

Preface

In 2009, after two years of planning and robust conversation bathed in prayer, Palestinian Christian leaders representing a wide range of denominations issued the historic document, “A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering”.

Also referred to as Kairos Palestine, the profoundly theological document—grounded in the Biblical texts—is a bold, prophetic call naming Palestinian realities as they are and describing life as God has purposed it. This ecumenical confession of faith and call to action stands alongside Christian confessions written in other times of crisis, such as the rise of Nazism (The Barmen Declaration, 1934), in the midst of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement (Letter from the Birmingham Jail, 1963), and during the struggle to end South African Apartheid (Kairos Document, 1985).

Over the years, the document and its authors, while demonized by some, have been gratefully embraced by many around the world. In addition to educators on college and seminary campuses, persons in other settings of occupation, distress, poverty and marginalization have embraced what is now referred to as Kairos Theology. In turn, the document and its supporters are nurturing a growing international movement, Global Kairos.

In observance of the Tenth Anniversary of the Christian Palestinian Initiative’s Kairos Palestine and as a way to acknowledge the Global Kairos movement, this book has gathered together reflections from some of the many voices that are empowering the movement in Palestine and around the world.

*Kairos Palestine Staff
November, 2019*

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Kairos Palestine:

Ten Years of Prophetic Voice

Rifat Odeh Kassis

On the 11th of December 2009, the Christian Palestinian Initiative—a group of Palestinian Christians, both clergy and laypeople—launched the Kairos Palestine document, “A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering”. This document gives voice to Palestinian Christians: their word to the world about the reality of the Israeli occupation and a call for support in establishing a just peace and equality between people in our region. Soon after its launch, the Kairos document became more than just a text. It became a living initiative, a movement strengthening the Christian presence in Palestine and working to end the prolonged Israeli occupation and its structured oppression. While the Kairos document may appear to be a call of pain and desperation, it is fundamentally a call for hope, a call born of love, prayer and faith in both God and humanity.

The Palestinian people have suffered dispossession at the hands of the Israeli state for 71 years, including 52 years of direct military occupation on what remains of historic Palestine. During the forcible establishment of Israel in 1948, over 530 Palestinian villages were destroyed. Between 900,000-750,000 people (more than half of the population at the time) were expelled from the country, becoming refugees dispersed across the globe and still lacking any meaningful international recognition of their right to return.

Soon after its launch, the Kairos document became more than just a text. It became a living initiative, a movement strengthening the Christian presence in Palestine and working to end the prolonged Israeli occupation and its structured oppression.

Since 1967, Palestinians who have remained in what is left of historic Palestine have faced continual human rights violations, dispossession and confiscation of their land to build illegal Jewish-only settlements. In addition, the Separation Wall, over 700 kilometers in length, has confiscated a substantial amount of the 1967 Occupied Palestinian Territories. Today, about %62 of what is referred to as the West Bank is under direct Israeli occupation control.

Over decades, the official international community has focused on Israel’s right to exist, with very little attention given to the life and rights of Palestinians. Israel’s continued settlement building and other confiscations of Palestinian land have severely damaged prospects for a just peace. Racist laws which the State of Israel has enacted support the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.

Despite all this, Kairos Palestine has managed to achieve substantial results. True to its original premise to serve as a platform for action, Kairos Palestine has advanced in the following ways over the past ten years.

- Kairos Palestine solidarity groups have expanded in many countries and regions around the world, especially in the Global South.
- More and more churches are persuaded to reevaluate their investments in order to avoid supporting companies and organizations linked to the Israeli occupation. Others have definitively voted to divest from such companies and financial institutions. Still others have adopted part or all of the BDS campaign.
- Pilgrimage practices are evolving through Kairos Palestine’s “Come and See” campaign, providing a detailed theological analysis of Christian pilgrimages and locating Jesus’ life, ministry, death and resurrection in the context of a brutal Roman occupation.
- Hundreds of conferences have been organized under the Kairos theme. Thousands have come to visit, speak and work in solidarity with Kairos Palestine. Hundreds of articles, theses, and other materials have been written about Kairos Palestine in many languages.
- Kairos theologians have been engaged in wide-ranging dialogue with theologians from all over the world. Palestinian clergy and lay theologians have written scores of books about (or referencing) Kairos Palestine.
- Kairos Palestine has been embraced by local Palestinian church-related organizations as their unified voice.
- Relationships between Kairos Palestine and Palestinian civil society are growing in strength and number. The Palestinian youth movement is expanding through Kairos’ efforts.

Throughout the centuries, the bravery, perseverance, steadfastness, cooperation, vision, and love of ordinary people have transformed the world again and again—in sudden, dramatic ways and in slow, quiet ways.

Today, Kairos Palestine’s main foci are the following:

1. *Promoting an international theological dialogue* with churches, church-related organizations and theologians. This conversation includes: challenging the theological and political justifications adopted by some that neglect or deny the oppression of Palestinians; advocating against a blind loyalty to Israel and silence in the face of oppression; and lobbying churches to stop investing, directly and indirectly, in the occupation.
2. *Preserving the Christian presence in Palestine*, connecting Palestinians in Palestine with Palestinians inside the Green Line (established in 1967) and throughout the diaspora. The popular resistance and youth movements are participating in the struggle more than at any time before. Kairos Palestine has become a national social movement and a major voice for Christians working in partnership with individuals, local communities, churches, Christian organizations and other national groups, both faith-based and secular.
3. *Strengthening and growing the international movement*, “Kairos for Global Justice Coalition”, mobilizing churches and Christian organizations around the world to work for a just peace both in the region and in their own contexts. The Kairos for Global Justice movement shares a unified advocacy and lobby strategy to support the international BDS movement, sharing Kairos Palestine’s annual Christmas and Easter Alerts which raise awareness about the racist policies and ongoing destruction facing Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Kairos Palestine and its partners continue to develop the “Come and See” call, mobilizing pilgrims to become advocates for just peace.

There are many challenges plaguing everyday Palestinian life. But we refuse to lose faith in a just resolution. Kairos Palestine will not surrender hope. Sumud (steadfast perseverance) is our way of life. Despite the challenges and difficulties, we see many signs of hope and look ahead to a time when justice will prevail. We know that hope is not a passive waiting. Hope stirs us to act bravely. Hope is courage laced with love. Hope is a vivid, living guide to the future. Our primary reserve of hope is grounded in God, in ourselves and in humankind. We trust our own power, gifts and creativity. We believe in the power of people all over the world.

Kairos Palestine is grateful that the global movement is stirring hope and gaining momentum. We see that many nations—in increasing numbers—are expressing their support for Palestine and Palestinians. The solidarity movement is growing: through the international BDS campaign; through nonviolent protests; through the media; and through governmental entities urging Israeli accountability.

We have hope that, over time, these efforts will oblige world governments to acknowledge their double standards and stop supporting the oppressor rather than the oppressed.

The State of Israel, like other oppressive regimes throughout history, doesn't simply fear the anger of the oppressed. More significantly, Israel fears the steadfast faith, hope and love of the oppressed—their inner strength. Israel knows that its power and impunity will prevail only as long as people feel weak and hopeless. Israel knows, too, that its dominance is easier to maintain as long as it convinces the international community that it—the oppressor—is instead the oppressed, under attack, its existence at stake.

As we observe the Tenth Anniversary of Kairos Palestine, we continue to raise a voice in the wilderness. Kairos Palestine will continue to provide both a vital symbol of hope and the tools for transforming that hope into action—for Palestinians and for people across the entire region and around the world. Kairos Palestine will continue to shape and empower Palestinians' legitimate, creative and ultimately transforming popular resistance—a resistance driven by love, not by hatred and revenge.

At a moment when it is easy to feel paralyzed, Kairos Palestine offers an alternative—a theology that recognizes God's historic commitment to free the oppressed, a call to *sumud*, and the tools and practices that will lead to a just and lasting peace.

Throughout his career, **Rifat Kassis** has been advocating and actively campaigning for the effective application of international human rights and humanitarian law in Palestine through various professional and voluntary positions. In 1988, he started working in the East Jerusalem YMCA as director for its rehabilitation programs in the West Bank. In 1995, he co-founded the Alternative Tourism Group (ATG). In 1991, he founded the first Palestinian independent Child Rights NGO, a national section of the Geneva-based global child rights movement, Defense for Children International (DCI). Rifat served as president of DCI-Palestine, and later became president of the DCI movement at the global level. He currently serves as Director of both the Kairos Palestine and Global Kairos movements.

A Message of Hope

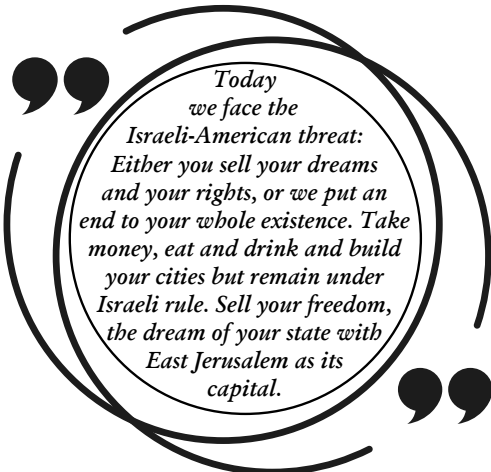
H.B. Patriarch Michel Sabbah

Ten years ago, the Kairos document was launched in Bethlehem, the City of the Nativity. It was a vision and a guide for all Palestinians in general and for Christians in particular, in the midst of the crisis and the injustice in which we live under Israeli military occupation. We live in an abnormal situation. At any moment, the Palestinian expects one's house to be demolished or be invaded by soldiers to be searched or, worse, to take away family members to throw them in Israeli jails for years. In Palestinian life, the possibility of death is ever-present. Moreover, there are internal challenges among Palestinians themselves: an unstable economic life for many, while others live a life of normality; and politically, the big division being a rift between the Palestinian Authority and the people.

Today we face the Israeli-American threat: Either you sell your dreams and your rights, or we put an end to your whole existence. Take money, eat and drink and build your cities but remain under Israeli rule. Sell your freedom, the dream of your state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In this situation, the Kairos document holds a message of hope, of steadfastness and remaining firm where we are. The document is a word of truth, based on the fact that Palestinians did not come from abroad. We have the right to live freely in our ancestral homes and on our ancestral land. But until today, we are not free. We live under the yoke of the Israeli occupation.

Israeli rulers know this truth: Palestine is for the Palestinians, a truth beyond debate. But Israeli rulers reject this truth. Because they believe that their own existence and rights require that Palestinians disappear or remain under Israel's will. The international community also knows the rights of Palestinians. All countries know. But none dares to look at it. They prioritize the right of Israel to exist and survive. Recognition of the Palestinian's right is disturbing. Israel was built on the ruins of Palestinian homes, but no one



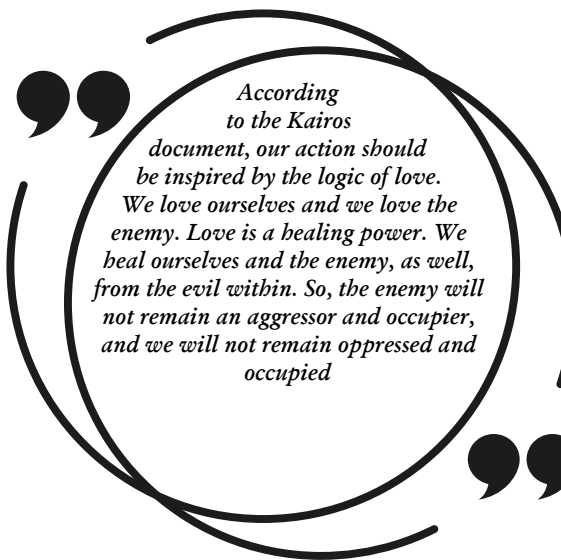
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wants to be reminded. The international community has attempted to compensate its silence—and acceptance of the injustice imposed upon Palestinians—by recognizing the Palestinian Authority and through financial contributions. But none of this is enough to restore justice.

This is our situation today. Can we hope for better days?

The Introduction of the Kairos document says that it is a word of truth. It is a word of faith in God who sees and knows. But God is too forbearing about the injustice imposed on the Palestinians. Still, the document says that God is good and just. God's goodness will prevail one day; the injustice will disappear; the occupation will end.

The document is also a word of hope. Believing in God, we are a people who put our hope in God in spite of human oppression. Hope sees what cannot be seen, what will happen tomorrow.



According to the Kairos document, our action should be inspired by the logic of love. We love ourselves and we love the enemy. Love is a healing power. We heal ourselves and the enemy, as well, from the evil within. So, the enemy will not remain an aggressor and occupier, and we will not remain oppressed and occupied

Good will come tomorrow. Of course, our present will not be changed—no new tomorrow will come—if we do not seek it and act or if we nurture our internal discord. Tomorrow will come if we become united and prepare the way to it. The document says that the word of truth is a word of faith, hope and love. According to the Kairos document, our action should be inspired by the logic of love. We love ourselves and we love the enemy. Love is a healing power. We heal ourselves and the enemy, as well, from the evil within. So, the enemy will not remain an

aggressor and occupier, and we will not remain oppressed and occupied. The document expresses our belief in the power and effectiveness of nonviolence, despite the fact that the Israeli army—and some expressions of Palestinian resistance—use violence.

