

# A Moment of Truth: Kairos Palestine

A word of faith, hope and love  
from the heart of Palestinian suffering



FOR GLOBAL MINISTRIES  
POUR LES MINISTÈRES MONDIAUX

**ECUMENICAL THREE-SESSION STUDY GUIDE**

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# 1. What is the *Kairos Palestine* document? Why should we study it?

## What is “Kairos”?

“A Moment of Truth: A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering”—the document that has come to be known as *Kairos Palestine*—is, in the words of its authors, “the Christian Palestinians’ word to the world about what is happening in Palestine.” It speaks to the reality on the ground for the Palestinian people as they experience it, and gives their prophetic Christian response and challenge.

“Kairos” is the Greek word for a special time of opportunity when we are called to join in God’s redemptive activity in our world.

“Kairos” documents have been issued by Christians at a number of crucial moments in recent world history. They represent an attempt “to read the signs of the times” in moments of conflict, crisis or oppression.

The Palestinian Christian authors of the *Kairos Palestine* document have declared “a moment of truth” when they must speak “from the heart of Palestinian suffering,” first and foremost to each other, then to their community and to the world church. They define this “kairos” as “the moment when we see God’s gifts in the midst of our suffering.”

## Why study *Kairos Palestine*?

We study the *Kairos Palestine* document to hear directly the authentic voice of Palestinian Christians, which has long been neglected or silenced in discussions about Israel Palestine. The document was developed in a two-year consultation process. It was written and issued first in Arabic to speak to fellow Christians living under Israeli occupation, and then in other languages to speak to the world community.

In 2010, the Canadian Anglican, Presbyterian and United Churches each passed resolutions recognizing the *Kairos Palestine* document as an authentic voice of Christian brothers and sisters, and offered it to their members for study, dialogue, prayer and action.

In order to better hear the Palestinian Christian voices speaking in the *Kairos Palestine* document, this study guide offers a basic summary of the political, economic and social context that Palestinian Christians experience.

This study guide is meant to encourage meaningful reflection and discussion of *Kairos Palestine* that can lead to faithful action. It provides a guide for three study sessions that can be used by individuals or groups in congregations, ministries and courts of the church.

## **What is the central message of *Kairos Palestine*?**

“In the absence of all hope,” Palestinian Christians proclaim a word of faith, hope and love. Key messages in *Kairos Palestine* include the following:

- The decades-old Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territories is a sin against God and humanity.
- Any theology or interpretation of the Bible that justifies this occupation is “far from Christian teachings.”
- Non-violent resistance to this evil is a right and duty for all Palestinians, including Christians.
- “Human beings were not made for hatred.” Only a resistance based on love of the enemy and repudiation of revenge can lead to a just peace and reconciliation.
- The Churches and the international community are called to respond, using “the logic of peaceful resistance.” This involves faithful consideration of economic, political and diplomatic measures similar to the measures that led to the end of apartheid in South Africa.

## 2. The Reality on the Ground— Maps and Background information

The *Kairos Palestine* document speaks to and from a specific historical context. In order to understand this context, some basic historical background is necessary. Any specific interpretation of this history is highly contested. The following summary sets the *Kairos Palestine* document in the context of the historical situation from 1946 to the present.

### Palestinian loss of land, 1946–2011

In 1947, the British government decided to end its Mandate over Palestine. In response to the growing conflict over the competing claims to the land, the United Nations voted to partition the territories, with 56 percent of the territory designated for the one-third of the population who were Jewish. Jerusalem, including Bethlehem, was designated as a “separate entity” (*corpus separatum*) under international authority. This plan was never implemented.

In 1948, Israel declared its independence. In the 1948 war that followed, approximately 750,000 Palestinians either fled or were forcibly expelled from their property and land. When the armistice was declared, Israel had established a state and occupied 78 percent of the land, and expelled 80 percent of the Arab population (Muslims and Christians), leaving only 22 percent of Mandatory Palestine for an eventual Palestinian state (see maps). Palestinians who left have been prohibited from returning and their land has been expropriated in violation of UN resolutions.

## “The Nakba”

While called the “War of Independence” in the newly declared State of Israel, the events of 1948 became known to the Palestinians as “the Nakba,” an Arabic word that translates as “the disaster,” “the catastrophe” or “the cataclysm.” The war resulted in dispossession and displacement for approximately 750,000 Palestinians. (Precise numbers are disputed, and range from a low of 560,000 to a high of 900,000; see [www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=86](http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=86), [www.badil.org/](http://www.badil.org/))

In addition to those who fled, the Palestinians who remained living in what is now Israel became “internal refugees,” having been displaced from home and property.

More than 530 Palestinian villages were depopulated and destroyed to erase their memory. Forests, parks and kibbutzim were built on their sites, making the previous Palestinian presence all but invisible.

In 1948 the United Nations General Assembly established the right for the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes (UNGA Resolution 194; <http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/com.htm>). In 1949 Israel was admitted as a member state of the United Nations.

## 1967 war

As a result of the ongoing tensions between Israel and its neighbours, war broke out again in 1967 between Israel, Egypt, Syria and Jordan. After the 1967 War ended, Israel had occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (as well as Egyptian and Syrian territories).

The United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 242, calling for Israel’s withdrawal from the territory occupied in the war and stating the illegality of the acquisition of territory by force (<http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/com.htm>).

Since 1967, the State of Israel has maintained a military occupation of the Palestinian territories. It is this reality that is the focus of the *Kairos Palestine* document’s theological analysis and call for “resistance with love as its logic.”

## PALESTINIAN LOSS OF LAND 1946 TO 2011



Source: Palestine Israel Action Group, Ann Arbor Friends Meeting. Reprinted with permission.

The boundary between Israel and the remaining Palestinian territory, established by the Armistice of 1949, is shown in panel 3. Palestinians living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, were under Jordanian rule; Palestinians living in Gaza were under Egyptian rule, pending the establishment of a Palestinian state that would control these areas. After the 1967 war with Jordan and Egypt, Israeli military forces occupied the West Bank and Gaza. Under international law, these territories are considered to be militarily occupied by Israel and not part of Israel. They are “occupied Palestine” and are administered by the Israeli military under military law and not by Israeli civilian authorities.

# International law regarding the treatment of people under military occupation

According to international law, Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is illegal and constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law, specifically the Fourth Geneva Convention.<sup>1</sup> Most countries, including Canada, consider Israeli military and civilian presence in East Jerusalem and the West Bank as occupation. Most countries, including Canada, do not recognize Israel's annexation of land in the occupied territories, and especially in East Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> As a "High Contracting Party" to the Fourth Geneva Convention, Israel's actions in the occupied Palestinian territories are governed by international law.

The *Kairos Palestine* document addresses the ongoing violations of human rights and international humanitarian law that characterize the occupation. Palestinian Christians are calling on fellow Christians and the international community to join them in non-violent action to end to the occupation, and for the implementation of a just, peaceful resolution to the conflict according to international humanitarian law and the relevant United Nations resolutions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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1 Part III: Status and treatment of protected persons Section III : Occupied territories, Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949. International Committee of the Red Cross, [www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/WebART/380-600056](http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/WebART/380-600056), retrieved February 28, 2011.

2 "Canadian Policy on Key Issues in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada, [www.international.gc.ca/name-anmo/peace\\_process-processus\\_paix/canadian\\_policy-politique\\_canadienne.aspx?lang=eng](http://www.international.gc.ca/name-anmo/peace_process-processus_paix/canadian_policy-politique_canadienne.aspx?lang=eng), retrieved March 4, 2011.



# Settlements

Between 1967 and 2010, West Bank land and water resources have been taken over to allow for over 121 settlements and some 100 outposts for Jewish residents. Nearly half a million of these settlers live in the West Bank, including 190,000 in occupied East Jerusalem. Settler violence directed toward Palestinians is a constant source of human rights violations in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. All settlements, and the bypass roads and tunnels that support them, have been declared illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention and named as a major obstacle to peace by the international community.

## Separation—roads, checkpoints and the separation barrier

The occupied Palestinian territories are divided into Areas A, B, and C, which are subject to different administrative and security authorities.

