is unacceptable to transform the Word of God into letters of stone that pervert the love of God and His providence in the life of both peoples and individuals

- The occupation of Palestine is a sin against God and Humanity
- Condemn the privileging of one people as against another

### **The Amman Call**

*Issued at WCC International Peace Conference "Churches together for Peace and Justice in the Middle East" Amman, Jordan, 18-20 June 2007(Excerpts)*

#### **Amman imperatives:**

Almost sixty years after Christian churches first spoke with one voice about Arab-Israeli peace, forty years since the Christian churches have called for an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, Palestinian Christians from Gaza to Jerusalem and to Nazareth, have called out to their brothers and sisters in Christ with this urgent plea: "Enough is enough. No more words without deeds. It is time for action."

The role of the Churches is to heal and to bring all sides to reconciliation." Our belief in God reminds us "that all God's children of all religions and political parties are to be respected." We assure the Churches of Palestine and Israel of our prayers, collaboration and resources.

3. Thus, in Amman, Jordan 18-20 June 2007, churches affirmed the decision of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and launch the "Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum" as an instrument to *"catalyze and co-ordinate new and existing church advocacy for peace, aimed at ending the illegal occupation in accordance with UN resolutions, and demonstrate its commitment to inter-religious action for peace and justice that serves all the peoples of the region."*

This action has been taken in response to three fundamental imperatives that call us to action:

- The ethical and theological imperative for a Just Peace
- The ecumenical imperative for unity in action
- The Gospel imperative for costly solidarity

#### **Amman challenges:**

1. Act to liberate all peoples of this land from the logic of hatred, mutual rejection and death, so that they see in the other the face and dignity of God.
2. Pray with us in our efforts to resist evil in all of its guises.
3. Raise our voices along with ours as we speak "truth to power" and name with courage the injustices we see and experience.
4. Risk the curses and abuse that will be aimed at you and stand in solidarity with us and with our Palestinian brothers and sisters of all faiths as we defiantly reject the possibility that occupation will continue.
5. Help us to tear down walls and build and rebuild bridges among all peoples in the region. Extremism on all sides produces chaos.
6. Insist with us that all dispossessed peoples, all refugees, have the right to return.
7. Partner with us as we seek peace and pursue it. Peace is possible. Christians and Muslims and Jews have, can and will understand one another and live together as neighbors.

Christian churches and church-related organizations from every corner of the earth must respond: "Yes, we will. Together we will act and pray and speak and work and risk reputations and lives to build with you bridges for an enduring peace among the peoples of this tortured and beautiful place -Palestine and Israel- to end these decades of injustice, humiliation and insecurity, to end the decades of living as refugees and under occupation. We will work with you to seek peace and pursue it. We have allowed too much time to pass. Time has not served the cause of peace but has served the cause of extremism. This is our urgent cause that cannot wait".

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/middle-east-peace/the-amman-call>

### **Berne Declaration- International Theological Conference- "Promised Land"**

This international and broadly ecumenical conference was convened to help different parts of the body of Christ join together in the work of addressing biblical and theological issues in Christian discourse about the conflict in Palestine-Israel.

After decades of dispossession, discrimination, illegal occupation, violence and bloodshed in Palestine-Israel, Christians are challenged to continue to study, critique and re-vision theologies of land in order to promote life-affirming Christian visions and responses to the conflict. This process explores both the contexts in which our theologies were created and their consequences for millions of human lives.

This conference gave preferential option to the voices of Palestinian and Middle Eastern Christian theologians. At several points, participants were made painfully aware that because Christians worldwide have differing vocations, situations, perspectives, interests and solidarities, they also hold to different views of land. Because of our shared hope in the risen Lord, we are confident that these differences do not preclude mutual transformation.

Let us continue,

1. To build trusting relationships that will allow for transformation which can come about only through continued dialogue and constructive confrontation in the spirit of Christian unity.
1. Develop a theological discourse about land, life on the land and living together in the land that is sensitive, promotes respect among ourselves and with others within both intra-Christian and inter-religious contexts, particularly in dialogue with Jews and Muslims, and which avoids any kind of teaching of contempt.
2. Affirm that a new discourse on these issues develops as a new generation emerges. Therefore, our churches should commit themselves to ecumenical and inter-religious formation.
3. To critically and creatively examine notions of the "Promised Land", rediscovering in the Bible and in our traditions life-giving metaphors for promoting justice, peace, reconciliation and forgiveness for the fullness of the earth and all its inhabitants.
4. Include approaches to reading the Bible and doing theology that have emerged from other contexts of conflict, landlessness, dispossession, oppression and exclusion so that we might more rigorously analyze the conflict, interrogate ideologies like anti-Semitism and Christian Zionism, and contribute toward peace making and peace building in Palestine-Israel.

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/middle-east-peace/bern-perspective>

**Open letter from The National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine (NCCOP)  
to the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement  
21 June 2017**

*Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. (Isa. 1:17)*

**Background**

As we meet this month in Bethlehem in occupied Palestine, we are still suffering from 100 years of injustice and oppression that were inflicted on the Palestinian people beginning with the unjust and unlawful Balfour declaration, intensified through the *Nakba* and the influx of refugees, followed by the Israeli occupation of the West Bank including East Jerusalem and Gaza and the fragmentation of our people and our land through policies of isolation and confiscation of land, and the building of Jewish-only settlements and the Apartheid Wall.

We are still suffering because of one political declaration from a Western Empire, based on a twisted theological premise. Even some churches and few Christian leaders supported the establishment of the colonial state in our land, and totally ignored – even dehumanized – the nation, our people that had already existed here for centuries and paid the price for atrocities committed in Europe.

Hundred years later with thousands of lives lost, towns and villages razed from the face of the earth – though not our memory –, millions of refugees, thousands of homes demolished and continued incarceration of prisoners, and our *Nakba* goes on.

Hundred years later and there is still no justice in our land! Discrimination and inequality, military occupation and systematic oppression are the rule. Today, we stand in front of an impasse and we have reached a deadlock. Despite all the promises, endless summits, UN resolutions, religious and lay leader's callings – Palestinians are still yearning for their freedom and independence, and seeking justice and equality. Humanly speaking – we have reached the “moment of impossible”, as Emeritus Latin Patriarch Sabbah said recently.

Could it be that we have reached this “impossible moment” because things were built from the very beginning – a hundred years ago – on an unjust premise? Should we expect that such an unjust declaration will create anything but strife and destruction?

Today is also an opportunity to remember the *Amman Call* which was proclaimed ten years ago. We are thankful to those who stood with us back then in costly solidarity; those who stood for truth and justice. We are also concerned that ten years later the situation has been worsening on the ground and still deteriorating. Like other initiatives advocating end of occupation, the *Amman Call* did not achieve its goals in building and achieving just peace and we must ask ourselves today – why?

We are also concerned by Israel's systemic assault on Palestinian creative resistance, and on our partners worldwide who use this method to pressure Israel to end the occupation. Many new laws were issued in Israel and around the world to oppose this creative non-violent resistance unlawfully, and to stop all effort towards peace. Not only is this an attack on the freedom of conscience and speech but it is also an assault on our right and duty to resist evil with good. Israel is even now trying to prevent pilgrims from visiting Bethlehem – the city of Emmanuel!

While we are grateful for the 'costly solidarity' articulated in the *Amman Call* and exercised by many churches around the world, we are concerned that some churches have weakened their positions in the last ten years as a result of this manipulating pressure. Many still hide behind the cover of political neutrality, not wishing to offend their religious dialogue partners.