The Palestinian and Israeli peoples are both «dear in the eyes of God» (Ps :116 15). They have the same God-given dignity, a dignity that must be respected for the glory of God and the glory of humankind. We are all equal in humanity.

The Palestinian hope today is based first on the goodness of God, God's justice and love for all human beings, then on the rights of the Palestinian people, and thirdly on a hope, albeit far away. There will be an awakening and a newly-needed courage in the international community. There will be a new awakening in the Israeli conscience; Israelis will see that Palestinians are human beings with the right to remain in their homes and on their land. The day of equality and justice will come. "Loyalty will spring up from the earth and justice will roll down from heaven. God will give prosperity, and our soil will yield its harvest (Ps 12-11 :85)."

We may go through still another phase of injustice and racist discrimination and oppression. But it will end. Already now, there are those in Israel and the international community who see what needs to be seen; they raise their voices and denounce the ongoing injustice and proclaim the need of justice for the Palestinians. In the minority now, they aren't the decision-makers. Generations will change, and one day they will be in the majority on the side of justice and peace-making.

Then a new era will begin. I hope it will be the last, as Israelis see the Palestinian as a human being with the right to exist and live in one's own home on one's own land. Otherwise, the new era will not be the last. God alone knows what will be next, and who will be the oppressor and the oppressed. Equality and justice are the only conditions in harmony with the nature of the Holy Land.

H.B. Patriarch Michel Sabbah served as the Archbishop and Latin (Roman Catholic) Patriarch Emeritus of Jerusalem from 1987 to 2008. Patriarch Sabbah was ordained a priest for the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem in June 1955. He was a parish priest for a few years before being sent to the University of St. Joseph in Beirut to Study Arabic language and literature. Shortly thereafter, he became director of schools for the Latin Patriarchate. In 1980, he was named President of the Bethlehem University. In 1987, Pope John Paul II appointed him Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, making him the first native Palestinian to hold the office for centuries. Since 1999, Patriarch Sabbah has been the International President of Pax Christi, a Catholic organization promoting peace. Sabbah resigned as Patriarch in 2008. He is currently the Grand Prior of the Chivalric Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem, one of the knightly orders founded in 1099. Patriarch Sabbah is a co-author of the Kairos Palestine Document and believes in pluralism and equality in order to preserve the dignity of human beings.

We Renew the Pledge

to Continue on the Path of Serving the Values of Justice and Supporting Our People

Bishop Atallah Hanna

The Palestinian Christian Initiative was launched ten years ago and, in turn, helped launch the Kairos Palestine document. The document was translated into several languages and disseminated throughout the world. The aim of this initiative was and continues to be making the voice of Palestinian Christians heard all over the globe.

We feel it is our obligation to constantly remind the churches of the fairness of our cause and that defending Palestine is defending the birthplace of Christianity and the longstanding and indigenous Christian presence in the Holy Land.

We wanted to tell the whole world that Christianity and the Palestinian Christian presence in Palestine, in this Holy Land, is neither temporary nor foreign to this land. We cling to the authentic, righteous Christianity that emerged from this Holy Land. We are also members and advocates of the Arab nation and the Palestinian people who are struggling for freedom.

Palestinian Christians, whose numbers have declined dramatically, currently make up only %1 of the population. While we are few in numbers, we don't consider ourselves a minority. We are required always to be the salt of this land and to be a source of goodness and blessing for the Palestinian people who remain steadfast in defending their homeland, their fundamental rights and their sense of belonging to this holy place.

Through this document, we wanted our call as a Palestinian Christian initiative to reach all the peoples of the world—Arabs and our Palestinian community specifically, and yet all concerned parties—to tell them that as Christians the Palestinian question is our question, just as it is for Muslims and all the free people throughout the world who are true believers in the values of justice, freedom and human dignity.

We also wanted to clearly express our voice as Christian Palestinians to all churches in the world that they should pay attention to us—to the pain and to the suffering of our people who have made huge sacrifices and struggled for their

freedom and the rights denied to them. We feel it is our obligation to constantly remind the churches of the fairness of our cause and that defending Palestine is defending the birthplace of Christianity and the longstanding and indigenous Christian presence in the Holy Land. It is also defending a people who are deserving of life after all these long years of injustice, oppression, hegemony, racism and occupation.

Christian Palestinians are echoing the same message of all Palestinians, that this land will remain theirs and that the occupation is merely a temporary situation, for injustice cannot persist nor prevail. We wanted the churches to know that our people have the right to live in freedom, safety and peace in our homeland and Holy Land.

I remember when we visited South Africa and met with the Kairos South Africa group composed of several lawyers and priests who struggled to bring down the Apartheid regime. Their non-violent struggle and their famous Kairos South Africa document led to the collapse of the Apartheid regime there. It led to the transition of South Africa into a democracy and to the release of Nelson Mandela who would become the first president of post-Apartheid South Africa.

We renew the pledge that as Christian Palestinians we will remain committed to our religious values, our spiritual mission, and the defence of our Palestinian people until they obtain their freedom and regain their rights.

Our wish is for the Kairos Palestine document to contribute to the liberation of the Palestinian people, the realization of their rights, and the collapse of the Apartheid regime and walls surrounding us. Our hope is for the Kairos Palestine document to help expose the real picture of what is happening in our Holy Land, to bring the whole world to an awareness that there are injustices suffered by the Palestinian people and that these injustices must be brought to an end—a task that requires genuine effort.

In Kairos Palestine, we reiterated our adoption of non-violent, peaceful resistance. We also repeated our renouncement of all forms of racism and stated that the Palestine we aspire for is an independent, fully sovereign, civic state where talk of majority/minority does not exist, but where people talk instead about all citizens having the right to live in freedom, safety, stability, peace and prosperity in their homeland and their Holy Land.

On the 10th Anniversary of Kairos Palestine and the launching of the Palestinian Christian Initiative, we reaffirm our determination to continue moving on this path and defending the rights for which we have always advocated.

We renew the pledge that as Christian Palestinians we will remain committed to our religious values, our spiritual mission, and the defence of our Palestinian people until they obtain their freedom and regain their rights.

Our document is an outcry in the face of all oppressors, a word of truth that we send out to all those who remain silent and hesitant, with the hope that our words will remove the blurriness and encourage those who remain silent to mobilize in support of one of the most noble and most just causes that modern history has witnessed.

The Right Reverend Archbishop Atallah Hanna, the Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Sabastia, was born on June 1965, in the town of Al Rama in the Upper Galilee. After finishing high school in Al Rama in 1983 he joined the Orthodox Seminary in Jerusalem. In 1984, he left to Thessaloniki in Greece where he studied Greek and then joined the College of Theology at the Thessaloniki University from which he graduated with distinction in 1990. He was ordained a monk in 1990 at the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem. He contributed to the development of the unified curriculum for Christian religious teaching in Palestinian schools. Archbishop Hanna has participated in many local, regional and international conferences and advocated for the Palestinian question in all forums. He is a member of many committees and organizations in addition to his membership in several Christian and ecumenical institutions. He has played a role in the Christian-Muslim dialogue. He was elected unanimously as the Archbishop of Sebastia in 2005.

Why Kairos? For the future?

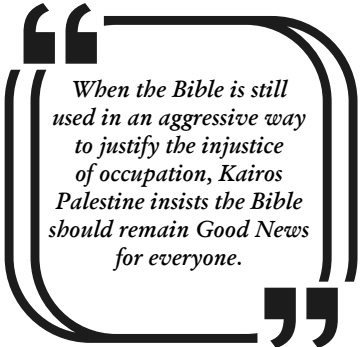
Fr. Dr. Jamal Khader

During the preparation period of the Kairos document, a member of the group was hesitant to write a document. He asked: “Do we really need a document? We have many documents; we do not need to add one more!” The Kairos Palestine document has been much more than a document; it was and still is part of a larger movement for peace and justice in Palestine, the region and the world.

Ten years after the launching of the document, we realize that it was a “Kairos moment” for our churches and our country. The Kairos document was a prophetic document. After ten years, we read the document as if it was written for today: we still live under military occupation; we still suffer from the same restrictions; Jerusalem is declared as “capital of the Jewish people” and suffers discrimination; the lack of hope in a possible future of peace and justice is felt more than ever. Hence, the message of the Kairos document is more needed today than when it was written.

Is a better future possible? Is real peace still possible? With the rise of extremism, discrimination and exclusiveness, the Kairos document offers an answer that is not limited to the time when it was written. Kairos Palestine (KP) uses an inclusive, human and moderate language in a time when language in many parts of the world, especially in our region, is used to promote divisions and prejudice.

Let us re-read the document, giving a few examples of how KP is as pertinent today as it was ten years ago:



When the Bible is still used in an aggressive way to justify the injustice of occupation, Kairos Palestine insists the Bible should remain Good News for everyone.

- When the Bible is still used in an aggressive way to justify the injustice of occupation, KP insists the Bible should remain Good News for everyone. The Word of God should remain a source of light and life for everyone.
- When KP talks about peace, justice and security, it includes all the inhabitants of the Holy Land, as justice cannot be done for one group at the expense of others.
- In a time when Israel is defined as a “Jewish State”, a state not for all its citizens, KP rejects any religious state “that transforms [the nation] into a state that practices discrimination and exclusion.” (Kairos Palestine 9.3)

- The last paragraph of the document is consecrated to the city of Jerusalem, a city “inhabited by two peoples of three religions.” In 2018, Jerusalem was declared by the State of Israel as “complete and united, as the capital of Israel.” The United States adopted this exclusive definition of the Nation-State Basic Law by moving its Embassy to Jerusalem. The open and inclusive identity of the Holy City is denied.

The Kairos Palestine document has been much more than a document; it was and still is part of a larger movement for peace and justice in Palestine, the region and the world.

We may give more examples of how KP is still valid, and the principles declared in it may inspire us in our struggle for a just peace in our region. But the question remains: Is peace still possible? Although we see an increasingly severe reality on the ground preventing any possibility of peace, we still affirm that another way is possible. A peace based on dignity, mutual respect and equality as human beings can point to this new way.

Some people talk about the impossibility of the two-state solution with Israel’s control of the Palestinian land and its resources and the expansion of the Jewish settlements. Others talk about the one-state solution, incompatible with the Jewish State notion where “the exercise of the right to national self-determination is unique to the Jewish People” (Nation-State Basic Law). KP calls for an end to the military occupation and for the recognition of the basic rights of the Palestinian people as the only way to move on the path of a just peace. Then negotiations, based on international law and resolutions, can define the possible solution to the conflict. In this political process, religion can inspire and guide the politicians, not sabotage their efforts.

KP begins with the description of the reality on the ground. This reality is more severe now than when the document was written. But the document takes us to new horizons with the hope that “does not disappoint us (Romans 5:5).” We hope against all hope (Romans 5:8), a hope based on our faith in the goodness of God and the goodness of human beings. “We believe in a good and just God, who loves each one of his creatures.” (Kairos Palestine 2.1) This is our faith, and this is the foundation of our hope in a better future for everyone in this region. Kairos Palestine is not prophetic because it talks about the future. It is prophetic because it is an authentic search of the will of God for us in this country. Peace is still possible. We may not be optimistic about a near future of peace, but we keep our hope alive that a better future is still possible.

Fr. Dr. Jamal Khader is a priest at the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, ordained in 1988. After several years of pastoral experience, he continued his studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome (1998-1994), where he obtained his PHD in Dogmatic Theology. Fr. Khader has served as: Professor of Theology at the Latin Patriarchal Seminary (2017-1998) and at Bethlehem University (2017-2000); Chairperson of the Department of Religious Studies at Bethlehem University (2013 - 2003); Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Bethlehem University (2013-2008); Rector of the Latin Patriarchate Seminary (2017-2013); Pastor of the Holy Family Church in Ramallah; and he is currently the Director of the Latin Patriarchate Schools in Palestine. He is one of the co-writers of the “Kairos Palestine document.”

Call Things by Their Name

Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb

This year, Kairos Palestine is celebrating its 10th Anniversary. What we wrote in 2009 is more valid than ever: “They say peace, peace, but there is no peace.” (KP 1.1) In fact, it is very difficult to recognize our world anymore. With Trump in the US, Bolsonaro in Brazil, Johnson in the UK, Modi in India, not to mention Eastern Europe, Turkey and Russia, Netanyahu has gained lots of company. The world order that developed in the aftermath of the Second World War seems to be coming to an end; international law and human rights are being questioned; and civil society space is shrinking. It’s a gloomy time and the light at the end of the tunnel is out of sight.

Yet, this new world constellation makes things clearer than ever before. It’s high time to call things by their name.

1. The occupation of Palestinian land was and is a settler colonial project.

It is clear now that Israel never intended to share the land with its indigenous Palestinian people. What happened in North America in the 16th century and in South Africa and Australia in the 19th century is happening in twenty-first century Palestine. Israel is colonizing the whole of historic Palestine while confining the Palestinian people in closed-off areas, similar to the American Indian reservations or the Bantustans. The plan to annex the Jordan Valley and all West Bank Jewish settlements is an expression of this settler colonial project.