Area A is under Palestinian administrative and security authority. These areas are enclaves of Palestinian cities in the West Bank. Area B, which includes many Palestinian villages, is administered by the Palestinian Authority but under Israeli military authority. Area C is under full Israeli military and administrative authority, and is the only contiguous area of the occupied Palestinian territories. Areas B and C are broken up into enclaves separated from each other by roads built for the exclusive use of the Israeli military and Jewish settlers, checkpoints, the separation barrier and other impediments to free movement, both temporary and permanent.

# Oslo II, 1995

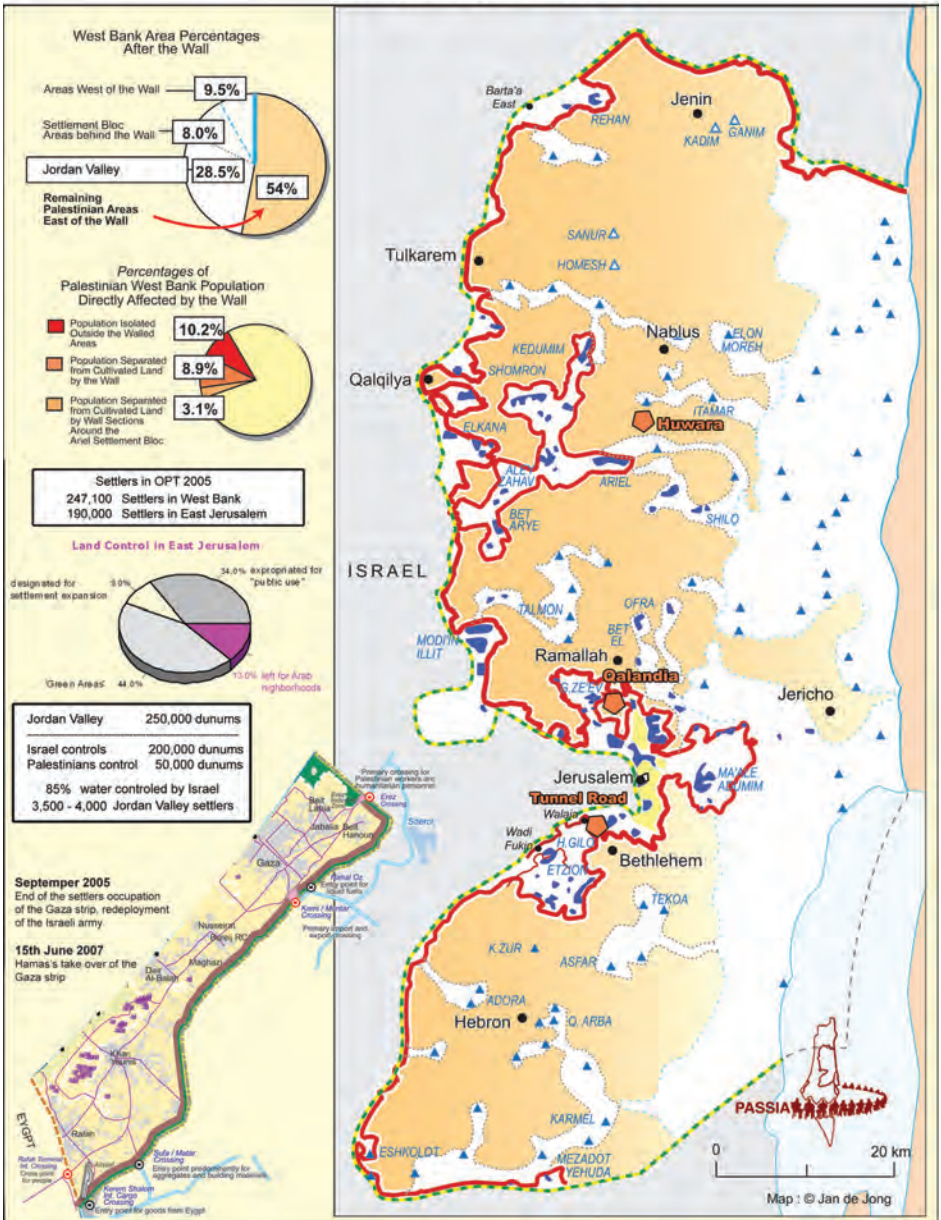


Source: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of Academic Affairs (PASSIA). Reprinted with permission.

## The separation barrier

While the legal right of Israel to build a barrier or a wall or a fence on Israeli territory for security purposes is undisputed, the route of the “separation barrier,” called “the Wall” by Palestinians, cuts deep into occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. The Israeli state describes the barrier as built to protect and provide security for Israelis. The route does not justify this claim. The barrier cuts off Palestinians from their land, schools and jobs, and separates Palestinians from Palestinians. Palestinian land and water resources are expropriated to build the barrier or fenced off from Palestinian access, reducing further the land available to Palestinians for any possible future state and undermining the Palestinian economy and quality of life in the present. The construction of most of the barrier on Palestinian land has been named as in violation of international law.

# West Bank Wall - Map 2006



Source: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of Academic Affairs (PASSIA). Reprinted with permission.

## Restrictions on movement

The movements of Palestinians are subject to about 500 checkpoints within the occupied territories ([www.ochaopt.org](http://www.ochaopt.org)). Palestinians are required to produce permits authorizing movement to go to their farms, to jobs, places of worship, schools or hospitals, or to visit family. Only Palestinians are required to obtain permits, which are difficult to obtain, and applications are frequently refused. The travel of Palestinians is restricted. Palestinians are required to produce permits issued by Israeli authorities in order to travel within the occupied territories or beyond. These restrictions are a violation of the basic rights of Palestinians and have caused massive suffering and hardships. In addition, these restrictions specifically affect the exercise of the right of Palestinians, including Christians, to practise their religion and visit holy sites during religious festivals and holidays.

## Home demolitions

Demolitions by Israeli authorities of Palestinian-owned homes in the occupied territories are another reality of the occupation. Particularly in East Jerusalem, Palestinian citizens are routinely refused permits to build new homes or build on existing homes to accommodate growing families.<sup>3</sup> Home demolitions are administrative (lack of a building permit) or punitive (to punish the families of persons suspected of involvement in terrorist attacks). The majority of demolitions are administrative. Palestinians are not likely to be issued permits to build, so many build without permits. Without a home, Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem will be denied a residency permit to continue living in East Jerusalem. Palestinians are required to demonstrate that Jerusalem is the centre of their lives in order to retain their residency permit, i.e., that they live, work, go to school, shop, and so on within the environs of Jerusalem.

The separation and control measures described here—including the wall, restrictions on movement, building permits and home demolitions—separate the population of the West Bank on ethnic lines (that is, separate Israeli settlers from Palestinian residents). They also cut off and separate Palestinian communities from each other and particularly from East Jerusalem.

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), 2,000 homes have been destroyed in East Jerusalem since 1967.

# Jerusalem

United Nations resolutions and previous agreements between Palestinians and Israelis declare that the status of Jerusalem must be decided through just negotiations between the two parties. From a religious perspective, Jerusalem is and must be respected as a city holy and important to Jews, Muslims and Christians.

Palestinians and Israelis each claim Jerusalem as their capital city. Jerusalem is central to the Palestinian economy, religion and culture. However, Israel annexed East Jerusalem following the 1967 war, and has built illegal settlement blocs on the edges of the Old City that extend deep into the West Bank. In East Jerusalem, Israeli settlers have taken over the homes of Palestinians, resulting in the forcible eviction of resident Palestinian families.<sup>4</sup> In some cases, the evictions are court-ordered, with the proceedings conducted and court documents written in Hebrew, which some of the Palestinians affected neither speak nor read. This illegal annexation, settlement building and expansion jeopardize the possibility of a just and peaceful resolution to the issue of the status of Jerusalem.

The legitimate residency and family reunification rights of “Jerusalemite” Palestinians are denied through administrative and bureaucratic measures. This dramatically diminishes the viability of the Palestinian Christian community in Jerusalem.