Finally, we meet in an environment of religious wars and persecution in our region. Religious extremism is on the rise, and religious minorities have paid a heavy and painful price. We thank you for your efforts towards the refugees and towards ending the conflicts in our region. We also thank you for your support of persecuted Christians in places like Iraq and Syria.

***We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. (2 Cor. 4:8-9)***

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/letters-received/open-letter-from-the-national-coalition-of-christian-organizations-in-palestine/>

### **Alternative Tourism Group-Study Centre and Kairos Palestine “Madaba declaration”**

This communiqué emanated from Madaba, Jordan where twenty one representatives from the International Reference Group of Alternative Tourism Group-Study Centre and Kairos Palestine rallied for a journey for justice for Palestine.

Our deliberations in Madaba were cross-sectoral and resulted in practical outcomes. Our outcomes were shaped by a dynamic and interactive process that included:

- “Discerning new signposts in the Pilgrimages for transformation”

- Addressing the complicity of Christian community and Christianity in this situation and the resultant deepening crisis for the integrity and credibility of the Gospel as well as own witnessing thereof

- Theoretical and practitioner insights on tourism and pilgrimage in the Holy Land that highlighted obstacles and restrictions on visiting Palestine which hurt the tourist economy of Palestine.

- A case study into the experiences towards transformational change of participants during a pilgrimage to Palestine and Israel.

- An overview of Palestine heritage and history suggesting new and different opportunities, and itineraries towards broadening and deepening exposures particularly which, in turn, offered different options for advocacy work.

### **An Invitation to Solidarity - - Join the Pilgrimages for Transformation, “Come & See”**

A plethora of urgent actions were proposed for continuing work. The call included asking pilgrims to publicly challenge any attempt by Israel or other Christians that discourage pilgrims from visiting Palestinian places. The hope is that this same call will also reach the large number of progressive social movements, media, and individuals/academics because they too have spheres of influence and potential impact. Palestinians call on visitors and pilgrims to proceed beyond and outside the Zionist narrative, practices and limitations, to break the ‘culture of silence’ in the face of human suffering, place human dignity as the highest value, and thus, rediscover the fact of our common humanity. We reiterate the call for each of you who travel to our land to visit our homes, our churches, benefit from our rich heritage and culture, and, thus, become disciples and holders of knowledge that will one day lead to equality, democracy, and human rights for all.

<http://atg.ps/en/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Madaba-Letter-to-Churches-2017.pdf>

### **Selected examples of church actions on Palestine-Israel**

*(A fuller version of these examples with links is available if required and can be obtained from*

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Many Christian denominations in North America hold a major conference to reaffirm their faith, discuss issues of the day, and review and set policies. At these meetings in 2018, six U.S. churches passed resolutions that strongly affirmed the human rights of Palestinians, about 5 million of whom live under Israel’s military occupation today. Some of these statements advanced earlier efforts by these same churches.

A total of ten major U.S. denominations have gone a step beyond statements of affirmation; they are now materially participating, to some degree, in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which aims to hold Israel accountable to international law (see sidebar). These



are the Alliance of Baptists, Church of the United Brethren in Christ, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Mennonite Church USA, Presbyterian Church (USA), Roman Catholic Church, Unitarian Universalist Association, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, as well as the World Communion of Reformed Churches (a confederation that overlaps some of the above).

The context in 2018 could not have been more compelling. The U.N. had forecast that Gaza could become unable to sustain human life by 2020 as a result of Israel's siege (blockade of ingress/egress of people and resources by land, sea, or air). During the Great March of Return last year, along the fences and wall -the "cage"- that separates Gaza from Israel and Egypt, Israeli snipers shot thousands of Palestinian demonstrators. According to Amnesty International, Israeli sharpshooters killed 150 Palestinians at the protests and wounded at least 10,000 others. This overwhelmingly nonviolent campaign also included many celebrations of Palestinian culture, but the casualties were terrible. In May alone, as President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu feted the opening of the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem, at least 58 Palestinians were killed and more than 2,000 wounded.

The Israel-Palestine conflict seems to have entered another period of heightened state-sanctioned violence - this time in an era of instant news images created by on-the-ground participants. The assertive Christian church statements of 2018 are the culmination of years of educating and organizing by concerned individuals in the various denominations. Many U.S. denominations have, in previous years, published statements on this issue, developed curricula for congregational study on the Middle East, or responded to the Kairos Document, a manifesto of hope for liberation authored by Christian Palestinians in 2009.

These statements may also suggest that the enormous sacrifice of predominantly youthful Palestinians at the fence has elevated their campaign of nonviolent resistance in the eyes of much of the world to the historical significance of the South African struggle to end apartheid, of India's struggle for independence from colonial British rule, and of the civil rights movement in the United States.

Whether these statements and actions by major U.S. Christian denominations will lead to any dialogue with Zionist-friendly Evangelical churches in America, which claim 20 million members, remains an open question. Most of the latter have taken an unconditional pro-Israel-at-any-cost stance. In the political sphere, few observers would deny the fact that the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which can tolerate no criticism of Israel, is the most powerful foreign lobby in Washington, DC. Unless some conditions are placed upon the \$3.8 billion dollars that the U.S. gives annually to Israel, the institutional violence in the occupied territories is not likely to lessen. Israel is the only recipient of U.S. military aid that is not required by law to spend it on American-made weapons.

The “Promoting Human Rights by Ending Israeli Military Detention of Palestinian Children Act” (which is slated to be reintroduced in 2019) was endorsed last year by the American Friends Service Committee, Amnesty International USA, Arab American Institute, Center for Constitutional Rights, Church World Service, Churches for Middle East Peace, Defense for Children International-Palestine, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ, Jewish Voice for Peace, Mennonite Central Committee, Presbyterian Church (USA), the U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights, United Methodists for Kairos Response (UMKR), United Methodist General Board of Church and Society, and Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East.

In sum, more than 80 million church-going Americans belong to congregations that have endorsed sanctions to some degree against Israel for its violation of the human rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories and Jerusalem.

More than mere mention must be the efforts of Jewish organizations that are critical of Israel’s occupation and support the BDS movement. Jewish Voice for Peace, with 75 U.S. chapters and 13,500 members, is perhaps the largest, but there are others, such as Americans for Peace Now, and the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network. These groups were, in the summer of 2018, actively protesting the policies of the Trump-Netanyahu axis and organizing to uphold the right of Palestinians to resist occupation and participate in shaping their future. As the *group ‘If Not Now’* states, “We will be the generation that ends our [Jewish American] community’s support for the occupation.”