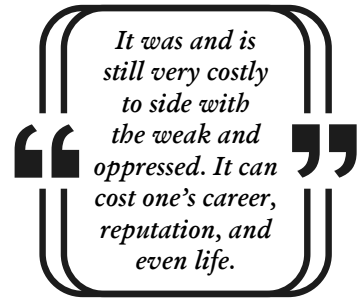
As in other colonial contexts, the Bible has been used to justify this colonial project. While no one today would dare to use scripture to justify the colonization of North America or Africa, Israel and its allies still do so to justify their own colonial project. Israel is looked upon as an exception, as the people of God who have the right to colonize the land in the name of God. In fact, when the settlement activities of Israel were condemned in the United Nations Security Council, the only response of the Israeli Ambassador Dannon was to raise the Bible. The “divine right” of Israel is utilized as a higher authority to trump the human rights of the Palestinians.

Unfortunately, the Zionist movement has been actively proselytizing Christian communities and Zionizing Christian theology to adapt certain aspects of a Zionist ideology into their thinking. It is a mistake to think that this is done only by “crazy” conservative Christian Zionist groups. This was and is done also

by liberal Christian Zionists, such as the Post-Holocaust Theologians and many “mainstream” pastors. It is therefore high time to call these theologians by name as colonizers. While they don’t colonize the land themselves, they still offer the ideological framework to justify it. The Kairos Document calls these theologians to repentance.

2. It is more comfortable for the church to side with those in power.

Often, we hear the argument that the church must side with Israel because of what happened to the Jews in Europe during the holocaust. We are made to think that the church has learned its lesson. I like to question this. I don’t see that the church has learned much. Yes, maybe it became sensitive to anti-Jewish traditions within the church, but it is still more comfortable for the church to side with those in power.



The Israel lobby is very strong and actively rewarding those who follow them while punishing those who follow their conscience. It was and is still very costly to side with the weak and oppressed. It can cost one’s career, reputation, and even life. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was part of the tiny confessing church who dared to challenge the powers of his time. He paid with his life. While Bonhoeffer is widely celebrated, almost as a Protestant saint, only very few today dare to walk in his footsteps and challenge the Israeli state and its lobbies embedded in church and society.

One tactic to silence prophetic voices is to call them anti-Semitic. While the word anti-Semitism was coined in the late nineteenth century to describe the demonization of and discrimination against the entire Jewish population, the Jewish lobby has been actively redefining the term to mean criticizing the state of Israel, thus discrediting any real resistance to Israel’s colonial project even if the resistance is clearly non-violent. The space for prophetic witness, non-violent resistance, and civic action is shrinking—and with it the right to free speech. It’s a Kairos moment to speak up.

3. Naming the Powers is a first step to dismantling them.

While Jews in Europe were considered different and inferior to Europeans, in 1944 U.S. President Roosevelt signed a GI bill declaring Jews (and Italians) to be white and thus have access to compensation, unlike African Americans who

were excluded. Ashkenazi Jews thus became part of the white race. In fact, if we examine the so-called Jewish Christian dialog in the last 50 years, we find it to be a dialog between white Anglo-Saxons and white Jews. No Ethiopian Jews or Ultra-Orthodox Jews were ever invited to these dialogs. White supremacy and Ashkenazi supremacy became two sides of the same coin. Palestinians on the other hand are not seen as white, but as Arabs, Muslims, and thus inferior. White supremacy on the one hand and Orientalism on the other are two factors that drive the cultural bias towards Israel.

Misuse of the Bible, existing power structures, white supremacy and racism are the factors that sustain the occupation and give Israel the impunity to continue with the colonization of Palestinian land and people. Naming these powers—calling things by their name—is a first step to dismantling them. The Kairos anniversary is an excellent occasion to do exactly this.

Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb is the founder and President of Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture in Bethlehem. He served as a Senior Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem from June 1987 till May 2017. And was the president of the Synod of the ELCJHL from 2011 till 2017. The most widely published Palestinian theologian to date, author of 18 books. His books and numerous articles have been translated into eleven languages. The 55-year-old multilingual contextual theologian received many prizes for his ‘distinguished service to the church and the society’; the prestigious Wittenberg Award from the Luther Center in DC (2003). The well-known German Peace Award of Aachen in 2007. And the German Media Prize in 2012. And the latest was the prestigious Tolerance Ring Award in Cologne-Germany, November, 2017. The work of Dr. Raheb has received wide media attention from major international media outlets and networks including CNN, ABC, CBS, 60 Minutes, BBC, ARD, ZDF, DW, BR, Premiere, Raiuno, Stern, The Economist, Newsweek, and Vanity Fair. Dr. Raheb holds a Doctorate in Theology from the Philipps University at Marburg, Germany. He is married to Najwa Khoury and has two daughters, Dana and Tala.

A Theology from “The Other Side of the Wall”

Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac

Visitors in Bethlehem are struck by the ugliness of the separation wall which surrounds most Palestinian (West Bank) cities today. It is a -25foot-high wall—comprised mostly of electronic fences and partially of concrete walls—which isolates Palestinians and restricts their movement. The situation in the Gaza Strip is even worst. This small territory of 365 square kilometers with a population of almost 2 million Palestinians—making it one of the most densely populated areas in the world—is the world’s biggest prison. Since the blockade in 2007, it is almost entirely isolated from the world. Israel controls the import of goods and food and prevents any exporting. Fuel shortages have led to power cuts of up to twenty hours per day, which affects all aspects of life. With respect to water, more than %95 of the water supply is undrinkable. Unemployment numbers have reached almost %45 and %80 of Gazans depend on some sort of aid.

Palestinians understand that the wall was built not for the purpose of security; it is merely a land grab. It exists to further separate and control Palestinians. If Israel were genuine in its claim for the necessity of the wall, Israel would have built it on the internationally recognized 1967 borders.

Palestinians understand that the wall was built not for the purpose of security; it is merely a land grab. It exists to further separate and control Palestinians. If Israel were genuine in its claim for the necessity of the wall, Israel would have built it on the internationally recognized 1967 borders. This is why the International Court of Justice issued an Advisory Opinion in 2004 finding that the wall’s construction violated international law, and that “Israel cannot rely on a right of self-defense or on a state of necessity in order to preclude the wrongfulness of the construction of the wall.”

Walls and separation are part of the language of colonial powers, which are used to separate and isolate the occupied under the pretext of security. Before they are physical realities, walls are an ideology. Building walls begins by drawing lines to divide and distinguish us from one another based on religion, denomination,

ideology, nationality and/or race. Then, separated from those who are different than us, we refuse to engage with the Other. Immediately, we begin to develop perceptions of the Other as dangerous, constructing a myth that we cannot coexist with those who are different than us. This leads to rejecting, dehumanizing and even demonizing the Other. Finally, we justify violence against those on the other side of the wall.

Walls communicate a lie: we cannot coexist with those who are different from us in religion, nationality or ethnicity. Built by the powerful, walls are constructed from a position of self-righteousness and a sense of superiority. They communicate that separation from the “evil, tyrant” Other is the only possibility for existence—all the time exploiting the weaker.

For most visitors to the “Holy Land” today, the wall shields them from Palestinians, keeping them at a distance and preventing any serious engagement with Palestinians and the reality on the ground. These visitors are not aware of us. They are often falsely warned that it is dangerous to visit on our side of the wall. Instead, they enjoy a “religious” experience by riding a boat in Galilee and visiting churches in Jerusalem. We are invisible, hidden behind the wall. If it were not for the fact that the Church of the Nativity is in Bethlehem, the vast majority of pilgrims visiting the Holy Land would not even be aware of our existence. Moreover, many of the pilgrims who do come to Bethlehem think that they are in Israel, unaware that Palestinian autonomy exists and that the people here call this land Palestine. It is really as if we do not exist.

Kairos theology is a challenge to step onto our side of the wall and to read the Bible in the shadow of walls and checkpoints.

Kairos theology goes beyond lamenting the reality of the walls and leads into the action of prophetically imagining a reality in our land where walls do not exist.

I believe that the physical wall that exists in Palestine today is a reflection of a wall that has long existed in the mind and positions of the Western Christian world. Palestinians have always been marginalized and pushed aside. The Christian world has always dealt with our land as if it were empty. A metaphorical wall has long existed in the mind, heart, and theology of the Western church, shielding the Western church from having to engage with us. Palestinians do not exist in this theology and narrative about the land—a narrative that chooses to see an

empty land and a 2000 years gap in history. Western Christians—and as a result many Global South Christians—believe in what I call the “myth of an empty land.” In theology books, conferences and formal statements, many Western Christians talk about the divine miracle that is the State of Israel. They talk about God’s faithfulness to the Jewish people. They celebrate the “return” of Jews to their “homeland.” While nothing is mentioned about our existence! To them, Palestine is a “land without a people”—not literally, but in terms of recognizing the equality of those who are worthy of consideration. If we are acknowledged, we are seen as a barrier, modern day “Canaanites” who are standing in the way of the enlightened chosen “people of God.” This is a typical colonial mentality. Most pilgrims come to this land having only learned one narrative about this land, They see only Israel. In this version of the story, there is no history, heritage or culture beyond biblical times. History stopped in 70 A.D, and resumed in 1948! To me, Kairos theology is a theology from “the other side of the wall.” It is our prophetic word against the wall and its ideology. Our mere existence, persistence and resistance over the generations—despite all efforts to ignore or delegitimize us—are our stand against such theology and ideology. Kairos theology is a challenge to the logic of “might is right.” It calls for serious Christians to engage with those on other side of the world, whether in Palestine or any other context where people are marginalized.

Kairos theology is a challenge to step onto our side of the wall and to read the Bible in the shadow of walls and checkpoints. Kairos theology goes beyond lamenting the reality of the walls and leads to the action of prophetically imagining a reality in our land where walls do not exist.

Our land is God’s land... 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.” (KP2.3.1)

Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac is a Palestinian Christian pastor, theologian, writer, speaker, blogger and, more importantly, a husband and a father. *The Other Side of the Wall* is the title of Munther’s forthcoming book to be published by Intervarsity Press in 2020. He now pastors Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem and is the Academic Dean of Bethlehem Bible College. He is also the director of the highly acclaimed and influential Christ at the Checkpoint conferences and is a board member of Kairos Palestine. Munther speaks locally and internationally on issues related to the theology of the land, Palestinian Christians, and Palestinian theology. He is the author of *From Land to Lands*,

from Eden to the Renewed Earth: A Christ-Centered Biblical Theology of the Promised Land”. Munther plays the guitar and the flute. He is also an avid sports fan, specially football (aka soccer) and basketball (NBA). Munther originally studied civil engineering in Birzeit. Realizing that numbers and construction sites are not his thing, he obtained a Master’s in Biblical Studies from Westminster Theological Seminary and a PhD from the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies. Munther is married to Rudaina, an architect. Together they have two boys, Karam (6) and Zaid (4).

Why Kairos Palestine?

Nora Carmi

Ten years ago, the Kairos Palestine document, a word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering, was launched on Human Rights' Day, 11 December 2009, at Dar an Nadwa, the International Bethlehem Center. At the time, the fate of this challenging initiative articulated by Palestinian Christians—yes, they do exist—was questionable. Who needed more dust-gathering literature to be shelved? What was so different about this proclamation compiled by fifteen local ecumenical theologians/writers coming from the cradle of Christianity? Would it have an impact in and on the region torn apart by injustice? Would it be able to contribute to a lasting, just peace in the struggle for equal basic rights for life? Why choose the Greek term Kairos, meaning qualitative time? Kairos is “the moment in which we see the work of God, the grace of God—even through the darkest moments lived by individuals.” This is A Moment of Truth, when we are called to respond and act. It is a way of life.

When Kairos Palestine was first written, it was published in Arabic to address the fears, needs and aspirations of the local Palestinians (Christians and Muslims alike). Today, this document is available in 22 languages. Having received the blessings of the thirteen church leaders of Jerusalem, it then became crucial to get the endorsement of parishioners, prominent political and civil society figures, women and youth, as well as representatives of international church councils, governments and different faith followers who recognized the Israeli military occupation of the land as a “sin against God and humanity,” and were willing to prophetically adhere to a sound theology of liberating the oppressed, as proclaimed in Luke 19-4:18:

The local campaign included clergy, women, members of the civil society, and even government officials who became visible advocates for a just cause, standing steadfast above denominational and confessional sectarianism.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Inspired by the Kairos South Africa document that contributed to the end of apartheid there, the Palestinians were hopeful that, in a situation of hopelessness,

this initiative, the Kairos Palestine movement, would move the hearts and consciences of people of different faiths and values, honest peace-builders, and all those who believe that each human being has a right to live with the dignity bestowed by the Creator. Hence the cry, “Are you able to help us get our freedom back?” (Kairos Palestine 6:1)

The challenge is to remain a movement that will lead not only to justice and liberation for Palestinians, but also to ensure global justice everywhere.

Though from the start, many eager peace-builders signed on enthusiastically to this effort including Muslim and Jewish theologians, in general churches were either positive or reluctant to officially take a stand, waiting for further theological discernment. Other groups openly criticized it, finding fault in the sound theology that based humanity on having a divine image and treating others with equality and respect. Still others believed that the message was too political or not political enough, all ignoring the fact that it was the cry of a people suffering for decades and feeling forgotten. On the other hand, South Africans praised the choice for bold non-violent resistance and the willingness to rectify all wrongs with love, even for the enemy.