## Violence, terrorism and security

Palestinian Christians have consistently and passionately condemned and rejected all violence against civilians. While acknowledging the legitimacy and legality of armed resistance to injustice, Palestinian Christians have instead called for non-violent resistance to end the occupation. Canadian churches have consistently and clearly condemned all acts of violence against civilians by any and all parties to this conflict. The World Council of Churches, reflecting the views of the global ecumenical family, has strongly denounced all acts of violence against civilians and has called for non-violent solutions to the legitimate security concerns of both parties.

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<sup>4</sup> See “2 Dec. 2010: New settler enclaves in East Jerusalem” ([www.btselem.org/English/Jerusalem/20101202\\_Settlers\\_takeover\\_apartmenets\\_in\\_East\\_JM.asp](http://www.btselem.org/English/Jerusalem/20101202_Settlers_takeover_apartmenets_in_East_JM.asp)).

With the beginning of the second Intifada in September 2000, violence spiralled on both sides, including violence against civilians. In this period until late 2008, the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem reported 1,053 Israeli deaths, of which 31 percent were combatants. For the same period, B'Tselem reported 4,789 deaths of Palestinians, with combatants making up 35.2 percent of the total. The figures and the relative death tolls on each side are not disputed, but there is a fierce debate about the number of civilians or non-combatants on each side. Human rights groups tend to use a stricter definition of “non-combatant” (as defined in international humanitarian law than government sources), leading to higher estimates of civilian deaths (see “Easy Guide to International Humanitarian Law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory” published by DIAKONIA—Sweden, [www.diakonia.se/ihl](http://www.diakonia.se/ihl)).

The United Nations—commissioned Goldstone Report into the Gaza conflict estimated that approximately 1,500 persons lost their lives during Operation “Cast Lead” from late December 2008 to January 18, 2009. According to B'Tselem, of the Palestinian deaths recorded, only one of five victims were combatants. Of those who died, 318 were children. On the Israeli side, four persons died within the borders of Israel; three were non-combatants. Within Gaza in the same period, nine Israeli soldiers were killed, four of them by so-called friendly fire. The total number of deaths and the percentage of civilian casualties are contested by Israeli government sources.

According to the widely accepted definition of terrorism as acts of violence aimed indiscriminately against civilians, it is clear that civilians on both sides have suffered acts of violence and that the death toll disproportionately affects Palestinian civil society. Other aspects of the structural violence of the occupation similarly affect both peoples, but have a very disproportionate impact of Palestinians.

In the face of this spiralling violence, Israeli military and settler violence has often been presented as legitimate actions as part of the “war on terror.” Palestinians say they are exercising their legal and moral right to resist and end the occupation, and are not terrorists. Clearly, any specific act of terrorism, including state terrorism, by any party must be denounced as such. To suggest that all acts of resistance are de facto terrorism denies the right and obligation of individuals and groups to resist injustice. Under international law, there are clear obligations to protect civilians in any legitimate actions by states of self-defence, ensuring national security, combatting terrorism or resistance.

### **3. Links to Canadian Church and Ecumenical Statements, Policy and Resources Related to Israel Palestine**

Search for “Israel Palestine” on the official websites of the following:

- The Anglican Church of Canada  
([www.anglican.ca](http://www.anglican.ca))
- The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace  
([www.devp.org](http://www.devp.org))
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada  
([www.elcic.ca](http://www.elcic.ca))
- The Presbyterian Church in Canada  
([www.presbyterian.ca](http://www.presbyterian.ca))
- The United Church of Canada  
([www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca))
- KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives  
([www.kairoscanada.org](http://www.kairoscanada.org))



“We welcome this document as an important step in seeking a just peace in this holy land. It is important because it offers a distinctive and clear voice of Palestinian Christians. It is a call to Christians throughout the world to acknowledge that this land is not first about sacred places, but rather about living communities of faith, people who are the living stones of the gospel story in this time.

“For far too long the voices of Palestinian Christian have been silenced or dismissed. This document is a clear call to the global Christian community to listen clearly and faithfully to what you are saying. Our commitment to you is to share this document with Christians throughout the world.”

—Dr. Bruce Gregersen, speaking on behalf of The United Church of Canada at the launch of the *Kairos Palestine* document, December 2009

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## **4. A Moment of Truth: A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering**

### **Full text of the *Kairos Palestine* document**

#### **Preface**

This document is the Christian Palestinians’ word to the world about what is happening in Palestine. It is written at this time when we wanted to see the Glory of the grace of God in this land and in the sufferings of its people. In this spirit the document requests the international community to stand by the Palestinian people who have faced oppression, displacement, suffering and clear apartheid for more than six decades. The suffering continues while the international community silently looks on at the occupying State, Israel. 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 in our region, calling on them to revisit theologies that justify crimes perpetrated against our people and the dispossession of the land.

In this historic document, we Palestinian Christians declare that the military occupation of our land is a sin against God and humanity, and that any theology that legitimizes the occupation is far from Christian teachings because true Christian theology is a theology of love and solidarity with the oppressed, a call to justice and equality among peoples.

This document did not come about spontaneously, and it is not the result of a coincidence. It is not a theoretical theological study or a policy paper, but is rather a document of faith and work. Its importance stems from the sincere expression of the concerns of the people and their view of this moment in history we are living through. It seeks to be prophetic in addressing things as they are without equivocation and with boldness, in addition it puts forward ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and all forms of discrimination as the solution that will lead to a just and lasting peace with the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Al-Quds as its capital. The document also demands that all peoples, political leaders and decision-makers put pressure on Israel and take legal measures in order to oblige its government to put an end to its oppression and disregard for the international law. The document also holds a clear position that non-violent resistance to this injustice is a right and duty for all Palestinians including Christians.

The initiators of this document have been working on it for more than a year, in prayer and discussion, guided by their faith in God and their love for their people, accepting advice from many friends: Palestinians, Arabs and those from the wider international community. We are grateful to our friends for their solidarity with us.

As Palestinian Christians we hope that this document will provide the turning point to focus the efforts of all peace-loving peoples in the world, especially our Christian sisters and brothers. We hope also that it will be welcomed positively and will receive strong support, as was the South Africa Kairos document launched in 1985, which, at that time proved to be a tool in the struggle against oppression and occupation. We believe that liberation from occupation is in the interest of all peoples in the region because the problem is not just a political one, but one in which human beings are destroyed.

We pray God to inspire us all, particularly our leaders and policy-makers, to find the way of justice and equality, and to realize that it is the only way that leads to the genuine peace we are seeking.

With thanks

*His Beatitude Patriarch Michel Sabbah*  
*His Eminence Archbishop Atallah Hanna*  
*Rev. Dr. Jamal Khader*  
*Rev. Dr. Rafiq Khoury*  
*Rev. Dr. Mitri Rabeb*  
*Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek*  
*Rev. Dr. Yohana Katanacho*  
*Rev. Fadi Diab*  
*Dr. Jiries Khoury*  
*Ms. Cedar Duaybis*  
*Ms. Nora Kort*  
*Ms. Lucy Thaljieh*  
*Mr. Nidal Abu El Zuluf*  
*Mr. Yusef Daher*  
*Mr. Rifat Kassis—Coordinator*

*Note:* A list of Palestinian Christian institutions and persons that have signed the document and copies in other languages are available at [www.kairospalestine.ps](http://www.kairospalestine.ps).

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

## **Introduction**

We, a group of Christian Palestinians, after prayer, reflection and an exchange of opinion, cry out from within the suffering in our country, under the Israeli occupation, with a cry of hope in the absence of all hope, a cry full of prayer and faith in a God ever vigilant, in God's divine providence for all the inhabitants of this land. Inspired by the mystery of God's love for all, the mystery of God's divine presence in the history of all peoples and, in a particular way, in the history of our country, we proclaim our word based on our Christian faith and our sense of Palestinian belonging—a word of faith, hope and love.

*Why now?* Because today we have reached a dead end in the tragedy of the Palestinian people. The decision-makers content themselves with managing the crisis rather than committing themselves to the serious task of finding a way to resolve it. The hearts of the faithful are filled with pain and with questioning: What is the international community doing? What are the political leaders in Palestine, in Israel and in the Arab world doing? What is the Church doing? The problem is not just a political one. It is a policy in which human beings are destroyed, and this must be of concern to the Church.