## Israel Palestine mission network - Statements & Press Releases

### 2019

- #Nakba71 - [Report on Petition Delivery](#) at Israeli Embassy in Washington
- [IPMN Endorses Rep. Betty McCollum’s Legislation on Treatment of Palestinian Children in Israeli Military Detention](#)
- In the wake of New Zealand shootings, [IPMN Expresses Its Profound Grief, Standing in Solidarity with Muslims](#)
- [IPMN Responds to Recent Methodist Vote Against LGBTQI+ Community](#)
- [Protect Your Right To Boycott](#)
- [Vernon Broyles letter to BCRI on Revoking Angela Davis' Award](#)
- [Presbyterians Oppose Congressional and State Anti-BDS Legislation](#)

### 2018

- [Kairos Palestine 2018 Christmas Alert](#)
- [IPMN Strongly Condemns Antisemitic Shooting Attack in Pittsburgh](#)
- [IPMN Condemns Israel’s New Apartheid Law favoring Jewish Citizens](#)

- [IPMN Responds To US Decision To Cease All Funding To UNRWA](#)
- [IPMN Stands Against Continuing Demolitions and Destruction of the Village of Al-Walajeh](#)
- [Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\) Deplores Killings in Gaza, Supports Equality for Palestinian Citizens of Israel](#) — Press Release at adjournment of 223rd GA — June 23, 2018
- [PC\(USA\) Deepens its support for Palestine](#) — Midweek report from 223rd General Assembly, June 21, 2018 — St. Louis, MO
- [Reflection on The Nakba at 70, What the Nakba Means to Us](#), a personal reflection, plus Nakba by the Numbers
- [The Nakba, 70 Years On -IPMN Stands with the Victims of the Ongoing Nakba](#), May 14, 2018, plus: *An Ecumenical Statement from U.S. Churches, signed by PC(USA)*
- [Gaza Border Violence: Statement of U.S. Churches and Christian Agencies](#)
- [BDS Movement nominated for Nobel Peace Prize](#)
- [US Churches joint letter to Pres. Trump on withholding funds from UNRWA](#)
- [IPMN's page for 223rd GA, St. Louis, MO](#)

## 2017

- [Jerusalem as Capital](#) - fact sheets, Letter from IPMN Moderator
- [Oppose the "Israel Anti-Boycott Act"](#) - Christian Leaders, including J. Herbert Nelson of the Presbyterian Church (USA), call on Congress to oppose the “Israel Anti-Boycott Act”
- [IPMN Stands with Mennonite Esther Koontz](#) - Protecting the Right to Protest through Economic Actions
- [Charlottesville: Where We Stand](#)
- [IPMN Condemns Israeli Travel Ban on Supporters of BDS](#)
- [Palestine: An Urgent Issue of Faith for the World Communion](#) - WCRC General Council 2017 Public Witness Report
- [Open letter from The National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine \(NCCOP\) to the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement](#) - June 12, 2017
- [Fifty years on... A call for liberty and justice for all](#)
- [Hunger Strike Solidarity](#)
- [Drop the Charges and End the Tarnishing Campaign](#) - Statement on Omar Barghouti gag order and travel ban
- [Joint Statement](#) - PC(USA) and 14 other Christian churches and organizations call for peace, justice, and equality in Israel and Palestine
- [Israel/Palestine Iona Community Statement](#)

## 2016

- [In Thankful Reflection](#) - What Hunter Farrell Has Meant for the Long-Term Mission Vision of the PC(USA)
- [Ecumenical Statement: Employing Economic Measures as Nonviolent Tools for Justice in the Israeli-Palestinian Context](#)

- [IPMN endorses the Movement for Black Lives](#)
- [IPMN recap post 222nd General Assembly](#)
- [PC\(USA\) Continues its Strong Support for Palestinian Rights](#)
- [Statement of Support for Divestment in the United Methodist Church](#)
- [Hosanna Seminar and Preaching Prize 2016](#)
- [Holding the IDF accountable for human rights violations](#) - *IPMN Response to the congressional letter on adherence to the Leahy Law*
- [IPMN responds to 'Two States for Two Peoples'](#) - a document by advocacy group PFMEP
- [IPMN page for 222nd General Assembly, Portland, OR](#)

## 2015

- [IPMN Stands in Solidarity with Muslims in America](#)
- [Westminster Presbyterian Church opens its doors to Syrian refugees](#)
- *Zionism Unsettled* now available on Kindle! - [Press Release](#)
- [Interfaith groups call for the protection of Palestinians' freedom of worship in Jerusalem](#)
- [Response to the anti-divestment protest document](#) *Reformed and Reforming: A Word of Hope*
- [With Courage in Cleveland, UCC votes for BDS](#) - Divestment from the Israeli Occupation marches forward
- [IPMN joins FOSNA and condemns racial hatred](#)
- [Words Matter](#): Criticism of Israeli policies and charges of anti-Semitism - IPMN Statement June 2015
- [Frequently Asked Questions about Divestment](#)
- [IPMN reflects on the Vatican recognizing Palestine](#)
- [Hosanna Seminars Announced](#) - IPMN announces a new initiative
- [IPMN Tribute to Bob Simon of CBS News](#) - Thank You Bob Simon
- [IN SOLIDARITY WITH GAZA](#) - resources, where to donate, the 2014 assault in numbers, Presbyterian statement, and more...

## 2014

- [Ending the Violence Is One Step Toward Liberation](#) - Statement on the Recent Tragedies in Israel/Palestine
- [Hosanna Preaching Prize Winner announced for 2014](#) - Rev. Loren McGrail of UCC, sermon preached at St. Andrew's Scots Memorial Church, Jerusalem - August 24, 2014
- [Zionism Unsettled: The Conversation Continues](#) - Nov 10, 2014 Press Release, with links to dialogue/articles on Zionism
- [Interfaith Statement of Concern over Jerusalem](#) - The debate over Al Aqsa Mosque/Temple Mount is a debate over the future of Jerusalem
- [Faith groups join call for an arms embargo on Israel](#)
- [Zionism Unsettled no longer sold by Presbyterian Mission Agency](#)
- [Thank you JVP!](#) - Statement of support for their witness and solidarity at our 221st General Assembly

- [221st General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\) Votes to Endorse Selective Divestment from Israeli Occupation](#)
- [Middle East Issues Committee Endorses Selective Divestment](#) from Israeli Occupation at 221st General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA)
- [Pre 221st General Assembly Press Release](#)
- [Five critical responses](#) to “Perspectives,” a discussion paper produced by the Ecumenical and Interreligious Work Group (EIWG) of the Chicago Presbytery
- [IPMN Responds to Chicago Group's mischaracterization of \*Zionism Unsettled\*](#)
- [If not now, when?](#) IPMN supports MRTI Recommendation to divest to 221st GA
- [Zionism Unsettled: A Congregational Study Guide](#) - IPMN announces its new publication
- Responding to Those Who Say Criticizing Israel’s Occupation of Palestine is “Anti-Israel” - FAQs click [here](#)
- [IPMN webpage for 221st GA](#) - Detroit, MI

## 2013

- [No Negative Investment in Palestine](#) - "Take the money and be quiet..."
- [Time for Israel to stop the settlements in Palestine](#) - IPMN Statement on Kerry Initiative
- [Wishful Thinking as Propaganda](#) - IPMN statement on "positive investment" in Palestine
- [IPMN Joins theInterfaith Coalition Boycott of Sodastream](#)