Walking down memory lane in an honest evaluative process after ten years, I cannot but thank God for this gift of the Kairos movement. All throughout, the real challenge has been to discern how to balance between the dire spiritual and social needs of the locals in the region and the fast-evolving demands of support groups around the world. One element that has strengthened the bonds is the conviction that justice is not exclusive for one group, but that it is a basic requirement for all. Reaching out to younger generations through schools, summer camps, scout clubs, and including the document in seminaries and universities (both locally and internationally) was a good start. Helping train new young ambassadors to tell their stories and to be recognized followed. The local campaign included clergy, women, members of the civil society, and even government officials who became visible advocates for a just cause, standing steadfast above denominational and confessional sectarianism. With deep insight, sound organizational skills and further theological reflections, there developed a common local vision for action amidst heavy pressures imposed by world powers and oppressive systems intent on personal interests and lacking principles and values.

The challenge is to remain a movement that will lead not only to justice and liberation for Palestinians, but also to ensure global justice everywhere. Hence, Kairos for Global Justice has been formed and other international Kairos groups

are mushrooming around the world.

However, with all the efforts pooled together some goals still remain to be achieved. The occupation has not ended. Oppressive apartheid laws have increased. A world plan to end the Palestinian just cause is threatening our existence. Will a prophetic voice find new methods and means to respond to the Kairos message today? More than ever, a collective willingness to take risks and show a costly solidarity for the cause of justice, the preservation of humanity with dignity, and the beautiful creation of God is calling us, Kairos Palestine, to lead the way.

Nora Arsenian Carmi is a Palestinian activist from Armenian descent. She has worked for many years professionally and as a volunteer in community developments and empowerment through women organizations along with theological and charitable organizations to ensure legitimate national rights that are based on values and international laws that guarantee justice and peace for all, locally and internationally. Since her retirement from Kairos Palestine, Nora continues her volunteer work in the local community. She hasn't stopped writing and she continues international engagements to raise awareness to find practical ways to achieve a just peace. Among her international volunteer missions, Nora represents the State of Palestine in the World Day of Prayer Movement.

“We Cry...with a Cry of Hope”

Tarek Abuata

They say that if a tree fell in the depths of a forest and no one was there to hear it, would it make a sound? I ask, when a cry is bellowed from the depths of a soul and all heard but only a few listened, is it a legitimate cry?

When 300 Gazans are killed in cold blood in a March of Return to their indigenous homes, and meanwhile a churchman is talking to me about his reluctance to talk to the synagogue across the street because of his fears about their relationship, my heart cries with sadness. And when 3,000 have lost an arm, a leg, an eye, and parts of their stomachs and intestines, and a church woman is talking to me about her reluctance to talk to her pastor for fear of upsetting her church, my cries turn into anger.

My anger and sadness merge into the ultimate cry, the cry of Kairos.

My Palestinian sisters and brothers write in the Introduction to the Kairos document: “We...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.” (Kairos Introduction) I stand in awe of these words, but more so the conviction and love instilled in these inspirational words encompassing neighbor and enemy alike. This is Christ, and to worship Christ is to celebrate the divinity of Palestine by standing with these cries. Unfortunately, many in the moderate church have heard but not listened.

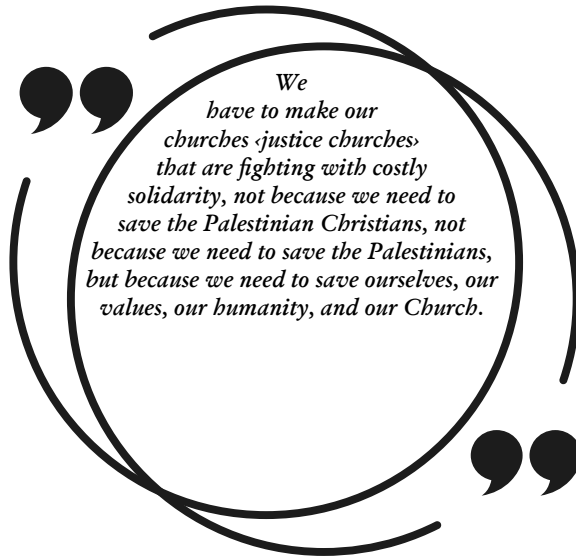
After 20 years of attending church, working with denominations across the U.S. and being invited to speak to 500 local congregations, I have concluded that the moderate church has become complicit in the sin of silence. I can no longer excuse any church’s sin of silence on Palestinian justice just as I wouldn’t have accepted the church’s sin of silence during the Holocaust or any other period of ethnic cleansing or genocide. The moderate church’s continuing silence on Palestine makes it complicit in erasing my people’s story and in aiding and abetting Israeli atrocities and crimes.

In writing this, I call upon the church to stop running away from being Christian, because being Christian is to stand with those oppressed in “costly solidarity.” As such, the church needs liberation as much as Palestine does, and Palestine provides the church with an opportunity to save itself, giving our religious leaders

yet another opportunity to liberate those oppressed, to liberate the church, and to liberate divinity itself. I write to remind Christians that hearing the truth doesn't set us free, but that knowing the truth sets us free, and that acting upon the truth sets our brothers and sisters free. I also remind every Christian that you do not need anyone's permission to do justice, not even your pastor's or priest's permission, for we have already been commissioned by Him who is most high and He has already spoken through Kairos. Let's follow Him!

We have to make our churches "justice churches" that are fighting with costly solidarity, not because we need to save the Palestinian Christians, not because we need to save the Palestinians, but because we need to save ourselves, our values, our humanity, and our Church.

A cry bellowed from the depths of a soul is not legitimized by the majority, but by the followers of Christ, be they many or a mere few.



Tarek Abuata is Executive Director of Friends of Sabeel North America (www.fosna.org). Growing up in Bethlehem, Palestine, Tarek moved with his family to Texas during the first Intifada when he was 12. After graduating from the University of Texas Law School, Tarek started his career working for the Negotiations Support Unit in Ramallah, researching legal and policy issues. Since, Tarek worked in Hebron for nine years as coordinator of the Christian Peacemaker Team in Hebron and served as the representative of the Rev. Bernard LaFayette (protégé of Dr. Martin Luther King) for five years, training Palestinian youth in grassroots organizing and activism.

Kairos and the Logic of Love

Rev. Dr. Yohanna Katanacho

Ten years have passed since we issued the Kairos document. It was and still is a moment of truth, a word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering. My hope, in this short essay, is to address the third component: love. Indeed, it is difficult to talk about love during a season of war. There is so much hate in the media, in our streets, and even in our worship centers. To hate your neighbor and to act selfishly is embedded in political ideologies. It is becoming part, as well, of influential religious ideologies. In short, we struggle with hate every day when we encounter checkpoints, violence, discriminatory laws, religious extremism, powerful empires and systemic oppression.

Yet we are called to love. Love is such a mysterious word in the context of hate. What does it mean? How can we pursue a politics of love and a civilization of love? In order to address the issue of love in a Christian Palestinian context, I shall address three areas of love: covenantal, Christological, and missional love.

First, covenantal love is the only acceptable kind of love in the Old Testament.

At the heart of the Old Testament lies the book of Deuteronomy. This book is about the covenant with God. The covenant is summarized by the following text: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deut 5-4 :6). Loving God is the most important element in the relationship of human beings with him. It is the reason for keeping the commandments. It is the motive for loving your people and your neighbor. It is the best response to knowing God and understanding God’s nature.

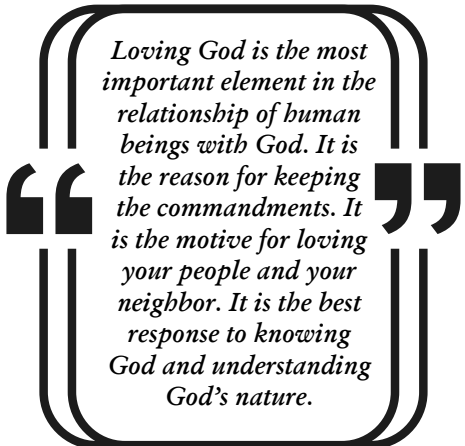
This kind of love is part of the story of an oppressed people. They were slaves in Egypt, struggling with oppressive powers and praying to God to liberate them. God took the initiative and confronted the powers of systemic evil. But divine love is interested in much more. God does not want people’s love for the sake of their political interest. Instead, they should have true awe and respect of God’s person within a covenantal relationship. Such a covenant cannot ignore the nature of God, God’s will and purposes for all of creation. God’s love is understood in the context of God’s holiness, righteousness and commitment to justice. Loving God empowers us to love God’s people. Thus, covenantal love is important in a country that is marked with diverse Christian denominations who disagree on many doctrinal issues. Palestinian Christians must embody covenantal love with

generous orthodoxy that seeks to embrace every Christian regardless of his or her denomination.

Second, it is imperative to address Christological love. The Old Testament covenants—with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and David, to say nothing of the New Covenant in Jeremiah—lead us progressively to Christ, in whom all the promises are fulfilled. So without Christological love, we cannot rightly understand covenantal love. The love of Christ for his enemies is one of the most striking revelations in the New Testament. Christ died not only to reconcile us to God but also to each other. He died on the cross insisting to be reconciled to his enemies. But this kind of love is not an excuse to abandon justice. Rather, it is an opportunity to pursue justice with the logic of love.

Both justice and love met on the cross. God’s love is a kind of love that bleeds on a cross. Interestingly, several Christian and Muslim Palestinians see themselves as crucified by their enemies. For them, Christ is perceived as a figure with whom the oppressed can naturally identify.

However, love perceives differently. If we adopt this controversial Kairos theology, then we are not only crucified by our enemies, but we are also crucified for the sake of our enemies. Put differently, we choose to suffer for the sake of the Kingdom of God and the best interest of our enemies. Such orthopathic love is stunning, yet it has the power to bring forth a new world. This kind of love can transform us and destroy personal, social and political hatred without abandoning justice.



Loving God is the most important element in the relationship of human beings with God. It is the reason for keeping the commandments. It is the motive for loving your people and your neighbor. It is the best response to knowing God and understanding God's nature.

Third, this leads me to missional love. Covenantal and Christological love must be missional. It is not selfish or ethnocentric. The mission of love is bringing forth justice and righteousness for all of our neighbors. Only then we can attain the peace that God desires and that fulfills the deepest needs of our lives. Missional love can be seen in the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Jesus crossed geographical, political, religious, cultural, historical and gender barriers in order to demonstrate the love of God.

Each of the aforementioned three loves is important for attaining a mature vision of love. Leaving out even one of them leads us to a distorted form of love, even to hate. We as Palestinian Christians are called to be agents of love in a world full of hate. This love must be rooted in a covenantal relationship with God, in union with the suffering Christ, and in a mission to bring forth a new world full of justice, mercy, equality and righteousness. It is pursuing the dream of love, the civilization of love, the communion that honors God. Such love is active. It engages God, society, the enemy and controversial political concerns. Regardless of the power of hate, love shall prevail.

Rev. Dr. Yohanna Katanacho is currently Full Professor of Biblical Studies and academic dean at Nazareth Evangelical College. He is a Palestinian Evangelical citizen of Israel who studied at Bethlehem University (B.Sc.), Wheaton College (M.A.) and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (M. Div.; Ph.D.). He has authored many books in English and Arabic, including *The Land of Christ: A Palestinian Cry*, 2013 and *Praying through the Psalms*, 2018.” Katanacho is an Old Testament editor for *Arabic Contemporary Commentary* and *Asia Bible Commentary*. He is one of the authors of the Palestinian Kairos Document.

WCC engagement and the birth of Kairos Palestine

Yusef Daher

During the Second Intifada when the Churches in Jerusalem felt helpless in ending the circle of violence in the Holy Land , They turned to the World Council of Churches calling them to act swiftly in 2002 when the Intifada was in its second year and the Nativity church was under siege. At that time The Heads of Churches asked for two things; one being a monitoring program, and the other was a joint office in Jerusalem.

WCC responded swiftly and in one year the monitoring program was set as an accompaniment program named “Ecumenical Accompaniment program in Palestine and Israel” where the logic of having International presence within violent situation can be effective in lowering the level of violence. So the program was set to accompany not only Palestinians in their daily life while workers go to their work and students to their schools but also to accompany Israeli and Palestinian pro Justice groups in their non-violent activities and actions towards ending occupation.

On the other hand a Physical Center in Jerusalem was established to serve the Churches in Jerusalem . The Idea of joining efforts on one Ecumenical platform became what is called today “Jerusalem Inter-Church Center - JIC” under the mandate of being a liaison office for the Heads of Churches in association with World Council of Churches and Middle East Council of Churches basing its services on information and advocacy in addition to supporting diakonia , interfaith ,and EAPPI administrative offices.

JIC also continue to encourage and facilitate high level visits by Churches to Palestine under the context of come and see call by Palestinian Christians as Christian witness and advocacy tool.

Under former General Secretary of the World Council of Churches , Dr. Rev Sam Kobia the idea of consolidating all Church advocacy efforts for Peace in Palestine and Israel was translated into forming and launching the “Palestine/ Israel Ecumenical Forum- PIEF” aiming at putting an end to the Israel Illegal occupation by using Theology , Economic means and Advocacy. The Forum was launched in Amman in 2007 under the very good intentions of preserving

a viable Palestinian Christian community in the Holy Land. The Forum first helped boost what was an existing WCC International Church Action for Peace in Palestine /Israel which is now known as World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel where all Churches observe a week as a start of a year for praying , educating and acting in advocacy towards Peace in the region.