We address ourselves to our brothers and sisters, members of our Churches in this land. We call out as Christians and as Palestinians to our religious and political leaders, to our Palestinian society and to the Israeli society, to the international community, and to our Christian brothers and sisters in the Churches around the world.

# 1. The reality on the ground

**1.1** *“They say: ‘Peace, peace’ when there is no peace”* (Jer. 6:14). These days, everyone is speaking about peace in the Middle East and the peace process. So far, however, these are simply words; the reality is one of Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, deprivation of our freedom and all that results from this situation:

**1.1.1** The separation wall erected on Palestinian territory, a large part of which has been confiscated for this purpose, has turned our towns and villages into prisons, separating them from one another, making them dispersed and divided cantons. Gaza, especially after the cruel war Israel launched against it during December 2008 and January 2009, continues to live in inhuman conditions, under permanent blockade and cut off from the other Palestinian territories.

**1.1.2** Israeli settlements ravage our land in the name of God and in the name of force, controlling our natural resources, including water and agricultural land, thus depriving hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, and constituting an obstacle to any political solution.

**1.1.3** Reality is the daily humiliation to which we are subjected at the military checkpoints, as we make our way to jobs, schools or hospitals.

**1.1.4** Reality is the separation between members of the same family, making family life impossible for thousands of Palestinians, especially where one of the spouses does not have an Israeli identity card.

**1.1.5** Religious liberty is severely restricted; the freedom of access to the holy places is denied under the pretext of security. Jerusalem and its holy places are out of bounds for many Christians and Muslims from the West Bank and the Gaza strip. Even Jerusalemites face restrictions during the religious feasts. Some of our Arab clergy are regularly barred from entering Jerusalem.

**1.1.6** Refugees are also part of our reality. Most of them are still living in camps under difficult circumstances. They have been waiting for their right of return, generation after generation. What will be their fate?

**1.1.7** And the prisoners? The thousands of prisoners languishing in Israeli prisons are part of our reality. The Israelis move heaven and earth to gain the release of one prisoner, and those thousands of Palestinian prisoners, when will they have their freedom?

**1.1.8** Jerusalem is the heart of our reality. It is, at the same time, symbol of peace and sign of conflict. While the separation wall divides Palestinian neighbourhoods, Jerusalem continues to be emptied of its Palestinian citizens, Christians and Muslims. Their identity cards are confiscated, which means the loss of their right to reside in Jerusalem. Their homes are demolished or expropriated. Jerusalem, city of reconciliation, has become a city of discrimination and exclusion, a source of struggle rather than peace.

**1.2** Also part of this reality is the Israeli disregard of international law and international resolutions, as well as the paralysis of the Arab world and the international community in the face of this contempt. Human rights are violated and despite the various reports of local and international human rights' organizations, the injustice continues.

**1.2.1** Palestinians within the State of Israel, who have also suffered a historical injustice, although they are citizens and have the rights and obligations of citizenship, still suffer from discriminatory policies. They too are waiting to enjoy full rights and equality like all other citizens in the state.

**1.3** Emigration is another element in our reality. The absence of any vision or spark of hope for peace and freedom pushes young people, both Muslim and Christian, to emigrate. Thus the land is deprived of its most important and richest resource—educated youth. The shrinking number of Christians, particularly in Palestine, is one of the dangerous consequences, both of this conflict, and of the local and international paralysis and failure to find a comprehensive solution to the problem.

**1.4** In the face of this reality, Israel justifies its actions as self-defence, including occupation, collective punishment and all other forms of reprisals against the Palestinians. In our opinion, this vision is a reversal of reality. Yes, there is Palestinian resistance to the occupation. However, if there were no occupation, there would be no resistance, no fear and no insecurity. This is our understanding of the situation. Therefore, we call on the Israelis to end the occupation. Then they will see a new world in which there is no fear, no threat but rather security, justice and peace.

**1.5** The Palestinian response to this reality was diverse. Some responded through negotiations: that was the official position of the Palestinian Authority, but it did not advance the peace process. Some political parties followed the way of armed resistance. Israel used this as a pretext to accuse the Palestinians of being terrorists and was able to distort the real nature of the conflict, presenting it as an Israeli war against terror, rather than an Israeli occupation faced by Palestinian legal resistance aiming at ending it.

**1.5.1** The tragedy worsened with the internal conflict among Palestinians themselves, and with the separation of Gaza from the rest of the Palestinian territory. It is noteworthy that, even though the division is among Palestinians themselves, the international community bears an important responsibility for it since it refused to deal positively with the will of the Palestinian people expressed in the outcome of democratic and legal elections in 2006.

Again, we repeat and proclaim that our Christian word in the midst of all this, in the midst of our catastrophe, is a word of faith, hope and love.

## **2. A word of faith**

### **We believe in one God, a good and just God**

**2.1** We believe in God, one God, Creator of the universe and of humanity. We believe in a good and just God, who loves each one of his creatures. We believe that every human being is created in God's image and likeness and that every one's dignity is derived from the dignity of the Almighty One. We believe that this dignity is one and the same in each and all of us. This means for us, here and now, in this land in particular, that God created us not so that we might engage in strife and conflict but rather that we might come and know and love one another, and together build up the land in love and mutual respect.

**2.1.1** We also believe in God's eternal Word, His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, whom God sent as the Saviour of the world.

**2.1.2** We believe in the Holy Spirit, who accompanies the Church and all humanity on its journey. It is the Spirit that helps us to understand Holy Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, showing their unity, here and now. The Spirit makes manifest the revelation of God to humanity, past, present and future.

## How do we understand the word of God?

**2.2** We believe that God has spoken to humanity, here in our country: *“Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days God has spoken to us by a Son, whom God appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds”* (Heb. 1:1-2).

**2.2.1** We, Christian Palestinians, believe, like all Christians throughout the world, that Jesus Christ came in order to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, and in his light and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we read the Holy Scriptures. We meditate upon and interpret Scripture just as Jesus Christ did with the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. As it is written in the Gospel according to Saint Luke: *“Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures”* (Lk 24:27).

**2.2.2** Our Lord Jesus Christ came, proclaiming that the Kingdom of God was near. He provoked a revolution in the life and faith of all humanity. He came with *“a new teaching”* (Mk 1:27), casting a new light on the Old Testament, on the themes that relate to our Christian faith and our daily lives, themes such as the promises, the election, the people of God and the land. 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. This is precisely the error in fundamentalist Biblical interpretation that brings us death and destruction when the word of God is petrified and transmitted from generation to generation as a dead letter. This dead letter is used as a weapon in our present history in order to deprive us of our rights in our own land.

## Our land has a universal mission

**2.3** We believe that our land has a universal mission. In this universality, the meaning of the promises, of the land, of the election, of the people of God open up to include all of humanity, starting from all the peoples of this land. In light of the teachings of the Holy Bible, the promise of the land has never been a political programme, but rather the prelude to complete universal salvation. It was the initiation of the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God on earth.



**2.3.1** God sent the patriarchs, the prophets and the apostles to this land so that they might carry forth a universal mission to the world. Today we constitute three religions in this land, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Our land is God's land, as is the case with all countries in the world. It is holy inasmuch as God is present in it, for God alone is holy and sanctifier. It is the duty of those of us who live here, to respect the will of God for this land. It is our duty to liberate it from the evil of injustice and war. It is God's land and therefore it must be a land of reconciliation, peace and love. This is indeed possible. God has put us here as two peoples, and God gives us the capacity, if we have the will, to live together and establish in it justice and peace, making it in reality God's land: *"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it"* (Ps. 24:1).

**2.3.2** Our presence in this land, as Christian and Muslim Palestinians, is not accidental but rather deeply rooted in the history and geography of this land, resonant with the connectedness of any other people to the land it lives in. It was an injustice when we were driven out. The West sought to make amends for what Jews had endured in the countries of Europe, but it made amends on our account and in our land. They tried to correct an injustice and the result was a new injustice.

**2.3.3** Furthermore, we know that certain theologians in the West try to attach a biblical and theological legitimacy to the infringement of our rights. Thus, the promises, according to their interpretation, have become a menace to our very existence. The "good news" in the Gospel itself has become "a harbinger of death" for us. We call on these theologians to deepen their reflection on the Word of God and to rectify their interpretations so that they might see in the Word of God a source of life for all peoples.