## 2012

- [IPMN supports upgrading Palestine status at United Nations](#)
- [IPMN condemns violence in Gaza and Israel](#), Encourages better reporting from US Media
- [IPMN Condemns Mischaracterization of Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\) policies on Israel/Palestine](#)
- [IPMN Responds to Attack on Rev. Gradye Parsons by Presbyterians for Middle East Peace](#)
- [IPMN Welcomes Multi-denominational Letter to Congress Urging End to Unconditional Military Aid to Israel](#)
- [2013 Peacemaker Award announced by Presbyterian Peace Fellowship](#) , *Joint Statement of Thanks*
- [IPMN Statement on Rachel Corrie Civil Suit Verdict](#)
- [Investment, Divestment and the Collective Amnesia of the PC\(USA\)](#), a comprehensive account from 2004 to 2012 General Assemblies, by Rev. Dr. Jeffrey DeYoe
- [Final IPMN Report from the 220th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church \(USA\)](#)
- [Presbyterian General Assembly Passes Boycott Motion](#)
- [Presbyterian Church \(USA\) Fails to Pass Divestment Motion](#)
- [IPMN Responds to Christian Century on "Positive Investment"](#)
- [Presbyterian Network Commends United Methodist Church on Boycott Vote](#)
- [IPMN Supports Divestment by United Methodist Church](#)
- [Presbyterian Leadership Takes Historic Stand](#)
- [IPMN responds to smear campaign](#)

- [IPMN Statement on Social Media](#)
- [IPMN webpage for 220th GA - Pittsburgh, PA](#)

## 2011

- [The IPMN responds to punitive Israel's punitive measures since Palestine voted into UNESCO](#)
- [Christian leaders say yes to Palestine U.N. membership](#)
- [IPMN and Presbyterians to Obama: Don't block statehood!](#)
- [The IPMN Supports Divestment Vote on Caterpillar Inc., Hewlett-Packard and Motorola Solutions](#)
- [PC\(USA\) Stated Clerk Expresses Concern Over Israel's New Boycott Law](#)
- [IPMN responds to the Knesset's Boycott Law](#)
- [Shameless Attack on Concerned Christians](#)
- [IPMN Statement on President Obama's Speech on Mideast](#)
- [IPMN Statement on the Violence in Jerusalem](#)
- [The IPMN Strongly Condemns the Attack on the Fogel Family in Itamar](#)
- [A New Era for Egypt and the Middle East](#)

## 2010 and earlier

- [Presbyterian Groups Call on U.S. Department of Justice to End Subpoenas on Dissenting Activists](#)
- [Presbyterian Mission Network Responds to Simon Wiesenthal Center Attack](#)
- [U.S. Groups to Obama—Stop Delivery of Bulldozers to Israel](#)
- [Presbyterian Mission Network Joins BDS Movement, Calls for Boycotts on goods from Illegal Israeli Settlements](#)
- [Mission Network Praises Presbyterian Call to Withdraw Military Aid to Israel](#)
- [The Freedom Flotilla](#)
- [IPMN Statement on MESC](#)
- [IPMN Pre-Inaugural Letter to President Obama](#)
- [The Amman Call, 2007](#)
- [Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth, 2009](#)
- [Cairo Declaration from Free Gaza Coalition](#)
- [Statement on Gaza invasion of 2008/2009](#)

## What our partners and members have said?

### *Excerpts from an article by Steven Sellers Lapham*

1. The Alliance of Baptists, with 65,000 members, passed a resolution in 2017 opposing “efforts by Congress and state legislatures to punish entities that engage in Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) or that provides sanctuary for immigrants.” In 2016, the Baptists “affirmed the use of BDS strategies and comprehensive education and advocacy programs to end the 49-year Israeli military occupation of Palestinian land.”

2. The Church of the United Brethren in Christ, with 23,000 members, took a stand in 2006, when the Brethren Benefit Trust divested “from ownership of Caterpillar Corporation and any other company that sells products that are used routinely as weapons of destruction or death in Israel and Palestine.” Recently, the Brethren joined others in divesting from HP Inc. (Hewlett-Packard Company). Early in 2010, members of On Earth Peace (a Church of the Brethren agency) were arrested, jailed, and deported as they tried to enter Israel.
3. The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) has 76,000 members. The American Friends Service Committee (the humanitarian services arm of the church) took a position in 2012 in support of BDS and the right of people to use economic activism tactics as tools for change in Israel and Palestine, after having passed a divestment screen (screening an investment portfolio reflects an organization’s ethical stances) in 2009. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), the 1947 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, was the main provider of aid for Palestinian refugees forced from their lands and homes in 1948. The Friends Fiduciary Corporation investment firm, serving over 300 Quaker institutions in the U.S., has dropped its holdings in HP Inc. and Veolia Environment. Those actions were the result of a preexisting investment screen, and are explicitly not part of BDS.
4. The Mennonite Church USA, which has more than 75,000 members, approved a resolution by a majority of 98 percent in 2017 calling on “individuals and congregations to avoid the purchase of products associated with acts of violence or policies of military occupation, including items produced in [Israeli] settlements.” The church explained, “The Palestinian people have suffered injustices, violence, and humiliation, including...life under Israeli military occupation and in refugee camps throughout the Middle East.”
5. The Presbyterian Church (USA), which represents 1.5 million Americans, voted overwhelmingly in support of the international BDS campaign in 2018. Members voted on a slate of resolutions put forth by the Israel Palestine Mission Network (IPMN). The church also opposed congressional and state anti-BDS legislation, instead calling on Americans to “defend and advocate for the constitutional protection under the First Amendment for all United States citizens.”
6. The Roman Catholic Church has 70.4 million members in the U.S., making it the largest denomination in the nation. The Catholic Conference of Major Superiors of Men voted in March 2016 to “join the boycott of settlement products and companies profiting from settlements.” The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has not made a similar statement. Pax Christi, a Catholic peace and justice organization, is a leader on this issue.
7. The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) has 155,000 members. Its Socially Responsible Investing Committee adopted a human rights investment screen in 2016 focusing on conflict zones. Human rights violations by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories came under scrutiny. As a result, the UUA divested from HP Inc., Motorola Solutions, and Caterpillar Inc. A resolution specifically mentioning Palestine and calling for a broader, secure, and long-lasting commitment to screening out investments in

corporations complicit in human rights violations in Palestine/Israel was not adopted by the delegates to the 2016 UUA General Assembly.

8. The United Church of Christ (UCC), with 850,000 members, voted in 2015 to divest from companies profiting from Israel's military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The UCC Christ Palestine-Israel Network (UCC PIN) stated that the resolution was "the culmination of a process that began in 2005 to end the Church's complicity in Israel's nearly half-century-old occupation and other abuses of Palestinian human rights." The 2005 resolution stated, "Economic leverage can be used to support the development of Palestine and Israel as two independent, secure, economically viable states."
9. The United Methodist Church (UMC), with an estimated 7 million members, divested from five Israeli banks on the grounds that they contribute to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. Bank Hapoalim, Bank Leumi, First International Bank of Israel, Israel Discount Bank and Bank Mizrahi-Tefahot are among 39 companies blacklisted in 2018 by the UMC pension fund for failing to meet the guidelines of a human rights investment policy. An Israeli construction company, Shikun & Binui, was also excluded for involvement in settlement building. The pension board's assets in 2014 were valued at \$20.9 billion.
10. The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), has 232 member churches on six continents. In 2017, WCRC called on its members to "examine their mission, education, and investment relationships with Israel and Palestine in light of the witness of Palestinian Christians and to respond as they understand the Reformed communion's commitments to human rights and the protections of international law." The WCRC is the largest association of Reformed churches in the world, with 11 member denominations in the U.S., including two (UCC and Presbyterians) appearing on this list.

Where do the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America stand on these issues? Both denominational conventions passed resolutions in 2018 expressing strong concern for Palestinian human rights, although both stopped short of supporting any BDS action.