One thing leading to the other in consistency, and under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Olav Tveit the former Co-moderator of PIEF and now the current WCC General Secretary a theological consultation took place in Bern in 2008 that led Palestinian Theologians to start ecumenically thinking together and writing together for their brothers and sisters locally and internationally. This is where JIC convened meetings of what was later called the Palestine Kairos Group. So from PIEF that was directed by Michel Nseir in Geneva the theological track to end occupation was well picked up locally by Palestinian theologians, men and women , clergy and laity where the Kairos Palestine document was launched in December 2009 and endorsed by the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem thus making three words of hope , faith and love pillars of a Palestinian Christian movement and way of life in resisting the sin of occupation.

In Busan , South Korea, the WCC 10th assembly a joint team was set on the same tracks to ending occupation thus lifting the central issues of Jerusalem as the key for peace . With local and International partners who have walked along together through this journey pledged : “Hope is still our sign , and faith is what unite us and with love we will together resist the evil in the occupation to free Israelis and Palestinian from the midst of this long suffering”.

The World Council of Churches continues to see Kairos Palestine as the voice of the voiceless and accompanies Palestinian Christians and Churches in Jerusalem on their pilgrimage towards justice and peace.

Internationals

Kairos, Empire and Freedom

Chris Ferguson

The Kairos Palestine document and Kairos Palestine as a movement are faith-driven, hope-filled, theologically-inspired expressions of struggle against systems and structures of domination. Born out of a specific historical context, Kairos is at the same time an expression of the global struggle for peoples' resistance to oppression.

As the decades since the Nakbah (Arabic for catastrophe) have unfolded, the intertwined relationship between the current hegemonic world order and the specific violence against and uprooting of the Palestinian people have become more visible—in no small part because Kairos Palestine (the document and the movement) has contributed in significant ways to the unmasking of the global project of domination. This project finds its current expression in (dis)order driven by both economic globalization and the death-dealing over-reach of so-called neo-liberal capitalism.

Kairos Palestine begins as a reading of the signs of the times in a specific context. By locating the suffering of Palestinians and the occupation of their land in a moment of truth-telling about the oppression experienced by a particular people in a particular place and giving it theological meaning, Kairos Palestine adds to the growing and irrepressible movement of resistance to the global system of domination.

From beginning to end, the Bible reflects the trajectory of captivity, resistance and liberation from Empire. From the destruction of the tower of Babel in Genesis to the fall of Babylon in the book of Revelation.

As part of this global faith response to the injustice of economic, ecological, gender, racial and social domination, voices in the ecumenical community have spoken of resistance to Empire. In 2004, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches spoke of Empire as our defining context and declared the resistance to injustice as a faith imperative.

In deepening the faith basis of resistance to and struggle against Empire, an international study group offered this definition:

We speak of empire, because we discern a coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power in our world today. This is constituted by a reality and a spirit of lordless domination, created by humankind. An all-encompassing global reality serving, protecting and defending the interests of powerful corporations, nations, elites and privileged people, while exploiting creation, imperiously excludes, enslaves, and even sacrifices humanity. It is a pervasive spirit of destructive self-interest, even greed—the worship of money, goods and possessions; the gospel of consumerism, proclaimed through powerful propaganda and religiously justified, believed and followed. It is the colonization of consciousness, values and notions of human life by the imperial logic; a spirit lacking compassionate justice and showing contemptuous disregard for the gifts of creation and the household of life.

The reality of this current world order is built on the long history of colonialism and imperialism of which Palestine and Palestinians have been millennial victims. Our biblical, theological framing sees God's liberating action as the overcoming of all forms of domination and all supremacies and the forging of life-affirming communities of radical equality and justice. From beginning to end, the Bible reflects the trajectory of captivity, resistance and liberation from Empire. From the destruction of the tower of Babel in Genesis to the fall of Babylon in the book of Revelation: in biblical terms, Empire is Babylon.

As is clear in the above definition, Empire is more than material domination. It is repressive ideology and the colonization of minds and desires. It requires the justification and support of religion and theology. It requires alliances to false gods and idols to maintain a sinful, evil system that afflicts the very many for the interests of the very few.

Walter Wink outlined three moments in the struggle against the domination system: Naming the Powers, Unmasking the Powers, and Engaging the Powers. In this past decade, Kairos Palestine has done all three, moving from the concrete reality in Israel/Palestine to the universal reality of global domination that both shapes and is shaped by the Nakbah and occupation.

The force and clarity with which the Kairos document and movement have named the reality of Palestinian suffering and exposed the lies told about the origin and purpose of Palestinian oppression explains the ferocious and aggressive efforts to suppress, repress and discredit the authors, the movement and its allies.

Truth-telling is an essential act in the struggle against Empire. Empire is maintained by lies and by the oppression of truth itself. Oppression flourishes where truth does not matter. And for this, Kairos Palestine has become a dangerous threat for all those complicit with Empire. All of us—especially those of us in the church—are caught in the culture of Empire. When Kairos Palestine was first published it was difficult for churches to call occupation by its name or even to call the wall a wall. And so, Kairos Palestine had to be discredited and denounced!

Even a greater threat has been the unmasking of the use of the Bible and theology to justify occupation and oppression and to deny freedom and dignity. Theological resistance to empire is a significant part of the struggle for freedom: denying empire its pretention that it is an expression of divine will, that God desires the world to be as it is. The growing emergence of Palestinian Christian theology—which has reached an important public visibility along with its authentic spirituality of transformative love based on faith in the God of life—is fatal to Empire. Again, Kairos Palestine was dangerous and needed to be ignored, side-lined or repressed. Churches were—and too often are—timid or afraid to embrace the spiritual and theological undoing of the system of colonial and imperial domination.

In its struggle against Empire, however, Kairos Palestine has stopped neither the threatening act of naming nor the dangerous business of unmasking. It has fully engaged the forces of Empire by calling for a resistance with “love as its logic” in the form of non-violent actions such as BDS. Kairos Palestine not only joined with civil society in this action but also gave the BDS movement a theological and spiritual rootedness. Yes, of course, this became the bridge too far for many churches and many in the ecumenical movement.

Kairos Palestine embodies the resistance against Empire in the three moves of dignity—naming, unmasking and engaging—in the hopeful and steadfast struggle for freedom. Simply put in the words of John’s Gospel: “So that all may have life and have it abundantly (10:10).”

“Truth-telling is an essential act in the struggle against Empire. Empire is maintained by lies and by the oppression of truth itself. Oppression flourishes where truth does not matter. And for this, Kairos Palestine has become a dangerous threat for all those complicit with Empire.”

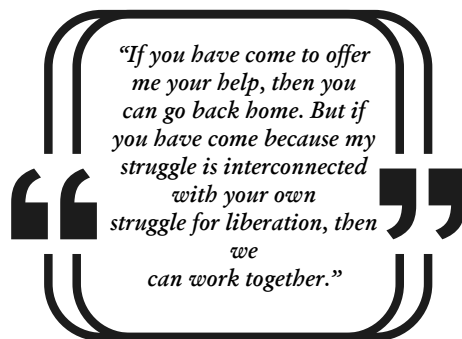
Chris Ferguson is General Secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. He is an ordained pastor in the United Church of Canada and has also served as the international ecumenical advisor for the Programme for Ecumenical Accompaniment in Colombia (2014-2011), the World Council of Churches representative to the United Nations (2010-2006), the World Council of Churches representative to Jerusalem (2006-2004) and the executive minister of the United Church of Canada's Justice, Global and Ecumenical Relations Unit and ecumenical officer (2004-2002).

Interconnected Struggle

Eilert L. Rostrup

From the days of the anti-Apartheid struggle, I remember these words: “If you have come to offer me your help, then you can go back home. But if you have come because my struggle is interconnected with your own struggle for liberation, then we can work together”.

The Palestinian Kairos Document, entitled “A Moment of Truth: A Word of faith, hope and love from the heart of the Palestinian suffering”, stands in a long tradition of documents and prophetic callings that bring forth a message with very specific characteristics:



- describing a context of systematic and systemic evil, built on ideological and conceptual exclusiveness and privilege of one group of people or nations over other;
- a testimony of this suffering and injustice and evil as a reality in fundamental opposition to the will of God for human co-living and our mandate to work for a world of justice;
- a call to the universal Christian community for repentance from cowardice, weakness, fear, and sometimes alignment with and justification of evil;
- a call for actively choosing the new path of justice, of costly solidarity, of confronting evil with practical and tangible actions of love and justice and peace;
- a call to people of all faiths and of all life-stands and of all nations and races and gender and ages to choose life and justice and mutuality and equality and liberation as the only option for a common future.

Many such documents form the inspirational background for Kairos Palestine. Among them we find: Challenge to the Church (South Africa 1985 and revised edition 1986); Evangelical Witness in South Africa (1986); A Relevant Pentecostal Witness (South Africa 1988); Violence: The New Kairos (South Africa 1990); A Kairos from Kenya (1991); A Call for Prophetic Action! The Zimbabwean Kairos Document (1998); Kairos Centromericanano (1988); The Road to Damascus:

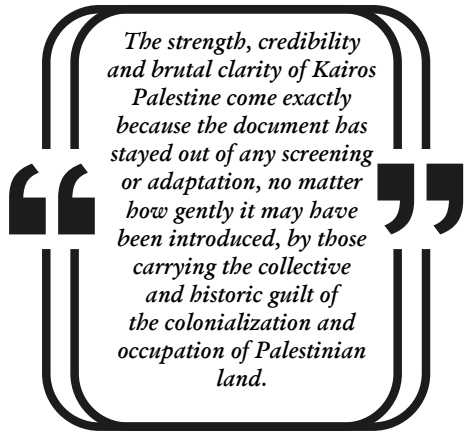
Kairos and Conversion (1989); and Kairos India (2000). One should also mention two Kairos documents from the Global North—On the Way: From Kairos to Jubilee (USA, early 1990's) and European Kairos Document (1998). As a historical curiosity, it could be mentioned that the very significant document of the Church of Norway in 1942, The Foundation of the Church, A confession and a Statement, is a comparable document that defined a church position and agenda in a specific context and time, as a confession of freedom and justice and faith in confrontation with the Nazi occupation, oppression and evil.

Most of these modern documents were born and grew out of a Global South reality, where the church is confronted with a choice of only two alternatives. One is to seek the comfort and privileges of aligning with might and power. The other is shouldering and uniting with the suffering and oppressed in a clear confession of the Christ who makes the preferential option for the poor, the very least, the most marginalized, the beaten and imprisoned, the people who hunger and long for liberation and justice.

From the very start, it was clear that the Palestinian Kairos document was a %100 Palestinian creation. The process and discussions between involved individuals had been going on for a couple of years. Some internationals were both institutionally and financially connected, but the actual process of bringing the analysis and visions of a number of individual Palestinian Christians together in shaping the document, with all that it demanded of prayer, discussions, listening, prioritising and much more, was fully a Palestinian process.

The writing of the Palestinian document could also be described as having some input from the Global South, since at least at one particular moment the Palestinian group allowed some comrades from South Africa to enter into a dialogue with them. In this way, the document was connected to the same historical roots as the previous Kairos-documents.

Representing an informal “post-Kairos” network in South Africa, a group of five people visited and interacted with the Kairos writers in Palestine. Two of the five contributed with a Jewish and a Muslim call for resistance, liberation and



The strength, credibility and brutal clarity of Kairos Palestine come exactly because the document has stayed out of any screening or adaptation, no matter how gently it may have been introduced, by those carrying the collective and historic guilt of the colonialization and occupation of Palestinian land.

struggle. And when the Palestinians opened their strictly Palestinian process for this international contribution, they firmly profiled its Global South rootedness by exclusively giving Global South representatives access to discussions on the process and the text, and excluding those of us present who represented the Global North. The voice of the oppressed—voices “..from the heart of suffering”—would not be credible if it were intertwined with perspectives and unclear influences by any of those who must be seen to represent the true reason for the suffering and the powers that sustain and extend the oppression, the Global North. The strength, credibility and brutal clarity of Kairos Palestine come exactly because the document has stayed out of any screening or adaptation, no matter how gently it may have been introduced, by those carrying the collective and historic guilt of the colonialization and occupation of Palestinian land.

The Global North offers a lot of presence, compassionate words, and debates on theological and political implications. But in the end, the Global North is a lukewarm accompanier, sometimes even harmonizing and contributing to normalize the continued colonialization of the land and lives of a people.

Many “people of good will” have honestly tried to find ways of supporting and responding to the Kairos call, including churches and individuals of the Global North who sincerely have gone through their own personal, political and religious transformation when they have met the prophetic voice of the document. Still, the years after the launch have also shown how much resistance there has been in the Global North against the core messages, recommendations and strategies of the Kairos document. It has been a journey of much sadness and frustration realizing how

the Kairos writers and Palestinian Christians at large, who own the voice in the document, have had to endure theological and political criticism, accusations of terrorism support and anti-Semitism, and charges of instigating conflict through their BDS support, and much more.