**2.3.4** Our connectedness to this land is a natural right. It is not an ideological or a theological question only. It is a matter of life and death. There are those who do not agree with us, even defining us as enemies only because we declare that we want to live as free people in our land. We suffer from the occupation of our land because we are Palestinians. And as Christian Palestinians we suffer from the wrong interpretation of some theologians. Faced with this, our task is to safeguard the Word of God as a source of life and not of death, so that "the good news" remains what it is, "good news" for us and for all. In face of those who use the Bible

to threaten our existence as Christian and Muslim Palestinians, we renew our faith in God because we know that the word of God can not be the source of our destruction.

**2.4** Therefore, we declare that any use of the Bible to legitimize or support political options and positions that are based upon injustice, imposed by one person on another, or by one people on another, transform religion into human ideology and strip the Word of God of its holiness, its universality and truth.

**2.5** We also declare that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is a sin against God and humanity because it deprives the Palestinians of their basic human rights, bestowed by God. It distorts the image of God in the Israeli who has become an occupier just as it distorts this image in the Palestinian living under occupation. We declare that any theology, seemingly based on the Bible or on faith or on history, that legitimizes the occupation, is far from Christian teachings, because it calls for violence and holy war in the name of God Almighty, subordinating God to temporary human interests, and distorting the divine image in the human beings living under both political and theological injustice.

### 3. Hope

**3.1** Despite the lack of even a glimmer of positive expectation, our hope remains strong. The present situation does not promise any quick solution or the end of the occupation that is imposed on us. Yes, the initiatives, the conferences, visits and negotiations have multiplied, but they have not been followed up by any change in our situation and suffering. Even the new US position that has been announced by President Obama, with a manifest desire to put an end to the tragedy, has not been able to make a change in our reality. The clear Israeli response, refusing any solution, leaves no room for positive expectation. Despite this, our hope remains strong, because it is from God. God alone is good, almighty and loving and His goodness will one day be victorious over the evil in which we find ourselves. As Saint Paul said: *“If God is for us, who is against us? (...) Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all day long’ (...) For I am convinced that (nothing) in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God”* (Rom. 8:31, 35, 36, 39).

## **What is the meaning of hope?**

**3.2** Hope within us means first and foremost our faith in God and secondly our expectation, despite everything, for a better future. Thirdly, it means not chasing after illusions—we realize that release is not close at hand. Hope is the capacity to see God in the midst of trouble, and to be co-workers with the Holy Spirit who is dwelling in us. From this vision derives the strength to be steadfast, remain firm and work to change the reality in which we find ourselves. Hope means not giving in to evil but rather standing up to it and continuing to resist it. We see nothing in the present or future except ruin and destruction. We see the upper hand of the strong, the growing orientation towards racist separation and the imposition of laws that deny our existence and our dignity. We see confusion and division in the Palestinian position. If, despite all this, we do resist this reality today and work hard, perhaps the destruction that looms on the horizon may not come upon us.

## **Signs of hope**

**3.3** The Church in our land, her leaders and her faithful, despite her weakness and her divisions, does show certain signs of hope. Our parish communities are vibrant and most of our young people are active apostles for justice and peace. In addition to the individual commitment, our various Church institutions make our faith active and present in service, love and prayer.

**3.3.1** Among the signs of hope are the local centres of theology, with a religious and social character. They are numerous in our different Churches. The ecumenical spirit, even if still hesitant, shows itself more and more in the meetings of our different Church families.

**3.3.2** We can add to this the numerous meetings for inter-religious dialogue, Christian–Muslim dialogue, which includes the religious leaders and a part of the people. Admittedly, dialogue is a long process and is perfected through a daily effort as we undergo the same sufferings and have the same expectations. There is also dialogue among the three religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as well as different dialogue meetings on the academic or social level. They all try to breach the walls imposed by the occupation and oppose the distorted perception of human beings in the heart of their brothers or sisters.

**3.3.3** One of the most important signs of hope is the steadfastness of the generations, the belief in the justice of their cause and the continuity of memory, which does not forget the “Nakba” (catastrophe) and its significance. Likewise significant is the developing awareness among many Churches throughout the world and their desire to know the truth about what is going on here.

**3.3.4** In addition to that, we see a determination among many to overcome the resentments of the past and to be ready for reconciliation once justice has been restored. Public awareness of the need to restore political rights to the Palestinians is increasing, and Jewish and Israeli voices, advocating peace and justice, are raised in support of this with the approval of the international community. True, these forces for justice and reconciliation have not yet been able to transform the situation of injustice, but they have their influence and may shorten the time of suffering and hasten the time of reconciliation.

### **The mission of the Church**

**3.4** Our Church is a Church of people who pray and serve. This prayer and service is prophetic, bearing the voice of God in the present and future. 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 our Church and the service of all her institutions. Thanks be to God that our Church raises her voice against injustice despite the fact that some desire her to remain silent, closed in her religious devotions.

**3.4.1** The mission of the Church is prophetic, to speak the Word of God courageously, honestly and lovingly in the local context and in the midst of daily events. If she does take sides, it is with the oppressed, to stand alongside them, just as Christ our Lord stood by the side of each poor person and each sinner, calling them to repentance, life, and the restoration of the dignity bestowed on them by God and that no one has the right to strip away.

**3.4.2** The mission of the Church is to proclaim the Kingdom of God, a kingdom of justice, peace and dignity. Our vocation as a living Church is to bear witness to the goodness of God and the dignity of human beings. We are called to pray and to make our voice heard when we announce a new society where human beings believe in their own dignity and the dignity of their adversaries.

**3.4.3** Our Church points to the Kingdom, which cannot be tied to any earthly kingdom. Jesus said before Pilate that he was indeed a king but *“my kingdom is not from this world”* (Jn 18:36). Saint Paul says: *“The Kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”* (Rom. 14:17). Therefore, religion cannot favour or support any unjust political regime, but must rather promote justice, truth and human dignity. It must exert every effort to purify regimes where human beings suffer injustice and human dignity is violated. The Kingdom of God on earth is not dependent on any political orientation, for it is greater and more inclusive than any particular political system.

**3.4.4** Jesus Christ said: *“The Kingdom of God is among you”* (Luke 17:21). This Kingdom that is present among us and in us is the extension of the mystery of salvation. It is the presence of God among us and our sense of that presence in everything we do and say. It is in this divine presence that we shall do what we can until justice is achieved in this land.

**3.4.5** The cruel circumstances in which the Palestinian Church has lived and continues to live have required the Church to clarify her faith and to identify her vocation better. We have studied our vocation and have come to know it better in the midst of suffering and pain: today, we bear the strength of love rather than that of revenge, a culture of life rather than a culture of death. This is a source of hope for us, for the Church and for the world.

**3.5** The Resurrection is the source of our hope. Just as Christ rose in victory over death and evil, so too we are able, as each inhabitant of this land is able, to vanquish the evil of war. We will remain a witnessing, steadfast and active Church in the land of the Resurrection.

## 4. Love

### The commandment of love

**4.1** Christ our Lord said: *“Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another”* (Jn 13:34). He has already showed us how to love and how to treat our enemies. He said: *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous*

(...) *Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect*" (Matt. 5:45-47). Saint Paul also said: *"Do not repay anyone evil for evil"* (Rom. 12:17). And Saint Peter said: *"Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called"* (1 Pet. 3:9).

## Resistance

**4.2** This word is clear. Love is the commandment of Christ our Lord to us and it includes both friends and enemies. This must be clear when we find ourselves in circumstances where we must resist evil of whatever kind.

**4.2.1** Love is seeing the face of God in every human being. Every person is my brother or my sister. However, seeing the face of God in everyone does not mean accepting evil or aggression on their part. Rather, this love seeks to correct the evil and stop the aggression.

The aggression against the Palestinian people which is the Israeli occupation, is an evil that must be resisted. It is an evil and a sin that must be resisted and removed. Primary responsibility for this rests with the Palestinians themselves suffering occupation. Christian love invites us to resist it. However, love puts an end to evil by walking in the ways of justice. Responsibility lies also with the international community, because international law regulates relations between peoples today. Finally responsibility lies with the perpetrators of the injustice; they must liberate themselves from the evil that is in them and the injustice they have imposed on others.