### **Mandate of UNJPPI in Palestine & Israel**

UNJPPI (**United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine/Israel**) is a grassroots network of United Church members and adherents, and other friends, which has been established to respond to the requests from leaders of Palestinian churches outlined in the Kairos Palestine Document (KPD). The Kairos Palestine Document eloquently describes the long-standing and worsening conditions faced by Palestinians living under the illegal Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinian Christians urgently call on churches worldwide to come to the aid of Palestinians. It says that doing nothing is not an option and asks for action. UNJPPI seeks to raise awareness of the conditions of Palestinians under the illegal Israeli occupation and encourages action to pressure the state of Israel to end the occupation of and building of Israeli only settlements in Palestinian land.



## **Kairos Canada -Middle East**

### **Resilience and collective responsibility in peace building in Palestine –Recent examples**

In July, 2018 Kairos Canada staff travelled to the West Bank to visit with Wi'am: Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center, one of five KAIROS partner organizations in the Women of Courage: Women, Peace and Security (WPS) program. KAIROS also joined fifteen international faith-based, civil society and human rights organizations from around the world in collectively calling on our governments to take action to stop demolition of Khan al Ahmar.

In the wake of US declarations on status of Jerusalem, KAIROS shares its long standing position on Jerusalem as an open city. Its policy affirms: The city of Jerusalem must be shared and open. The question of Jerusalem has two...

KAIROS network shows solidarity for partners in the Middle East and has previously stated "In this moment, we must all don the robe of humanity. It is a time to stand together as Canadians, Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims, Jews, Israelis and Christians as one soul. We must show that none is ignored or considered unworthy..."

KAIROS member churches and organizations have earlier spoken out for peace in Gaza, urging the Canadian government to become more engaged in building a just peace. A number of KAIROS' member churches are accepting donations to provide direct support to those affected by ongoing violence in Gaza.

### **US Campaign for Palestinian Rights (Faith-based actions)**

July 19, 2017 – [Seventeen churches pledge to boycott Hewlett Packard to end complicity with Israel's human rights abuses of Palestinians](#)

July 12, 2017 – [Disciples of Christ call on Israel to guarantee basic due process rights and prohibit torture and ill-treatment of detained children](#)

July 6, 2017- [Menonite Church \(USA\) votes by 98% to create an investment screen for the purpose of withdrawing investments from companies that are profiting from the occupation](#)– National

July 3, 2017 – [United Church of Christ calls for military sanctions on Israel for its mistreatment of Palestinian children in Israeli detention](#) – National

June 12, 2017 – [By a vote of 144-5, Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ divests from companies that profit from the Israeli occupation of Palestine](#) – Minnesota

January 19, 2017 – [Majilis Ash-Shura / Islamic Leadership Council of New York endorse BDS](#) – New York, New York

December 10, 2016 – [Pax Christi International endorses BDS](#) – International

August 13, 2016 – [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Overwhelmingly Passes Investment Screen](#)

August 13, 2016 – [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Votes 82% Against Unconditional U.S. Aid to Israel](#)

April 10, 2016 – [Alliance of Baptists Divests from Companies Profiting from Israel's Occupation of Palestinian Land](#)

April 7, 2016 – [Unitarian Universalists Divest from Companies Profiting from Israel's Occupation](#)

March 30, 2016 – [Catholic Conference of Major Superiors of Men Calls for Boycott of Illegal Settlements](#)

January, 2016 – [United Methodist Church Excludes Top 5 Israeli Banks for Involvement in Illegal Settlements](#)

December 2015 – **United Methodist Church declares Israeli company Elbit Systems**, long excluded for weapons production, also **ineligible for investment due to involvement in human rights violations**

June 30, 2015 – [United Church of Christ General Synod votes overwhelmingly to boycott and divest from Israeli occupation](#)

June, 2015 – **National Council of Fellowship of Reconciliation Unanimously Endorses BDS**

July 31, 2014 – [No Más Muertes endorses Palestinian call for BDS](#)

June 20, 2014 – [Presbyterian Church \(USA\) General Assembly divests from companies involved in Israeli occupation](#)

June 12, 2014 – [United Methodist Church divests from G4S in response to role in Israeli prisons](#)

Winter 2013/2014 – [United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society Boycotts Sodastream](#)

March 16, 2013 – [Mennonite Central Committee unanimously adopts AFSC 29-company no-buy list for divestment](#)

18 Victories spanning 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 – [18 Quaker Meetings Across 15 States Endorse Boycott, Divestment, and, in some cases, Both](#)

September, 2012 – [Quaker Friends Fiduciary Corporation divests from HP, Veolia](#)

July, 2012 – [Presbyterian Church \(USA\) General Assembly votes to boycott settlement products](#)

May, 2012 – [United Methodist Church General Conference votes to boycott settlement products](#)

May, 2012 – [Quaker Friends Fiduciary Corporation divests from Caterpillar](#)

June, 2010 – **Presbyterian Church (USA) General Assembly calls for U.S. Government to place sanctions on military assistance to Israel**

March 8, 2008 – [American Friends Service Committee approves Israel-Palestine Investment Screen](#)

October 21, 2007 – [National Coalition of American Nuns Publicly Urges Boycott of Caterpillar](#)

Summer, 2005 – [United Church of Christ General Synod calls for the use of Economic Leverage — including ending military aid and divestment — to promote peace in Middle East](#)

Dozens of Victories spanning 2005 – 2015 – [18 United Methodist Church Annual Conferences — representing thousands of churches and hundreds of thousands of members — adopt 30 resolutions and statements calling for divestment; several divest their own conference funds](#)

July 2004 – [Presbyterian Church \(USA\) votes overwhelmingly to begin the process of selective divestment](#) – National

## **UCC General Resolutions on Israel/Palestine**

### **The Middle East at a Glance**

#### **Timeline**

- [1967 General Synod Resolution: On the Middle East Situation](#)
- [1969 General Synod Resolution: On the Middle East situation](#)
- [1971 General Synod Resolution: The Middle East](#)
- [1973 Executive Council Resolution: Middle East Situation](#)
- [1979 General Synod Action: Communication to Presidents Sadat, Begin, and Carter](#)
- [1979 General Synod Resolution: Overture on Consultation on the Future of the City of Jerusalem](#)
- [1987 General Synod Resolution: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#)
- [1989 General Synod Resolution: On the Middle East](#)
- [1991 General Synod Resolution: Consequences of the Persian Gulf War for a Just Peace Church](#)
- [1991 General Synod Resolution: Support for the Men and Women of our Armed Forces](#)
- [1993 General Synod Resolution: Urging Reopening of East Jerusalem](#)
- [1997 General Synod Resolution: Jerusalem City of Life](#)
- [1997 General Synod Resolution: Palestine/Israel](#)

- [1999 General Synod Resolution: Bringing Justice and Peace to The Middle East](#)
- [2003 General Synod Resolution: An Alternative Voice to Christian Zionism](#)
- [2005 General Synod Resolution: Concerning Use of Economic Leverage in Promoting Peace in the Middle East](#)
- [2005 General Synod Resolution: Tear Down the Wall](#)
- [2007 Executive Council action on referred resolution “In Support of a Renewed and Balanced Study and Response to the Conflict Between Palestine and Israel”](#)
- [2013 Executive Council action on reports of implementation of 2005 “Economic Leverage” resolution](#)
- [2015 General Synod Resolution: A Call for the United Church of Christ to Take Actions Toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#)
- [2017 General Synod Resolution: A Call for the United Church of Christ to Advocate for the Rights of Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation](#)

### **Theological Rationale and Background**

God calls the people of God to witness to justice and peace. Peace and justice go together; there is no justice without peace and no peace without justice.