While there are many expressions of compassionate and emotional solidarity to with the suffering and the pain, there still seems to be remarkably less willingness to join the document in its concrete actions against power, ideology and systems that sustain evil. So many churches and high-ranking entities and individuals have expressed, with much emotional and warmly felt care for Palestinians and all suffering people, that they “have heard the cry of the Palestinian people.” But rather few have endorsed, supported and let their agenda for solidarity be guided and determined by the priorities and suggested actions from the suffering Christian Palestinians. On saying a clear yes to BDS. On supporting actively

the fair demand for nationhood and the recognition of the Palestinians state. On firmly rejecting and condemning theologies that justify oppression and occupation. On organizing true Christian Pilgrimages to the Holy Land—the plea to “come and see”—rather than making their visits with contextual ignorance and contributing to the monopolised Israeli tourism industry. There are many compassionate prayers and tears on behalf of the few remaining Christians in the land, but prayers are detached from reality when foreign pilgrims don’t support Palestinian livelihoods but stick instead to Israeli hotels and tour operators.

Fundamentally, the Global North should have a minimum of historic and moral integrity to see that those who committed the crimes against the Jewish people though centuries and culminating with the horrors of the holocaust should also be the ones held accountable to pay the price for restoring dignity and safety for the holocaust victims. Instead, this has been loaded on the shoulders of the people of Palestine. The Kairos document has evoked so much sympathy, understanding, friendly visits from the Global North, but so little actions for actual change. The Global North offers a lot of presence, compassionate words, and debates on theological and political implications. But in the end, the Global North is a lukewarm accompanier, sometimes even harmonizing and contributing to normalize the continued colonialization of the land and lives of a people. Perhaps it is time now for Kairos Palestine to make a radical reorientation and a much clearer strategic priority. The survival, growth and further development of Kairos theology—the liberation agenda, the shift to a pro faith-hope-love paradigm—does not depend on acceptance from where the dominating powers are located. The growth and effectiveness of the Kairos movement depends much more on building broad, people-based and collective forces in the Global South, from where people, in churches and far beyond any church institutions, can identify fully with the Palestinian reality because they have similar daily struggles against domination, oppression, dehumanisation, theft of land, resources and livelihoods.

“...if you have come because my struggle is interconnected with your own struggle for liberation, then we can work together.”

Eilert L. Rostrup is a theologian and ordained pastor in the Lutheran Church of Norway. He has served as a military chaplain, parish pastor, program director and the Associate National General Secretary of the Norwegian YWCA-YMCA, Director of YWCA-YMCA Global and Director of Karibu Foundation. Eilert has visited Palestine frequently since 1991. Born 1957, he is married to Ann Midttun and has three children.

Reflection on 10 Years KAIROS Palestine

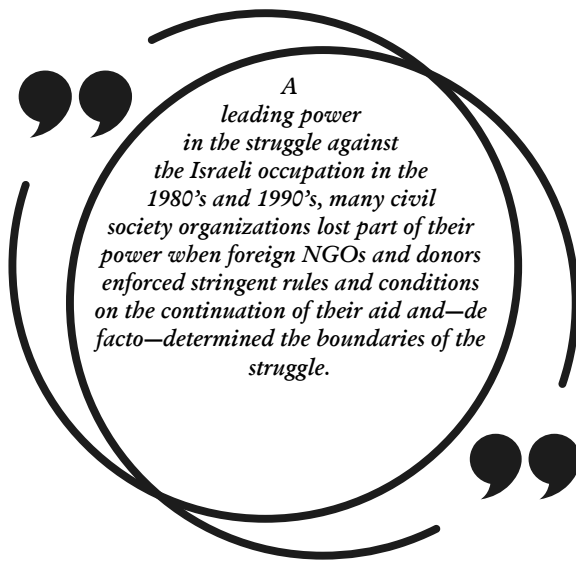
Harry Derksen

I started to work on the Middle East desk of the Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation in the early 1990's focusing on Israel and Palestine. I had previously worked on South Africa, witnessing the anti-Apartheid struggle in the ANC refugee camps and in South Africa itself. The doctrine of the Apartheid system was strongly rooted in the apartheid theology of the South African churches, in particular the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerke (NGK). The Kairos document issued in 1985 by (mainly) Black theologians in South Africa not only challenged the South African churches but also their sister churches in Europe and the USA. They were forced to review their standpoint and it led to the end of the Apartheid system.

After the ending of Apartheid in 1994 in South Africa, the world wanted to believe that finally peace in the Middle East was also possible. Looking at the reality on the ground in Israel and Palestine, I felt it difficult to share this optimism. Because while the people in the West were talking about peace, Israel was capturing Palestinian territory, piece by piece.

At the start of the Second Intifada in 2000, some common sense returned amongst politicians in Europe. Unfortunately, this was not accompanied by any meaningful change in the Middle East policies of European countries and political parties. As they lack the courage to take any meaningful action, they continue their

hollow phrases about the need for both parties—Israel and Palestine—to reach a two-state-solution in a peaceful way.



A leading power in the struggle against the Israeli occupation in the 1980's and 1990's, many civil society organizations lost part of their power when foreign NGOs and donors enforced stringent rules and conditions on the continuation of their aid and—de facto—determined the boundaries of the struggle.

In 2007, I travelled with my good friend Rifat Kassis to Pakistan. As we did during all our encounters, we discussed what civil society and the churches could offer as an alternative to the powerless politicians. Palestinian civil society organizations had their own problems. A leading power in the struggle against the Israeli

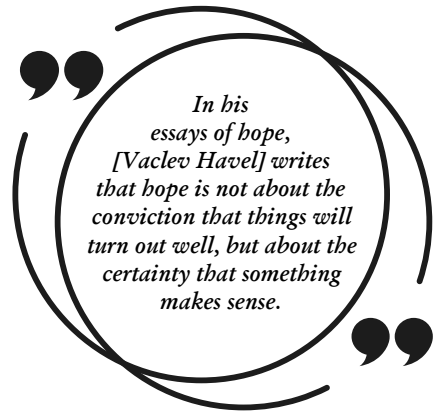
occupation in the 1980's and 1990's, many civil society organizations lost part of their power when foreign NGOs and donors enforced stringent rules and conditions on the continuation of their aid and—de facto—determined the boundaries of the struggle.

It was during that travel in 2007 in Pakistan that Rifat and I first discussed the idea of a Kairos Palestine: a powerful theological document that could harmonize the churches in their struggle against the occupation; a document that could be a moral and ethical compass for churches worldwide in their rejection of occupation and brutal violations of human rights.

In the following two years, the idea took shape and was being discussed amongst church leaders and theologians in Palestine, up to the moment in December 2009 when it was officially presented in Bethlehem. An important document was born which stirred discussions in churches worldwide, opening the eyes of people to the injustices taking place in Palestine.

A few years ago, I had an in-depth and emotional conversation with a Palestinian activist who felt disappointed that so little was realized after so many years of struggle and sacrifice. When she was a student, she explained, she was full of ideas to change the world. Now many years later, she felt as if the world had changed her, leaving her behind with disillusion and less hope for a better future. The biggest challenge is therefore to keep hope alive. In these days when Israel and its supporters seem more powerful than ever, hope for change seems irrational. Who believes that one day the Israeli occupation of Palestine will stop, Israelis and Palestinians will consider each other as equals and human beings formed in the image of God, and Palestinians will live in dignity and peace in their own country?

During the repressive years in the 1980's of Soviet-controlled Czechoslovakia, there was a dissident and writer by the name of Václav Havel. In his essays of hope, he writes that hope is not about the conviction that things will turn out well, but about the certainty that something makes sense. It is this hope, he argues, that gives us strength to live to continue to try new things, even in conditions that seem hopeless. In his words: "We continue our struggle, defeat after defeat,



until after the last defeat victory is ours.” To his own bewilderment, he became the first President of democratic Czech Republic.

It is this hope that Kairos Palestine should keep alive and this hope that should be passed on to future generations. It gives us all the courage to continue our struggle.

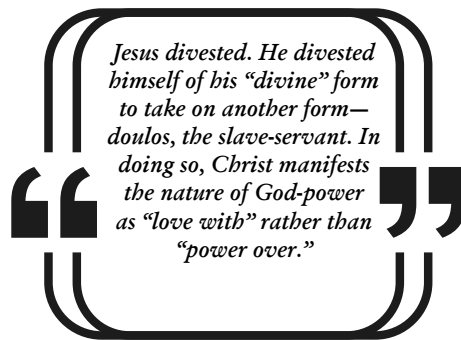
Harry Derksen, a citizen of The Netherlands has a long experience in development cooperation. He worked for the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and for development organizations SNV en ICCO. In 2012, he co-initiated ICCO investments, a fund for southern enterprises. In 2013, he co-initiated the New World Campus, a campus for sustainable development in The Hague. Harry is mentor in several programs in a.o. Startupbootcamp High Tech XL at the High Tech Campus in Eindhoven.

Kairos Palestine and Love

Katherine Cunningham

If there be any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, and sharing in the Spirit... Philippians 2:1 (NRSV)

The Letter to the Philippians offers the Church a vision of a community grounded in divine love and the sharing of the Spirit of Christ. Encouragement, consolation and the sharing of Christ-like love that overflows into seeking justice are the marks of a people who are Christ-filled. This epistle encourages the Church to be of this “same mind” of Christ who, in Paul’s words, sets aside the divine form to be in full solidarity with humanity, in Jesus’ own time and place. In the sharing of the Spirit, that Christ-solidarity pours out in our own contexts.



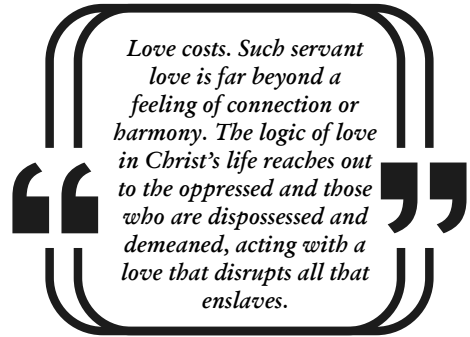
Jesus divested. He divested himself of his “divine” form to take on another form—doulos, the slave-servant. In doing so, Christ manifests the nature of God-power as “love with” rather than “power over.”

Jesus divested. He divested himself of his “divine” form to take on another form—doulos, the slave-servant. In doing so, Christ manifests the nature of God-power as “love with” rather than “power over.” He chose not to exploit the infinite power of God-form, but rather to locate that power in transforming partnerships of love. Christ emptied himself and identified with humanity, humbly and obediently showing us that God-love is inextricably linked to being willing to follow the path of active-loving and truth-telling, to the point of death. He died with the condemnation of a political criminal in an occupied region, the death of the outcast, of the one who refused to compromise truth for sake of expediency. In his death, Jesus calls forth love to be the partner of seeking justice and truth, even as he was the victim of violence and injustice.

Palestinians know that the deep faith traditions of their land found in the Bible and the Qur’an share this linkage of love and justice, grounded in the sharing of the Spirit of the Holy One. “This is God’s command: love and justice (Qur’an 16:90).” And “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another (John 13:34).” Love in active servanthood—modeled on Jesus’ servanthood—is justice. Love and justice cannot be separated. In his book on the nature of radical love, Islamic scholar Omid Safi writes of this Qur’anic linking of love and justice

in Islam (Radical Love, Introduction, xxxvi): “Love and justice are seen as intrinsically connected....To be a mystic in the path of radical love necessitates tenderness in our intimate dealings, and fierce commitment to social justice in the community we live in, both local and global.”

Love costs. Such servant love is far beyond a feeling of connection or harmony. The logic of love in Christ’s life reaches out to the oppressed and those who are dispossessed and demeaned, acting with a love that disrupts all that enslaves. Such love leads to justice, freedom and wholeness. It liberates ALL to the possibility of living into Jesus’ vision of redemptive transformation with God’s salvific love at its core. The Palestinian Church, both in Palestine and in the Diaspora, steadfastly remains a faithful witness in the midst of Israeli military occupation and systematic oppression. It is a church that locates itself in the servanthood of Christ:



Love costs. Such servant love is far beyond a feeling of connection or harmony. The logic of love in Christ’s life reaches out to the oppressed and those who are dispossessed and demeaned, acting with a love that disrupts all that enslaves.

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. (Kairos Palestine 3.4.2)

The Kairos Palestine document is a voice and a call to the world—and an invitation to partnership with Palestinian Christians—to see the truth of the decades of suffering of Palestinians and the continuing Nakba (Arabic, meaning catastrophe) of their existence under settler colonialism and ethnic erasure. This is a theology of servanthood: love seeking a redemption that generates new life.

The movement arising out of the Kairos Palestine document has spread widely, linking advocacy and actions in a web of theological reflection, institutional solidarity in affirmations and resolutions and, most importantly, a network of groups, secular and faith-based, which attempts to give hands and feet to Palestinian solidarity, calling for justice in halls of governments, in the spheres of trade, and in local, national and inter-religious work groups and meetings. It has sparked solidarity among many who know similar oppression and marginalization. To use a phrase from a North American context, Kairos Palestine has been part of

becoming “woke” to systemic oppression and racism in the global communities of the earth.

Over the last ten years of the Kairos Palestine movement, the passionate call to global Christians everywhere becomes even more urgent in each passing year: Are you able to help us get our freedom back, for this is the only way you can help two peoples attain justice, peace, security and love? (Kairos Palestine 6.1) In their open letter from the National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine (NCCOP) addressed to the World Council of Churches in 2017, Palestinian Christians demand of the wider church an even more engaged love in effective and committed solidarity based on Kairos Palestine’s continuing prophetic word to the global church. Using the words of Emeritus Latin Patriarch Sabbah, Palestinians have reached an “impossible moment.” That letter outlines nine different areas of loving, just, non-violent means of actions which display the logic of Christ’s servant love, through a willingness to sacrifice comfort, privilege and even piety for the sake of standing with those who suffer—to the point of condemnation, recrimination, rejection and loss of financial or institutional support. This call is one that reaches beyond institutional and political excuses or shallow diplomacy within ecclesiastical organizations.