**4.2.2** When we review the history of the nations, we see many wars and much resistance to war by war, to violence by violence. The Palestinian people has gone the way of the peoples, particularly in the first stages of its struggle with the Israeli occupation. However, it also engaged in peaceful struggle, especially during the first Intifada. We recognize that all peoples must find a new way in their relations with each other and the resolution of their conflicts. The ways of force must give way to the ways of justice. This applies above all to the peoples that are militarily strong, mighty enough to impose their injustice on the weaker.

**4.2.3** We say that our option as Christians in the face of the Israeli occupation is to resist. Resistance is a right and a duty for the Christian. But it is resistance with love as its logic. It is thus a

creative resistance for it must find human ways that engage the humanity of the enemy. Seeing the image of God in the face of the enemy means taking up positions in the light of this vision of active resistance to stop the injustice and oblige the perpetrator to end his aggression and thus achieve the desired goal, which is getting back the land, freedom, dignity and independence.

**4.2.4** Christ our Lord has left us an example we must imitate. We must resist evil but he taught us that we cannot resist evil with evil. This is a difficult commandment, particularly when the enemy is determined to impose himself and deny our right to remain here in our land. It is a difficult commandment yet it alone can stand firm in the face of the clear declarations of the occupation authorities that refuse our existence and the many excuses these authorities use to continue imposing occupation upon us.

**4.2.5** Resistance to the evil of occupation is integrated, then, within this Christian love that refuses evil and corrects it. It resists evil in all its forms with methods that enter into the logic of love and draw on all energies to make peace. We can resist through civil disobedience. We do not resist with death but rather through respect of life. We respect and have a high esteem for all those who have given their life for our nation. And we affirm that every citizen must be ready to defend his or her life, freedom and land.

**4.2.6** Palestinian civil organizations, as well as international organizations, NGOs and certain religious institutions call on individuals, companies and states to engage in divestment and in an economic and commercial boycott of everything produced by the occupation. We understand this to integrate the logic of peaceful resistance. These advocacy campaigns must be carried out with courage, openly sincerely proclaiming that their object is not revenge but rather to put an end to the existing evil, liberating both the perpetrators and the victims of injustice. The aim is to free both peoples from extremist positions of the different Israeli governments, bringing both to justice and reconciliation. In this spirit and with this dedication we will eventually reach the longed-for resolution to our problems, as indeed happened in South Africa and with many other liberation movements in the world.

**4.3** Through our love, we will overcome injustices and establish foundations for a new society both for us and for our opponents. Our future and their future are one. Either the cycle of violence that destroys

both of us or peace that will benefit both. We call on Israel to give up its injustice towards us, not to twist the truth of reality of the occupation by pretending that it is a battle against terrorism. The roots of “terrorism” are in the human injustice committed and in the evil of the occupation. These must be removed if there be a sincere intention to remove “terrorism”. We call on the people of Israel to be our partners in peace and not in the cycle of interminable violence. Let us resist evil together, the evil of occupation and the infernal cycle of violence.

## **5. Our word to our brothers and sisters**

**5.1** We all face, today, a way that is blocked and a future that promises only woe. Our word to all our Christian brothers and sisters is a word of hope, patience, steadfastness and new action for a better future. Our word is that we, as Christians we carry a message, and we will continue to carry it despite the thorns, despite blood and daily difficulties. We place our hope in God, who will grant us relief in His own time. At the same time, we continue to act in concord with God and God’s will, building, resisting evil and bringing closer the day of justice and peace.

**5.2** We say to our Christian brothers and sisters: This is a time for repentance. Repentance brings us back into the communion of love with everyone who suffers, the prisoners, the wounded, those afflicted with temporary or permanent handicaps, the children who cannot live their childhood and each one who mourns a dear one. The communion of love says to every believer in spirit and in truth: if my brother is a prisoner I am a prisoner; if his home is destroyed, my home is destroyed; when my brother is killed, then I too am killed. We face the same challenges and share in all that has happened and will happen. Perhaps, as individuals or as heads of Churches, we were silent when we should have raised our voices to condemn the injustice and share in the suffering. This is a time of repentance for our silence, indifference, lack of communion, either because we did not persevere in our mission in this land and abandoned it, or because we did not think and do enough to reach a new and integrated vision and remained divided, contradicting our witness and weakening our word. Repentance for our concern with our institutions, sometimes at the expense of our mission, thus silencing the prophetic voice given by the Spirit to the Churches.

**5.3** We call on Christians to remain steadfast in this time of trial, just as we have throughout the centuries, through the changing succession of states



and governments. Be patient, steadfast and full of hope so that you might fill the heart of every one of your brothers or sisters who shares in this same trial with hope. *“Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you”* (1 Pet. 3:15). Be active and, provided this conforms to love, participate in any sacrifice that resistance asks of you to overcome our present travail.

**5.4** Our numbers are few but our message is great and important. Our land is in urgent need of love. Our love is a message to the Muslim and to the Jew, as well as to the world.

**5.4.1** Our message to the Muslims is a message of love and of living together and a call to reject fanaticism and extremism. It is also a message to the world that Muslims are neither to be stereotyped as the enemy nor caricatured as terrorists but rather to be lived with in peace and engaged with in dialogue.

**5.4.2** Our message to the Jews tells them: Even though we have fought one another in the recent past and still struggle today, we are able to love and live together. We can organize our political life, with all its complexity, according to the logic of this love and its power, after ending the occupation and establishing justice.

**5.4.3** The word of faith says to anyone engaged in political activity: human beings were not made for hatred. It is not permitted to hate, neither is it permitted to kill or to be killed. The culture of love is the culture of accepting the other. Through it we perfect ourselves and the foundations of society are established.

## **6. Our word to the Churches of the world**

**6.1** Our word to the Churches of the world is firstly a word of gratitude for the solidarity you have shown toward us in word, deed and presence among us. It is a word of praise for the many Churches and Christians who support the right of the Palestinian people for self determination. It is a message of solidarity with those Christians and Churches who have suffered because of their advocacy for law and justice.

However, it is also a call to repentance; to revisit fundamentalist theological positions that support certain unjust political options with regard to the Palestinian people. It is a call to stand alongside the oppressed and preserve the word of God as good news for all rather than to turn it into a weapon with which to slay the oppressed. The word of God is a word

of love for all His creation. God is not the ally of one against the other, nor the opponent of one in the face of the other. God is the Lord of all and loves all, demanding justice from all and issuing to all of us the same commandments. We ask our sister Churches not to offer a theological cover-up for the injustice we suffer, for the sin of the occupation imposed upon us. Our question to our brothers and sisters in the Churches today is: Are you able to help us get our freedom back, for this is the only way you can help the two peoples attain justice, peace, security and love?

**6.2** In order to understand our reality, we say to the Churches: Come and see. We will fulfil our role to make known to you the truth of our reality, receiving you as pilgrims coming to us to pray, carrying a message of peace, love and reconciliation. You will know the facts and the people of this land, Palestinians and Israelis alike.

**6.3** We condemn all forms of racism, whether religious or ethnic, including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and we call on you to condemn it and oppose it in all its manifestations. At the same time we call on you to say a word of truth and to take a position of truth with regard to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. As we have already said, we see boycott and disinvestment as tools of non violence for justice, peace and security for all.

## **7. Our word to the international community**

**7.** 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. We repeat once again that this is not revenge but rather a serious action in order to reach a just and definitive peace that will put an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories and will guarantee security and peace for all.

## **8. Jewish and Muslim religious leaders**

**8.** Finally, we address an appeal to the religious and spiritual leaders, Jewish and Muslim, with whom we share the same vision that every human being is created by God and has been given equal dignity. Hence the obligation for each of us to defend the oppressed and the dignity God has bestowed on them. Let us together try to rise up above the political positions that have failed so far and continue to lead us on the path of failure and suffering.

## **9. A call to our Palestinian people and to the Israelis**

**9.1** This is a call to see the face of God in each one of God's creatures and overcome the barriers of fear or race in order to establish a constructive dialogue and not remain within the cycle of never-ending manoeuvres that aim to keep the situation as it is. Our appeal is to reach a common vision, built on equality and sharing, not on superiority, negation of the other or aggression, using the pretext of fear and security. We say that love is possible and mutual trust is possible. Thus, peace is possible and definitive reconciliation also. Thus, justice and security will be attained for all.