God calls the people of God to be agents of reconciliation, breaking down walls of division nationally, culturally, racially and religiously (Eph. 2:11-18).

God calls the people of God to be a new creation, restoring the original creation and bringing to birth new ways of relating to one another that honor the image of God within us.

As a people of faith - whose Statement of Mission calls us "to hear and give voice to Creation's cry for justice and peace...to repent our silence and complicity with the forces of chaos and death...to join oppressed and troubled people in the struggle for liberation; to work for justice, healing and wholeness of life"—we recognize that working for peace is not optional but is fundamental to the faith of Muslims, Jews and Christians.

The 15th General Synod pronounced the United Church of Christ a Just Peace Church, grounded in a ministry of reconciliation. The United Church of Christ participates in the work of Churches for Middle East Peace and supports the work of the U.S. Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East.

Peace in the Middle East is essential for the future of Israel, for the Palestinian and Arab states, and for the whole world. Peace cannot be achieved by force. It can only be achieved by negotiations.

### **1997 General Synod Resolution: Jerusalem City of Life**

WHEREAS, the 1980 National Council of Churches Middle East Policy Statement affirmed in 1981 at the General Assembly (Christian Church, Disciples of Christ) and the General Synod

(the United Church of Christ) stated that the issue of Jerusalem was an issue not only of shrines, but also of people;

The Twenty-first General Synod of the United Church of Christ joins in affirming the text of the December 21, 1996, Churches for Middle East Peace statement Heritage, Hope and Home of Two Peoples and Three Religions: "Jerusalem is a sacred city to Jews, Christians and Muslims, the Children of Abraham. All long for Jerusalem to be the City of Peace. Now the ancient hope for peace can become reality through negotiations.

Israeli leaders hold that Jerusalem should be Israel's capital under the sole sovereignty of the State of Israel. Palestinian leaders hold that traditionally Arab eastern Jerusalem should become the capital of a new State of Palestine. As Christians committed to working for peace, we support a negotiated solution for Jerusalem that respects the human and political rights of both Palestinians and Israelis, as well as the rights of the three religious communities. We urge Jews, Christians and Muslims to open dialogue on these issues.

### **Peace and Justice in Israel and Palestine- Church of Scotland**

The Church of Scotland has been present since the 1860s when during Ottoman rule Tabeetha school was founded in Jaffa to provide education for poor girls and the Tiberias mission hospital was set up to care for the sick. In 1930 a Church and Hospice (guest-house) was built in Jerusalem. Today, Tabeetha School in Jaffa, a church and hotel in Tiberias and a church and guest house in Jerusalem support the witness of the local Christian communities. They also help visitors from Scotland and around the world to better understand the reality for the people who live there.

### **Why is the Church of Scotland involved?**

“Christians have a calling to stand on the side of the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalized, and to warn against oppression. In Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, we are asked to stand in solidarity with our fellow Christians and all those who are oppressed. The presence and experience of the Church of Scotland in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, added to the call of the rest of the Christian community, has made this international issue a major focus”.

### **United Methodist Church**

The Methodist Projects & Partners in Israel/Palestine currently around 28 projects that address a varied number of humanitarian, human rights, educational, including educating and boarding disadvantaged children from the West Bank in a caring Christian environment.

### **Quakers**

Britain's Quakers have decided that they will not invest any of their centrally held funds in companies that are profiting from Israel's occupation of Palestine, making it the first church in

the United Kingdom to do so. “Our long history of working for a just peace in Palestine and Israel has opened our eyes to the many injustices and violations of international law arising from the military occupation of Palestine by the Israeli government: “With the occupation now in its 51st year, and with no end in near sight, we believe we have a moral duty to state publicly that we will not invest in any company profiting from the occupation.”

The Quakers' solidarity with the Palestinian people is longstanding. In 1948, during the Palestinian Nakba (Catastrophe) when 700,000 Palestinians were driven from their homes during the creation of Israel, the US branch of the Quakers set up refugee camps in the Gaza Strip which are still in existence. The American Friends Service Committee, as the US Quakers are known, established the camp

**The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem** Website: <http://www.j-diocese.org/>

The Diocese of Jerusalem covers five countries and is home to almost thirty parishes. Our healthcare and education ministries are active and growing across the region with the provision of hospitals, clinics, rehabilitation centers, and schools. Alongside these ministries the Diocesan Peace and Reconciliation department continues to work at strengthening the interfaith dialogue with our fellow Jews and Muslims. Our Kids4Peace programme in turn strives to educate the next generation in a language of tolerance and acceptance.

### **United Reform Church (URC) Israel-Palestine work to the mission committee**

The ‘General Assembly of the URC instructs mission committee to explore and develop further our existing work around the issues of the Israel-Palestine situation with indigenous churches, interfaith and ecumenical partners and public authorities, including:

- dialogue and action;
- peacebuilding;
- justice and security for all

### **The Sadaka Churches Campaign for Justice in Palestine**

There has been considerable progress in the stance of many Christian churches in recent times towards the cause of the Palestinian people. Through a desire to work with all sectors of Irish society Sadaka recognizes the importance of the role which faith based communities on the Island of Ireland have to play in furthering the cause of peace and justice in that part of the world known to Christians as the “Holy Land”.

The Church is a direct stakeholder in the issues surrounding the plight of all Palestinian people and of the Christian presence in particular. Sadaka in seeking to educate and raise the consciousness of the Irish people to the historical and contemporary aspects of the Israeli

Occupation of Palestine and the denial of rights to the Palestinian people, Muslim and Christian alike, realizes the vital role that faith based communities can play in this process. Sadaka is currently building working relationships with representatives of a broad range of churches and partly in pursuit of this and has organized two tours of Ireland for senior Palestinian church leaders:

### **Iona Community- Israel/Palestine Statement**

The Iona Community is an ecumenical Christian movement seeking new ways of living the gospel in today's world through working for peace and social justice rebuilding community and in the renewal of worship.

The Iona Community has a strong and long-standing commitment, through prayer, protest and the active engagement of many members, to seeking peace and justice in Israel/Palestine. The community believes that a just peace for Israelis and Palestinians is only possible through ending the 'settler colonial' project of the state of Israel and the establishment throughout historic Palestine of equal rights, irrespective of religious and ethnic background and identity.

Iona fully endorses the 2009 Kairos Palestine document asking all churches and Christians in the world 'to revisit theologies that justify crimes perpetrated against people and the dispossession of the land'. It acknowledges the need to scrutinize Christian theology and repent of any legitimacy it may give to anti-Semitism. It opposes any theology which privileges one religion or belief system and discriminates against adherents of others, or provides theological justification for the exclusive right of any group of people to the land. It condemns Christian Zionism in particular as a distortion of the Christian faith, in its abuse of scripture to oppress Palestinian people. It supports the demands of the BDS movement that Israel should abide by international law and United Nations resolutions by:

- Ending the military occupation of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and siege of Gaza;
- Abolishing all laws which discriminate against Palestinian citizens of Israel; and
- Granting all Palestinian refugees the right to return.

### **International Law- Instruments of international law**

The most consistent and universal demand among advocates for justice in Israel/Palestine is that Israel should comply with international law. Therefore, to be effective, advocates will need some familiarity with international law and how it applies to issues in Israel/Palestine. Much of international law is consent-based: a state is not obliged to obey the law in question, unless it has so consented. But some aspects of international law are considered to be binding on all states, such as "customary international law" and "peremptory norms."