Palestinian Christians continue their urgent cry to the global church to be faithful in love and justice. We in solidarity are asked to humble ourselves in obedience to the God revealed in the crucified and risen Christ, and to be fearless in seeking justice, fostering hope and laying hold of the power of love that resists every kind of evil. When we locate that in solidarity with Palestinians, we will find ourselves as a church having to address injustice everywhere—through the logic of love.


Katherine Cunningham has been a Palestine solidarity activist and educator within international and domestic faith-based and civil society organizations for over a decade. Currently, Katherine is the co-moderator of the Campaigns Working Group within the Global Kairos for Justice movement and serves on its Continuation Committee. She is a minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and served as the moderator of the Israel Palestine Mission Network of the PCUSA (IPMN) and on the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum of the World Council of Churches. In her solidarity work, she has been active in supporting faith-based organizations seeking justice and human rights for Palestinians, especially focusing on the call to the Christian community in the Kairos Palestine document. Katherine cherishes being a partner within the IPMN in creating, interpreting and advocating for a wide range of Palestinian solidarity resolutions which have been adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church

(U.S.A.) as that denomination has shaped its social justice stances related to Palestine and Israel. These resolutions have been catalysts for faith-based actions in other denominations. Katherine is deeply committed to fostering a strong ecumenical and inter-religious network for Palestinian solidarity actions. She is the author of the study guide for the most recent publication of IPMN entitled, “Why Palestine Matters”.

A Message from East Asia

Kim Yong-Bock

The Kairos movement in Palestine has broken fresh ground for a Global Kairos movement, providing a new, creative convergence of the Kairos movements around the world. It has challenged the ecumenical movements on local, national, continental and global levels. It has called all peoples to challenge the newly forging global regime of the powers—political, military, economic, cultural and even religious.



Kairos Palestine has called all peoples to challenge the newly forging global regime of the powers—political, military, economic, cultural and even religious.

Kairos Palestine has built on the South African Kairos Movement of the 1980's, creating a global convergence, the new platform of Global Kairos. We in the South Korean ecumenical movement acknowledge the creative challenge of Kairos Palestine, recognizing in its work our own national faith and confessional movements such as the Theological Declaration of Korean Christians (1973) against the Cold War military dictatorship and the Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Reunification and Peace (1988). This association reminded the Korean ecumenical movement of our resistance and struggle against the Japanese colonial regime (1945-1905), as in the March First Independence Movement (1919) which had been forged as a spiritual convergence of faiths and philosophies for justice and peace in the self-determination of the Korean people. In this historical sense, Kairos Palestine has triggered a fresh model of resistance that is linking West Asia and East Asia. For us in Korea and East Asia, this is the meaning of Global Kairos.

The people in Palestine have experienced the effects of the global hegemonic system that emerged after World War II. This world-wide regime—led by the super-power of the U.S.—is rooted in the Western colonial project. In our East Asian context, the people of the Korean peninsula have been experiencing a similar course of domination expressed in a globalized economy and a military system built on the symbiotic and far-reaching relationship between the industries of manufacturing and technology.

The nature of this newly forming synthesis of global power is yet to be fully analyzed and understood. Institutions of communication, education and media are integrated into a military system designed for cultural warfare. It's

an omni-cidal military regime, the economic orientation of which includes the most advanced trans-human technocracy: weapons of mass destruction (such as nuclear weapons) and non-human AI weapons systems closely tied to the military industrial complex of U.S. power. The technocratic system of scientific R&D has drawn academic institutions into this trans-national military regime.

The triumphalism of Western cultural values has been undermining the cultural heritages of many peoples and reshaping the religious-political spirituality of Christian faith. For example, Zionism and the like are mobilized to sanctify zoecide, the total destruction of all living beings. This is the stark, contemporary challenge to the global ecumenical movement.

The Korean ecumenical movement—like the Palestinian ecumenical movement—is keenly aware that Jesus and his followers led the original Kairos movement.

The story of the people in Palestine is a parable calling the Korean people to discern the present world regime. Kairos Palestine is an invitation for the Korean ecumenical movement to seek a creative convergence towards a Global Kairos. The Korean ecumenical movement—like the Palestinian ecumenical movement—is keenly aware that Jesus and his followers led the original Kairos movement. This is the truth, the ultimate ground upon which to draw together persons of faith, for the future of our peoples as well as those of faith throughout the world. We believe that Global Kairos, birthed by Kairos Palestine, is a fresh challenge to the world's ecumenical movements, calling them to discern signs of the times, to resist the global regime of world power, and to share in the work of bringing the many hope-filled visions of the future together in transformative ways. The Tenth Anniversary of the Kairos Palestine movement is an invitation to celebrate a 21st Century Jubilee in advance. It's an invitation to the world's entire ecumenical constituency and all people everywhere to radically engage in the pilgrimage that will lead to the Fiesta Convivencia, a celebration of the Blissful Banquet for all living beings around the globe—what in Korea is understood as SangSaeng.

Kim Yong-Bock, Ph. D., is President of Hanil University and Theological Seminary in Chonbuk, Korea. He received his Masters of Divinity and Ph.D. degrees from Princeton University. He has been a Teaching Fellow at Princeton Theological Seminary, an international consultant to the Commission on Ecumenical Missions and Relations, National Board of Missions, of the United Presbyterian Church (USA), and is founder and Director of the Christian Center for Asian Studies, and Director of the Doctor of Ministries Studies, a joint program with San Francisco Theological Seminary.

Kairos and Sumud

Ranjan Solomon

Two major events of catastrophic proportions left Palestinians cruelly battered in the history of the last seven decades. The creation of Israel on Palestinian lands in 1948 is known in Arabic as Nakba (meaning catastrophe). Nakba is entrenched in the Palestinian psyche since the colossal destruction that the terrorist Zionist movement inflicted on Palestinian lands after the unjust partition of Palestine by the United Nations. Armed and militarily over-prepared Zionist forces attacked major Palestinian cities and destroyed some 530 villages. Approximately 13,000 Palestinians were killed in 1948, with more than 750,000 expelled from their homes to become refugees. This turned out to be the height of the Zionist movement's ethnic cleansing of Palestine. Today, the refugees and their descendants number more than seven million. A large number of them still languish and undergo the seclusion and despair of life in refugee camps in neighbouring Arab countries, waiting to return to their homeland.

To rub salt into the wounds, as it were, an analogous event occurred in 1967, known as Naksa (Arabic for setback). Naksa also had a detrimental effect in at least two ways. First, Palestinians lost new parts of their lands—the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. Second, parts of other Arab countries came under direct Israeli occupation, such as Sinai and the Golan Heights.

Both the Nakba and Naksa left an ineradicable impression in the hearts and minds of Palestinians. Their sense of dispossession is only matched by the hunger and thirst for justice and dignity. After all, in their view, the act of war under which both the events happened were not ones that they instigated. It was wrought on them for the very purpose—undeclared and unwritten—of snatching away land for the colonialist powers that came to rule the lands on which Palestinians had lived for many millennium.

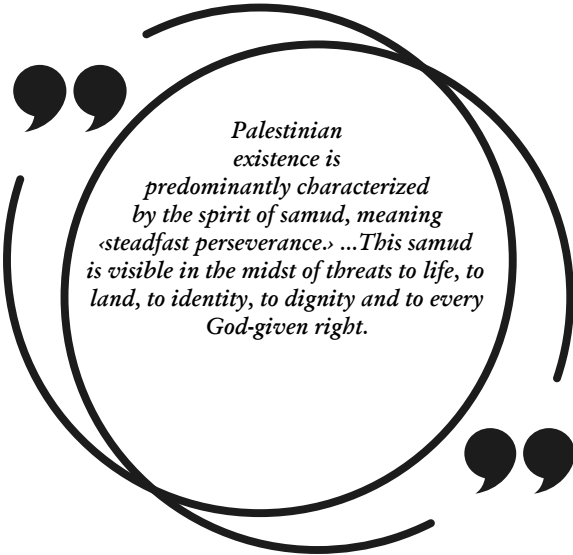
Beginning in 1967, Israel has acted with ruthlessness in acquiring more power over the Palestinians. A series of practices and policies have allowed Israel to exercise and enlarge control over populations. Intensity of cruelty grew and the occupation got to be characterized by acute violations of human rights as evidenced in needless punitive actions—such as totally unreasoned curfews, house demolitions, expulsions, imprisonments, raids of villages and agricultural lands, creation of roadblocks, building of settlements on land appropriated from Palestinian areas, construction of an apartheid arrangement through roads

for ‘Israel-only’ use—all of which became open racial practices reminiscent of apartheid South Africa.

Palestinians remain true to their essential temperament. When the repression crossed tolerable limits, Palestinian areas exploded in resistance in the form of Intifada (Arabic for uprising; literally shaking off) at the end of 1987. With sticks and stones, young people fought a mighty army for nearly five years refusing to budge even when the loss of lives crossed thousands and began to steeply mount. In the first year alone, 300 Palestinians were killed, 20,000 were injured and some 5,500 were detained by Israel. Tens of thousands of children required medical treatment for their beating injuries in the first two years of the Intifada, one third of whom were under the age of ten.

As Palestinian leaders gathered and reviewed the escalating situation, protests and clashes broke out within the refugee camps, spreading rapidly across the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Palestinians took control of neighbourhoods, barricading roads to prevent Israeli army vehicles from entering. Shopkeepers closed their businesses and workers boycotted workplaces in Israel.

The Israeli army grew frantic and clueless and indulged in desperate excesses often resorting to firing rubber bullets, live ammunition and tear gas canisters into the crowds. But the protests showed no signs of dispersing. Israel chose mass arrests to try to deter people, closing universities and schools, and imposing curfews to stifle the resistance. A tax-boycott began, which had the effect of a civil disobedience movement in the making.



*Palestinian
existence is
predominantly characterized
by the spirit of samud, meaning
<steadfast perseverance.> ...This samud
is visible in the midst of threats to life, to
land, to identity, to dignity and to every
God-given right.*

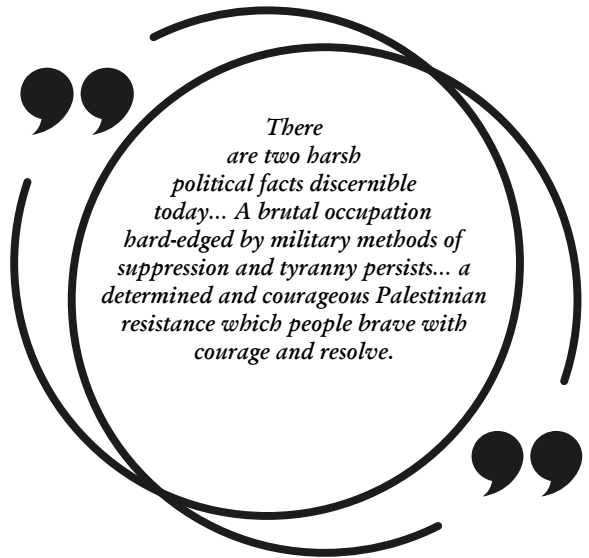
Through all these tactics, Palestinians had drawn keen global attention to the crisis. The uprising lasted from December 1987 until the Madrid Conference in 1991. It came to a halt only with the signing of the Oslo Accords. In the eight years that followed, however, Palestinians saw hopes receding with each passing day. Israel had not changed its policies and practices despite the Oslo promise of peace and a just settlement. This led to popular discontent because the expectations of Oslo—greater

political freedom and economic gains—were belied. Israel and the PLO, both, conceived the Second Intifada as a way to strengthen their hand at the bargaining table.

There are two harsh political facts discernible today.

A brutal occupation hard-edged by military methods of suppression and tyranny persists. The Israeli Occupation is an unintelligent lie waiting to be uncovered. It is illegitimate and, just as no lie can live forever, so will the occupation fall. Israel is under a siege brought on itself by its errant colonialist-racist systems. Its every act of brutality against Palestinians is one of desperation in what it knows, deep inside, as a losing measure against a struggle with moral claims.

This fact is matched by a determined and courageous Palestinian resistance which people brave with courage and resolve. Palestinian people refuse to capitulate despite threats to their security and those of family members and neighbours. With increasing ferocity, Israel imposes new laws each geared to imposing heightened anguish, their intent being to frustrate the Palestinians out of the land. And even though there is outmigration of people, Palestinians would rather stay and contest the colonialist tactic to dispossess and ethnically cleanse Palestinian areas. Such counter tactics are accompanied by a zest for life which underlies their dignity as a people, pride about their identity, and the need to preserve them because it is just to do so. Palestinians call it their Sumud.



Indeed, the Palestinian existence is predominantly characterized by the spirit of Sumud which implies «steadfastness» or «steadfast perseverance.» As an ideological theme and political strategy it has stayed as a binding force among the Palestinian people through the experience of the dialectic of oppression and resistance in the wake of the 1967 Six-Day War and beyond. It is visible today, more than any time, in the midst of threats to life, to land, to identity, to dignity and to every God-given right.