**9.2** Education is important. Educational programs must help us to get to know the other as he or she is rather than through the prism of conflict, hostility or religious fanaticism. The educational programs in place today are infected with this hostility. The time has come to begin a new education that allows one to see the face of God in the other and declares that we are capable of loving each other and building our future together in peace and security.

**9.3** Trying to make the state a religious state, Jewish or Islamic, suffocates the state, confines it within narrow limits, and transforms it into a state that practices discrimination and exclusion, preferring one citizen over another. We appeal to both religious Jews and Muslims: let the state be a state for all its citizens, with a vision constructed on respect for religion but also equality, justice, liberty and respect for pluralism and not on domination by a religion or a numerical majority.

**9.4** To the leaders of Palestine we say that current divisions weaken all of us and cause more sufferings. Nothing can justify these divisions. For the good of the people, which must outweigh that of the political parties, an

end must be put to division. We appeal to the international community to lend its support towards this union and to respect the will of the Palestinian people as expressed freely.

**9.5** Jerusalem is the foundation of our vision and our entire life. She is the city to which God gave a particular importance in the history of humanity. She is the city towards which all people are in movement—and where they will meet in friendship and love in the presence of the One Unique God, according to the vision of the prophet Isaiah: *“In days to come the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it (...) He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more”* (Is. 2:2-5). Today, the city is inhabited by two peoples of three religions; and it is on this prophetic vision and on the international resolutions concerning the totality of Jerusalem that any political solution must be based. This is the first issue that should be negotiated because the recognition of Jerusalem’s sanctity and its message will be a source of inspiration towards finding a solution to the entire problem, which is largely a problem of mutual trust and ability to set in place a new land in this land of God.

## **10. Hope and faith in God**

**10.** In the absence of all hope, we cry out our cry of hope. We believe in God, good and just. We believe that God’s goodness will finally triumph over the evil of hate and of death that still persist in our land. We will see here “a new land” and “a new human being”, capable of rising up in the spirit to love each one of his or her brothers and sisters.

## **A Letter from the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches of Jerusalem**

### **We Hear the Cry of Our Children**

We, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, hear the cry of hope that our children have launched in these difficult times that we still experience in this Holy Land. We support them and stand by them in their faith, their hope, their love and their vision for the future. We also support the call to all our faithful as well as to the Israeli and Palestinian Leaders, to the International Community and to the World Churches, in order to accelerate the achievement of justice, peace and reconciliation in this Holy Land. We ask God to bless all our children by giving them more power in order to contribute effectively in establishing and developing their community, while making it a community of love, trust, justice and peace.

*His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox*

*His Beatitude Patriarch Fouad Twal, Latin Church*

*His Beatitude Patriarch Torkom Manougian, Armenian Orthodox*

*Very Revd Father Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Custody of the Holy Land*

*H.E. Archbishop Dr Anba Abraham, Coptic*

*H.E. Archbishop Mar Swerios Malki Murad, Syrian Orthodox*

*H.E. Archbishop Paul Nabil Sayah, Maronite*

*H.E. Archbishop Abba Mathaios, Ethiopian*

*H.E. Archbishop Joseph-Jules Zerey, Greek Catholic*

*Bishop Gregor Peter Malki, Syrian Catholic*

*Bishop Munib A. Younan, Lutheran*

*Bishop Subeil Dawani, Anglican*

*Bishop Raphael Minassian, Armenian Catholic*

Jerusalem—December 15, 2009

# **5. Three-Session Study Guide**

## Leader's Notes

- a) Encourage others to participate in the study sessions. If you are in a congregation, invite people by putting a notice in the bulletin and by making an announcement in the Sunday services a few weeks ahead of the first meeting. Remind folks that they do not need to have prior knowledge of the Israel Palestine situation to participate. This series is an opportunity to learn more and to reflect on our faith as we do so. E-mail promotion, word of mouth and notices in common areas may be ways to encourage participation.
- b) Each session is designed to be about 90 minutes long.
- c) Make sure booklets or photocopies of the booklet are available to each participant before the meeting.
- d) In preparation for the first session, ask participants to read “The Reality on the Ground” (pp. 4–14), and the Introduction and section 1 of the *Kairos Palestine* statement (pp. 19–22).
- e) For all sessions, prepare a worship table with a candle and set up chairs in a horseshoe or circle shape. Have available masking tape, flip chart and paper, and markers.
- f) Suggestions are given for songs in The United Church of Canada’s *More Voices* hymn book. Leaders may wish to explore alternative songs.
- g) Prayers and worship resources related to Israel Palestine can be found on The World Council of Churches website for the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel at [www.worldweekforpeace.org](http://www.worldweekforpeace.org).

# Session 1 —An Introduction to the *Kairos Palestine* Statement

## Instructions for Facilitator

Ask participants to prepare for this session by reading

- “The Reality on the Ground” (pp. 4–14)
- the Introduction and section 1 of the *Kairos Palestine* statement (pp. 19–22)
- your denomination’s recent policy statements (see links on p. 15 ).

*For step 5*, print the following keywords on half-page paper sheets to use during the reading of section 1:

- 1.1 peace
  - 1.1.1 separation wall
  - 1.1.2 settlements
  - 1.1.3 humiliation
  - 1.1.4 family separation
  - 1.1.5 no access
  - 1.1.6 refugees
  - 1.1.7 prisoners
  - 1.1.8 Jerusalem

*For step 6*, set up a computer, projector and/or a DVD player to play a piece of instrumental music, or show a photo collage (photos and PowerPoints are downloadable from [www.eappi.org](http://www.eappi.org)).

Provide copies of song books being used.



## Session

- .00 1. Light the candle and welcome participants and begin by singing a song about peace. For example, “May Peace Be with You/ Salamun, Kullaheen” (*More Voices* 168) could be sung several times. Ask participants to look at each other as they sing.
- .05 2. Ask participants to introduce themselves and briefly share why they came to this study series.
- .15 3. a) Explain the purpose of the study series to the group:
- to learn about the social and political situation in Israel Palestine by studying the *Kairos Palestine* document written in 2009 by Christian leaders working in Palestine.
  - to listen in faith and attend to the voices of Christian sisters and brothers in Palestine crying out for justice and solidarity
  - to respond to the mandate of Canadian churches to journey with Christians in Palestine
- b) Read the Introduction of the statement (p. 19) out loud to the group.
- .25 4. a) Ask participants to write a word or phrase on the flip sheets that reflects their understanding or description of the Israel Palestine situation. (Save this sheet for Session 3.)
- b) Invite participants to read all that has been written on the wall.
- .35 5. a) Ask the group to repeat one or two verses of the song they used at the beginning.
- b) Invite participants to take turns reading aloud the first section of the *Kairos Palestine* document, one article at a time, rotating around the circle beginning with section 1 and continuing to section 1.1.8, pausing after each article. (After each article is read, the facilitator posts a keyword on the flip sheet or wall.)
- .45 6. Ask participants to sit quietly and reflect on what they have heard and read. Encourage them to journal if they wish on “What am I feeling?” and “What am I thinking?” Play an instrumental piece of music or show the photo collage as they do this.

- .50 7. In small groups of two or three, ask participants to share:
- a) What are they feeling or thinking as they reflect on section 1 of the *Kairos Palestine* statement?
  - b) What questions, affirmations and surprises did they have upon reading “Facts on the Ground” or your denomination’s policy statements? Discuss. Write down questions and issues that need further discussion or clarification. (Save these questions for Session 3.)
- 1.10 8. In the large group, ask participants to share a few highlights of each group’s discussion.
- 1.25 9. Closing Words
- a) Facilitator reads to the group:  
“Denise Ackerman, a South African, says that the language of lament calls for justice because it challenges the set boundaries of our relationships with humans and with God. Lament does not accept things as they are. Unless we act with God as our partner, the human situation will not change.”  
(Based on a quote of Omega Bula’s in *Challenging Empire: Stories and Activities to Transform Your Community*, The United Church of Canada, 2007, p.15)  
  
“Facing the pain in our own hearts when we hear stories of injustice is an important step in living God’s call to justice. The pain in our hearts is God’s reminder to us of our capacity to be compassionate and loving people who act for justice and reconciliation in our world today. Healthy hearts are those that both rejoice and bear pain.”  
(*Challenging Empire*, p. 13)
  - b) Ask participants to offer a word of blessing for all those struggling for a just peace in Israel Palestine.
- 1.30 10. Homework: For the next session, ask participants to read over sections 2, 3 and 4 of the *Kairos Palestine* statement and make a note of their initial responses.