[Hague Convention II \(1899\)](#)  
[Geneva Convention IV \(1949\)](#)  
[Additional Protocols to Geneva Convention IV \(1977\)](#)  
[International Convention on Crime of Apartheid – Full \(1973\)](#)  
[International Court of Justice, Advisory Opinion, Separation Wall, 2004 – Summary](#)  
[UN GA Resolution 194 \(1948\)](#)  
[UN SC Resolution 242 \(1967\)](#)  
[UN SC Resolution 252 \(1968\)](#)  
[UN SC Resolution 267 \(1969\)](#)  
[UN SC Resolution 338 \(1973\)](#)  
[UN SC Resolution 446 \(1979\)](#)  
[UN SC Resolution 452 \(1979\)](#)  
[UN SC Resolution 471 \(1980\)](#)  
[UN SC Resolution 476 \(1980\)](#)  
[UN SC Resolution 478 \(1980\)](#)  
[UN SC Resolution 2334 \(2016\)](#)

### **What our Churches Can Do?**

The Middle East needs to be viewed through more than the simple lenses of Christian-Muslim relations and Israel and Palestine (neither of which are actually simple, but the complexity of the region goes beyond these two categories). The region has a complex interfaith and colonial history that is playing into events today in ways that have global significance and need to be better understood by those of outside, whose main source of information about the region comes principally in the binary code of the news media in which there are either goodies or baddies in all situations. Such simple characterizations do not help anyone understand the complexities of what is currently happening for example in Syria, where there are multiple proxy wars being played out with actors from across the region and the globe, all to the extreme detriment of the Syrian people. A strand of our strategy should seek to explore and understand what is happening so that it can be lifted up to better inform WCRC members of the plight of our membership in the Middle East; the challenges this poses for global peace and security; and the quiet ways our members seek to build and strengthen community across the many fault lines in the places they serve. The last mentioned objective is especially important as there are lessons here for all of us as we work not only with misconceptions of the Middle East, but the fault lines in our own places.

### **“Come and See”**

1. The Kairos Palestine document pointedly calls on the global church to **“Come and See”** the reality of the conditions in which Palestinians live under the occupation. It



would be important (from the context of the WCRC General Council resolution) to carry this forward in several stages:

- a. To send a high-level delegation from different regions of the world to visit with Palestinians and Israelis who are actively engaged in the struggle for justice and peace based on dialogue and non-violence.
  - b. The delegation would be tasked with understanding the nature and imperatives for Palestinian resistance as a right. The group would need to meet people affected by the conflict, religious leaders, political thinkers and analysts, selected political leaders especially of the progressive variety, visit contested heritage-cultural sites that have been appropriated by Israel for tourism for ideological and corporate reasons
  - c. The delegation would probe the dynamics of what it means to be deprived of the freedom of movement (walls, check points, blockade of Gaza, preventing people from livelihood options, jobs across the border, children going to schools, obstructing the sick from medical access even when the medical condition is severe), violation of freedom of religion (wrongly interpreting the conflict to be a religious one), prisoners and their families, areas under collective punishment, the Bedouins at risk of extinction, meeting with legislators/Knesset members to understand unjust laws and their imposition), etc.
  - d. A report from such a meeting would offer an external assessment of the realities of the occupation and what the international community must do to transform the reality through global solidarity. The travel could be arranged by Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre, Kairos Palestine, Alternative Tourism group (an ecumenical initiative) which implements tours broadly characterized as ‘Pilgrimages for Transformation’.
  - e. Churches in different parts of the world would also be encouraged to send small teams of church leaders/members/youth groups/media persons/progressive political leaders; to make the “Come and See” encounters so as to mobilize support and solidarity, create awareness on a country basis.
2. WCRC churches could also join “*Witness visits*” under the theme Christian Zionism and Colonialism – A Response from Palestinian Christians”. [The Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center](#) invites people for nine nights to experience the reality of life in today’s Holy Land during which they Worship with Palestinian Christians, discuss Palestinian liberation theology, meet and reflect with Palestinian Christians and Muslims as well as with Jewish Israelis and internationals who partner with [Sabeel](#) in non-violent resistance against the violation of international and humanitarian law and generally experience the

realities of the Palestinian community living under Israeli occupation.

3. Encourage churches to join the WCC-EAPPI programme so that church people are exposed to the harsh conditions of the occupation and an increased number of advocates for justice and peace in Palestine and Israel. The World Council of Churches' (WCC) Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) was created in 2002 by the WCC. It was prompted by a letter and an appeal from local church leaders to create an international presence in the country. Since then, 1,800 ecumenical accompaniers (EAs) have worked to create conditions for a just peace.

The WCC's Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel advocates for justice and peace based on non-violence and a non-partisan approach. This is clearly outlined and emphasized in the programme's key principles.

4. **Re-orienting and re-engaging traditional Tour Operators** - Bring together 'Tour Operators' who frequent The Holy Land along with groups on trips usually planned by Israeli tour operators and who offer narratives that are Zionist/anti-Palestinian and obfuscate the truth about the reality.

Also, offer different tour packages under ATG or various other alternative tourism groups are based on the Code of Conduct designed by Palestinian Tour Operators. (See <http://atg.ps/> for more)

5. **Olive Tree Campaign - Keep Hope Alive**

WCRC member churches could be encouraged to join the [JAI' Olive Tree Campaign](#) which distributes olive saplings among farmers, sponsored by individuals, YMCAs, YWCAs, churches, church related organizations, human rights organizations, as well as solidarity and advocacy groups around the world, as an act of solidarity and support to help '[Keep Hope Alive](#)'. The farmers supported are those whose olive trees have been uprooted and destroyed by the Israelis, or where fields are threatened to be confiscated by the Israeli military Occupation, or where parts of the Israeli apartheid wall and settlements are constructed on part of the land.

The campaign's networks exist in many countries like Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Japan, UK, Switzerland, USA, Ireland, and many others. The WCRC could enrich and expand this campaign.

6. **Global Kairos for Palestine**

The idea respectively vision of "Global Kairos Network" emerged from the Kairos

Palestine conference held in Bethlehem in December 2011. The conference was attended by representatives of churches and institutions from more than twenty countries. The [Bethlehem Call](#), sent out at the end of the conference reiterated the urgent calls of the Kairos Palestine document “Moment of Truth” and asked for a comprehensive boycott of Israel as one of the non-violent tools to end the Israeli apartheid system.

Today Kairos movements exist in many countries in the Global South as well as in the Global North. The international movement is dependent on a committee in which Kairos Palestine plays the significant role of facilitating and coordinating the various committee’s tasks of looking at theological and political rhetoric, exchanging information, unifying advocacy strategies and suggesting activities that take into consideration the specificity of each country deriving from the Kairos concept of acting now for justice.

WCRC member churches could be urged to join the Global Kairos Network and where such a network does not exist to establish a Kairos movement in your own country.

(Kairos Palestine does not dictate or influence any group to start a movement in another country. Any individual or group that is convinced of the Kairos concept and accepts the principles of the prophetic obligation of striving against injustice in a non-violent creative resistance form contacts Kairos Palestine and informs of its creation and commitment.)

#### **7. Biblical and Theological Foundations for a Just Peace via inter-faith dialogue**

There are two basic truths that must be accepted for any peace to emerge in the Middle East. First, the people of Israel - both Jewish and Arab citizens - deserve to live in a homeland free from violence and discrimination. Second, the Palestinian people deserve their own nation free from oppression and where people can thrive economically and spiritually. Even though the conflict does not have religious roots, religion has contributed to a large measure of confusion because religion has been wrongly used to gain political advantage. This has been especially so in the case of the Jewish people as prompted by Christian Zionists. The Middle East is the cradle of three world religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam especially on Israel and Palestine. For Christians, our living faith has its roots in this land, nourished and nurtured by the unbroken witness of the local churches who have their own roots in apostolic times. The WCRC must add its commitment which, in 2016, expressed support for joint peace projects and dialogue between the peoples of Israel and Palestine and between their governments. There requires to be increasing inter-faith

dialogue and cooperation with Jewish and Muslim partners on the pathway to justice and peace. Dialogue will not only be a signpost of a common humanity seeking to resolve conflict through dialogue. It would be a forerunner of human and political relations based on an understanding that justice must be the precondition for peace and reconciliation.

#### **8. Kairos Alerts**

WCRC member churches could also respond to and act upon the [Christmas Alert and Easter Alert](#) issued by Kairos Palestine before Easter and Christmas each year. These alerts available as printed materials and online are usually resource materials which guide congregations as to how they may bear in mind the Palestinian condition during these special religious events.

#### **9. Economic Measures**

The WCRC General Council called on member churches to examine their mission, education and investment relationships with Israel and Palestine in light of the witness of Palestinian Christians and to respond as they understand the Reformed Communion's commitments to human rights and the protections of international law. It would be important for the WCRC to convene a major consultation that includes church leaders, lay people with an economic (justice) perspective, to examine the economic dimensions of the occupation.

*It must be remembered that the Kairos Palestine Group issued a call for Boycott-Divestment-Sanctions. The Kairos document says: "Our word to the international community is to stop the principle of "double standards" and insist on the international resolutions regarding the Palestinian problem with regard to all parties. Selective application of international law threatens to leave us vulnerable to a law of the jungle. It legitimizes the claims by certain armed groups and states that the international community only understands the logic of force. Therefore, we call for a response to what the civil and religious institutions have proposed, as mentioned earlier: the beginning of a system of [economic sanctions and boycott to be applied against Israel](#).*

#### **10. Preserving Palestinian Christian presence**

In the land where Jesus lived, Christians say their dwindling numbers are turning churches from places of worship into museums. And when Christian pilgrims come from all over the world to visit the places of Christ's birth, death and resurrection, they find them divided by a concrete wall.

Christians make up just 2 percent of the mainly Muslim population of the Palestinian territories according to the Christian affairs unit in the Palestinian Authority's religious affairs ministry. In 1920, they were a tenth of the population of Palestine -- land where today Israel exists alongside the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Palestinians remain stateless. Christians in what was known as Palestine prior to the creation of Israel in 1948 made up 18 percent of the population when Israel was established by a vote at the United Nations.

Decades of conflict, shifting borders and occupation are the root causes of the poor economic situation that is forcing Christians to seek better lives abroad. Israeli occupation is the prime cause of emigration and the decline of their community.

WCRC churches could work to protect Palestinian Christian presence in the cradle of Christianity. Staying connected to the land where Jesus was born is important for Palestinian Christians. They are part of a 2,000-year-old indigenous tradition, the living presence of the Christian church in the Holy Land, and yet many tourists and outside observers have never even heard of, or even pondered their existence. This means strengthening the presence of Christian institutions, and dissuading Christian Zionists from spreading the false narrative that Christian presence is dwindling because of Islamic terror.

## **11. Christian Zionism- Challenges and way forward**

“At least one in four American Christians surveyed recently by Christianity Today magazine said that they believe it is their biblical responsibility to support the nation of Israel. This view is known as Christian Zionism. The Pew Research Center put the figure at 63 per cent among white evangelicals. Christian Zionism is pervasive within mainline American evangelical, charismatic and independent denominations including the Assemblies of God, Pentecostals and Southern Baptists, as well as many of the independent mega-churches. It is less prevalent within the historic denominations, which show a greater respect for the work of the United Nations, support for human rights, the rule of international law and empathy with the Palestinians.

The origins of the movement can be traced to the early 19th century when a group of eccentric British Christian leaders began to lobby for Jewish restoration to Palestine as a necessary precondition for the return of Christ. The movement gained traction from the middle of the 19th century when Palestine became strategic to British, French and German colonial interests in the Middle East. Christian Zionism as a modern theological and political movement embraces the most extreme ideological

positions of Zionism. It has become deeply detrimental to a just peace between Palestine and Israel. It propagates a worldview in which the Christian message is reduced to an ideology of empire, colonialism and militarism. In its extreme form, it places an emphasis on apocalyptic events leading to the end of history rather than living Christ's love and justice today.

Followers of Christian Zionism are convinced that the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 and the capture of Jerusalem in 1967 were the miraculous fulfillment of God's promises made to Abraham that he would establish Israel as a Jewish nation forever in Palestine". (<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article35747.htm>)

WCRC could initiate studies on issues pertaining to Christian Zionism and debrief its myths and claims through a series of theological seminars and offer churches a new way of challenging the Christian Zionist narrative especially because it is seriously harmful to any prospect for peace and justice in Palestine and Israel.

**12. "End the colonialist-racist occupation" – A theological route**

A Five-Year campaign to build a just peace by ushering an end to the occupation is urgent and one around which WCRC member churches could rally. Such a campaign could be evaluated at the end of five years to assess impact. The basis of this campaign may be the Amman Call of the WCC issued in 2007 and the 'Berne Declaration'

**13. Displacement/dispossession of Palestinian populations in Palestine**

The WCRC could work to promote a research-study in cooperation with Palestinian theological and secular study centres to create awareness of the real dangers of what can be termed as 'ethnic cleansing' by the Israeli Zionist regime. A booklet may then be published for wide circulation and creating awareness among church members.

**14.** Support and encourage the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in **Iran** as best as possible under the circumstances, principally by working with and through the EPCI Synod in exile, supporting the training of leaders, and networking them with member churches in the places they have sought and found refuge.

**15.** Support the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in **Iraq** in its reconstruction efforts and contribution to community building in Iraq. In the first instance through holding a Solidarity Visit and Partners Consultation in October 2018, with a view to identifying new partners who might journey with the church and assist in building its capacities in education, healthcare, community development and Christian education. Through this it is hoped to establish a 'Partners Round Table' for ongoing accompaniment of

the church in Iraq, and deeper learning and appreciation of the situation in Iraq and the wider Middle East for the partners and the WCRC.

- 16. In Syria** there could be support to the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon in its reconstruction and community building in Syria. Unlike Iraq, NESSL already has a strong partner base, although it is mainly limited to the churches of the global North, thus limiting the mutual learning and solidarity opportunities only to those churches. NESSL must be encouraged to widening this partner base.

#### **Communication and Networking Strategies**

- Network with likeminded organizations working in and outside the region,
- Advocacy work through the WCRC website in highlighting the stories from the region

#### **Support to services and lay church movements/institutions**

An important dimension of engagement could cover a wide array of services including support to education, medical services, personnel (missionaries), youth institutions (YMCA, YWCA), Conflict transformation, support to Christian institutions etc.