# Session 2—Faith, Hope and Love

## Instructions for Facilitator

For step 3, make enough copies of the questions for each member of the three small groups. Read sections 2, 3 and 4 of the *Kairos Palestine* document to prepare for this session.

### Session

- .00 1. Light the candle. Welcome participants and offer an opening prayer.
- .05 2. In order to help people identify with the difficulties of speaking difficult truths, ask participants to do the following:
- a) Recall a time when they were called to speak the truth in love to a family member, friend or colleague, or received a painful truth from a family member in a difficult or risky situation. Reflect silently on that situation for a few minutes.
  - b) Then share their feelings and thoughts regarding those situations in groups of three (or, if you have less than six participants, in the large group).
- .20 3. Divide participants into three small groups, one for each section (Faith, Hope, Love) of the *Kairos Palestine* document. Ask each group to discuss the questions for their section.

### FAITH (Section 2 of the *Kairos Palestine* document)

- a) Read scripture passage aloud—Psalm 24:1 (found in article 2.3.1).
- b) How have understandings/misunderstandings of this theme, that the Earth belongs to God, played out in Israel Palestine and in Canada (article 2.3.1)? (Use the maps provided.)
- c) Discuss:
  - article 2.5 re the nature of the occupation
  - article 2.4 re the use of scripture

HOPE (Section 3 of the *Kairos Palestine* document)

- a) Read scripture passage aloud—Romans 8:31, 35, 36, 39 (found in section 3.1).
- b) In article 3.2, is this description of hope true for you? What are your reflections on the meaning of hope?
- c) Palestinian Christians describe the mission of the church in article 3.4. How does this understanding address and/or challenge your understanding of the mission of the church?

LOVE (Section 4 of the *Kairos Palestine* document)

- a) Read scripture passage aloud—Matt. 5:45-47 (found in section 4.1).
- b) Articles 4.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 characterize love as resistance. Discuss.
- c) What does resistance look like for Palestinian Christians and those who seek peace with justice in Israel Palestine? (Refer to article 4.2.6). What are the implications for us?

1.00 4. In the whole group, share learnings, surprises and questions from each small group with the whole group. List on a flip sheet. (Bring this sheet to Session 3.)

1.25 5. Closing prayer for peace.

6. Homework: Read sections 5–10 of the *Kairos Palestine* document, and your denomination's recent policy statements.

# Session 3—A Call to Action

## Instructions for Facilitator

Place a bowl on the worship table filled with a couple of inches of sand. Situate enough tea lights for all members of the group in the sand. Have a taper or long candle available for lighting later, in step 6.

Read sections 5–10 of the *Kairos Palestine* document to prepare for this session, and review the purpose of this study (Session 1).

Display on the wall the sheets of questions, learnings and surprises from Session 1 and 2 and the sheet of words and phrases from Session 1. Note: Although it is good to review questions that have been arising through these sessions, it will not be possible to fully address all of them.

Provide copies of *More Voices* for the closing of this session.

## Session

- .00 1. a) Light a candle and sing an opening song—one suggestion is “Canticle of the Turning” (*More Voices* 120)
- b) Ask participants to reflect on Sessions 1 and 2 and add new words and phrases to the sheet from Session 1 (or create an additional sheet).
- .05 2. Ask participants to reflect on a time when they spoke out, raising an uncomfortable truth and others were silent, or when they were silent when others spoke out.
- .15 3. Referring to sections 5–10, ask participants to name what they hear the authors of the *Kairos Palestine* document calling us to do.
- .25 4. Break participants into groups of three or four and ask them to discuss the following:
- a) Refer to your denomination’s recent policy statements on Israel Palestine (see links on p. 15). What surprises or challenges you? What questions do you have?
- b) What could your denomination’s recent policy statements on Palestine and Israel mean for you? For your Congregation/Parish/Presbytery/Diocese/Conference?

- c) What are some next steps? How might those steps contribute to ending the occupation of Palestine?
- 1.00
- 5. a) In the large group, ask participants to share ideas and next steps for working toward a just peace in Israel Palestine.
  - b) Ask participants how they will share these next steps with their faith community or church court.
- 1.15
- 6. Invite participants to think back over the three study sessions. Ask each person, when ready, to light a candle and then share a learning or a question that has made a strong impression on them.
- 1.25
- 7. Close by singing the song you began with for Session 1—“May Peace Be with You/Salamun, Kullaheen” (*More Voices* 168)—several times as a final blessing.

## 6. Websites and Links to Resources

[www.kairospalestine.ps](http://www.kairospalestine.ps)

Web page of “A Moment of Truth: *Kairos Palestine*—A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of the Palestinian suffering.”

[www.oikoumene.org](http://www.oikoumene.org) and [www.worldweekforpeace.org](http://www.worldweekforpeace.org)

The World Council of Churches’ websites for worship and education resources on Palestine and Israel, including the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel.

[www.eappi.org](http://www.eappi.org)

The World Council of Churches’ Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel site for reports, resources, photos, letters and reports from EAPPI ecumenical companions.

[www.sabeel.org](http://www.sabeel.org)

Sabeel, Arabic for “the way” and “spring” of life-giving water, is an ecumenical centre for liberation theology among Palestinian Christians located in Jerusalem. It seeks to promote peace with justice in the Middle East and sponsors a variety of programs to encourage people of faith to develop a spirituality of nonviolent liberation to empower work for justice, peace and reconciliation in Israel Palestine. It also offers alternative tours to the Holy Land.

[www.btselem.org](http://www.btselem.org)

B’Tselem, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. B’Tselem is a highly respected Israeli human rights organization focused on abuses in the occupied Palestinian territories, excellent for statistics and background information on key human rights issues.

[www.palestinemonitor.org](http://www.palestinemonitor.org)

The Palestine Monitor is recognized as a dynamic and independent voice of Palestinians living under occupation, for news, updates and analysis.

[www.ochaopt.org](http://www.ochaopt.org)

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs produces authoritative data on various aspects of life in the occupied territories and excellent maps. See especially its monthly Humanitarian Monitor.

[www.patg.org](http://www.patg.org)

The Alternative Tourism Group is a Palestinian NGO specializing in tours and pilgrimages that include critical examinations of the history, culture and politics of the Holy Land.

[www.sabeel.ca](http://www.sabeel.ca)

Canadians Friends of Sabeel

[www.cjpme.org](http://www.cjpme.org)

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East

Search for “Israel Palestine” on the official websites of:

- The Anglican Church of Canada  
([www.anglican.ca](http://www.anglican.ca))
- The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace  
([www.devop.org](http://www.devop.org))
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada  
([www.elcic.ca](http://www.elcic.ca))
- The Presbyterian Church in Canada  
([www.presbyterian.ca](http://www.presbyterian.ca))
- The United Church of Canada  
([www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca))
- KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives  
([www.kairoscanada.org](http://www.kairoscanada.org))



Please send your feedback to:

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FOR GLOBAL MINISTRIES  
POUR LES MINISTERES MONDIAUX



**A Moment of Truth: Kairos Palestine** is “the Christian Palestinians’ word to the world about what is happening in Palestine.” It speaks to the reality on the ground for the Palestinian people as they experience it, and gives their prophetic Christian response and challenge.

This ecumenical study guide for Canadian faith communities offers

- the full text of the *Kairos Palestine* document
- background of the document and why we should study it
- the reality on the ground—maps and background information

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Founded in 1921 as the Canadian School of Missions, The Canadian Churches’ Forum for Global Ministries is an agency through which Canadian churches engage in global ministry and are challenged to prophetic global witness through programs of education, training and dialogue.