And yet, it is not the struggle of the Palestinian alone. As Benjamin Franklin famously said, “Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are.” As human community, we are one, differently placed, variously identified. But we are united by our common humanity. We exist with and for each other—Ubuntu, that great African humanist philosophy which says: “I am because we are,» or «humanity towards others.” The streets of the world are ignited by the call to justice.

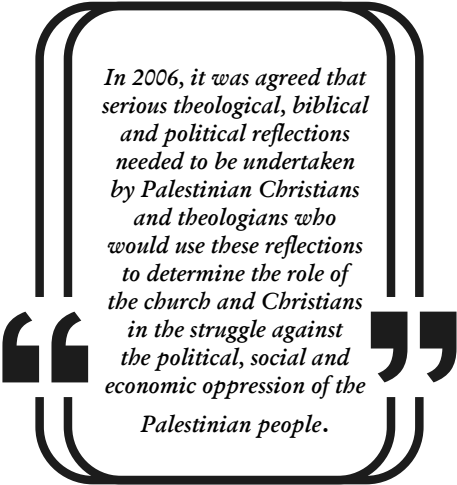
The Palestinian is a human being, a tormented human being who has daily questions, national and existential, who has a love story, who contemplates a flower and a window open to the unknown. Who has a metaphysical fear, and an inner world utterly resistant to occupation.
(Mahmoud Darwish)

Ranjan Solomon, from India, is a longtime activist for justice in Palestine. It began in the late sixties during his university days in Delhi and intensified when the First Intifada was launched in December, 1987. Since then he has frequently visited Palestine, led several delegations to Palestine, and organized international events on Palestine. He is now actively associated with Kairos Palestine and the Alternative Tourism group. He has helped set up an alliance of ecumenical partners in India who have worked on Palestine solidarity actions. He is also working with human rights groups and social movements in India to forge Palestine solidarity actions.

From South Africa Kairos to Kairos Palestine

Samuel Kobia

During the height of the struggle against the Apartheid regime in South Africa, the South African Council of Churches and the Centre for Contextual Theology in Johannesburg, South Africa, formulated the Kairos Document which gained international acclaim. The document was a Christian, biblical and theological comment on the political crisis precipitated by the Apartheid regime. The document analyzed the situation, identified the challenges and articulated the theological and biblical basis for the African Church's way forward in its liberation struggle against a very repressive and oppressive government whose ideology was Apartheid, the separation of the people along racial lines.



In 2006, it was agreed that serious theological, biblical and political reflections needed to be undertaken by Palestinian Christians and theologians who would use these reflections to determine the role of the church and Christians in the struggle against the political, social and economic oppression of the Palestinian people.

The Kairos Document inspired many South Africans, especially the younger generation, and became a critically important conceptual instrument for those involved in the liberation struggle in Africa and beyond. Moreover, it became an important point of reference for people suffering under the yoke of oppression, discrimination and repression on the basis of colour, race, religion or culture around the world. It is from that perspective that thinking about a Kairos document for Palestine was envisaged.

The process that led to the formulation of Kairos Palestine may be traced to the discussion we organized during the World Council of Churches Ninth General Assembly held in Brazil in 2006. By way of comparison, the struggle of the Palestinian people had at that time reached similar historical moment to that of South Africa in 1985 when the South Africa Kairos Document was written.

At the discussion in Brazil, it was agreed that serious theological, biblical and political reflections needed to be undertaken by Palestinian Christians and theologians who would use these reflections to determine the role of the church and Christians in the struggle against the political, social and economic oppression of the Palestinian people. The trajectory that followed had several signposts

and would culminate in the publication of the Kairos Palestine Document in 2009. The signposts include: the Amman Call of 2007 which articulated costly solidarity as the nature of ecumenical accompaniment for the Palestinian people in their struggle; the assignment in 2007 of Rifat Kassis as the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Special Envoy for Middle East with a specific brief to facilitate the Palestinian church and theologians in the Kairos drafting process; a meeting in early 2008 that I convened with Rifat Kassis and Harry Derksen of the Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation during which the idea of a Kairos document for Palestine was formalized; a meeting later that year with Patriarch Michel Sabbah in Bern, Switzerland, during which the concrete process for drafting of the document was worked out.

As the Palestinian and global ecumenical communities commemorate the 10th Anniversary of Kairos Palestine: “A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering”, I wish to reflect on several points. First, the ownership of the process leading up to the drafting of the document was firmly in the hands of Palestinian Church leadership. Secondly, the actual drafting of the document was done by Palestinian theologians thereby affirming its legitimacy. Thirdly, the role of the wider ecumenical community under the leadership of the World Council of Churches (WCC) was that of accompaniment and solidarity. This underscores the collective nature of the efforts that brought the document into reality.

First, the ownership of the process leading up to the drafting of the document was firmly in the hands of Palestinian Church leadership. Secondly, the actual drafting of the document was done by Palestinian theologians thereby affirming its legitimacy. Thirdly, the role of the wider ecumenical community under the leadership of the World Council of Churches was that of accompaniment and solidarity.

I thank God for the honor and privilege of being associated with that process during my time as the General Secretary of the WCC. And it is today my pleasure to join you in thanking God whose grace has made it possible for this historic ecumenical instrument to have been a living document for these first ten years. May God richly bless this anniversary with deep meaning as you reflect on how far you have come, and give you both the spirit of discernment in the liberation journey ahead and also the capacity to overcome any obstacles in the way.

Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia, of the Methodist Church in Kenya, was the first African to be elected General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (2009–2004). Previously, he served as General Secretary of Kenya’s National Council of Churches, chaired Kenya’s National Election Monitoring Unit, chaired peace talks for Sudan, and helped reorganize the Zimbabwe Christian Council after independence. In 2010, Kobia was appointed Ecumenical Special Envoy to Sudan by the All Africa Conference of Churches. He earned degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and McCormick Theological Seminary. In 2000, he spent a sabbatical year as a Fellow at the Center for the Study of Values in Public Life at Harvard Divinity School, Harvard University. In recognition of his position within the ecumenical family in Kenya and beyond, Kobia was awarded the country’s National Ecumenical Award and appointed Chancellor of St. Paul’s University, Limuru, Kenya, in 2007. He continues his work as a peacemaker and global leader. Kobia is married to Ruth. They have two daughters, Kaburo and Nkatha, and two sons, Mwenda and Mutua.

Liberating the other:

Towards a Pedagogy of the Oppressor

Stiaan van der Merwe

With an apology to Edward Said’s “Since when does a military occupied people have the responsibility for a peace movement?», I ask, “Since when does a colonial-apartheid, military-occupied people have the responsibility to liberate the other?”

A re-reading of the 2009 Kairos Palestine document implies this response: Since it is our sacred, human responsibility to see that the future does not repeat the past.

In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire points to the seemingly endless cycle in which the oppressed internalizes the mindset and level of consciousness of the other, in this case the oppressor, the perpetrator of injustice. When a moment of liberation arrives, Freire argues, newly-freed regimes and people often act out the level of consciousness that had been internalized

during struggles for liberation. It happens despite commitments towards justice and peace. Freire writes, “...for them, to be men (sic) is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity..., having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his (sic) guidelines.”

From the Holy Land, no stranger to this pattern of history, the Kairos Palestine document offers a radical, guaranteed successful, prophetic alternative of liberation from injustice and of breaking “the vicious cycle of history.”

The Kairos Palestine document positions its message of liberation against that of failed struggles for sustained freedom in “the history of the nations” (Kairos Palestine 4.2.2)—struggles through which war is resisted by war, violence by violence. The document acknowledges, self-critically, that the initial history of the Palestinian struggle against occupation went “the way of the peoples.” (Kairos Palestine 4.2.2)

While the way of love is a divine gift and operates out of a radically different level of consciousness, it actually is neither supernatural nor extraordinary. Love is the most basic and natural power that works ‘miracles’ in the midst of ordinary, everyday events, while fueling the most radical processes of healing and transformation on a massive scale.

Already ten years ago, the document stated, “we see nothing in the present or future except ruin and destruction” (Kairos Palestine 3.2), yet “in the absence of all hope, we cry out our cry of hope” (Kairos Palestine 10). It then continues to create a path of resistance against injustice that leads toward physically manifesting a future that is quantitatively, qualitatively and radically different from the present order. This path of resistance “... is a resistance with love as its logic.” (Kairos Palestine 4.2.3) “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.” (Kairos Palestine 4.2.4)

The situation worsened. In 2017, following the plea of the Kairos Palestine document, Palestinian Christians wrote in their National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine Open Letter to the World Council of Churches: “We are on the verge of a catastrophic collapse. The current status-quo is unsustainable. This could be our last chance to achieve a just peace.... Humanly speaking—we have reached the ‘moment of impossible....’” They asked: “Could it be that we have reached this ‘impossible moment?’”

Notably, these messages were anything but fear-mongering. Instead they have been clarion calls to take responsibility and to act with urgency beyond urgency in a radically new way.

Kairos Palestine declared 2019 The Year of Kairos. The Holy Land is reaching or may have reached a time-limited inflection point. All things being equal, where will it be five years from now?

It is often said that only a “miracle,” namely that which seems to be humanly impossible, could “save” Palestine and Israel. And so true it is! In the Kairos document, Palestinian Christians assert that what some might regard as humanly impossible is actually our God-inspired vocation, imperative and obligation to be ‘miracle-workers.’

While the way of love is a divine gift and operates out of a radically different level of consciousness, it actually is neither supernatural nor extraordinary. Love is the most basic and natural power that works ‘miracles’ in the midst of ordinary, everyday events, while fueling the most radical processes of healing and transformation on a massive scale. The ability to work miracles that will lead to

a just and lasting peace, though costly, is regarded as a very normal, God-gifted human propensity. It is written, “Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things...” (John 14:12, NIV).

The miracle that will happen through creative resistance with love as its logic—and which will take us beyond the current historical situation and beyond the cycle of history—is declared in the document’s concluding statement: “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.” (Kairos Palestine 10) From within this God-gifted, radically different way of being human, we now access our natural ability to regard every person as “...my brother and my sister...” (Kairos Palestine 4.2.1), to see “the face of God in every human being” (Kairos Palestine 4.2.1), and “to see the image of God in the enemy” (Kairos Palestine 4.2.3). Therefore, in the consciousness of love there are no enemies. Everybody is family, including every Israeli soldier, settler, politician and those who differ from us, including from among ourselves.

Kairos Palestine hereby offers Christians and all of humanity the most critical lessons, a pedagogy, about liberation from injustice, namely:

- A resistance grounded in love is the only way of resistance that liberates both the oppressed and the oppressor in breaking the ‘vicious cycle of history.’
- Participation in liberation and thereby in the liberation of the other requires our having been liberated from the level of consciousness of the other within us and of our having turned from the actions that flow from that level of consciousness.
- The oppressor carries the ultimate responsibility for its self-liberation: “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.” (Kairos Palestine 4.2.1)
- A resistance deeply grounded in love emanates from the “new human being” (Kairos Palestine 10) as a radically different level of consciousness that naturally pursues a path of creative, albeit fierce, resistance to the other. It is an approach that finds “human ways that engage the humanity of the enemy” (Kairos Palestine 4.2.3) in order “...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.” (Kairos Palestine 4.2.3)
- Such resistance becomes a history-defying and history-defining act of solidarity

with the other, namely to avoid and overcome the other's destructive and ultimately self-destructive Nakba (Arabic meaning catastrophe). Who else but the 'victims' of injustice—and those in solidarity—are called and obligated to seize the initiative in accompanying the other, including through resistance, during what can only be regarded as the excruciatingly painful and complex processes and moments of change as the Zionist dream collapses—as it must and will?

- This seemingly miraculous shift, rebirth or conversion in God's grace and by the Holy Spirit to deeply love the other is obviously a "...difficult commandment." (Kairos Palestine 4.2.4) However—difficult and painful as it is—this process can only be regarded as impossibly difficult if we remain stuck in the levels of consciousness of the other. Truth is, the shift to love easily becomes a reality in our ordinary, everyday life as lived testimonies to Jesus' words, "...my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matthew 11:30)."

Our theologies, ideologies, theories, politics and strategies of resistance towards liberation have in general not taken to and pursued the path of love. We have to admit and confess that we, too, have often gone "the way of the peoples." (Kairos Palestine 4.2.2) When our thoughts and actions have emanated from the consciousness of the other, we prove ourselves to be part and parcel of perpetuating the injustice we proclaim to resist. We provide for the next round of the other. When we go the way of the people, we and the other become in reality two sides of the same coin.

It is now more than ever our obligation to work miracles and wonders in the history of the Holy Land and the world, creating a new reality. To be sure, the Kairos Palestine document insists that this path of resistance, grounded in a hope that comes from God (Kairos Palestine 3.2-3.1), is both "a right and a duty" (Kairos Palestine 4.2.3) for Christians and all others. This is the historic and universal calling, mission and obligation of this land. It is a mission that rests on Palestinian Christians, Palestinians in general and all who support Palestine and Palestinians (Kairos Palestine 2.5-2.3). It is the nature and challenge of this-kairos-within-THE-kairos.

Now is the time to publicly declare and practically demonstrate our love for the other in no uncertain terms, loud and clear and as a truly heartfelt conviction. It is thereby our sacred obligation to ensure that our spirituality of liberation and strategic visions explicitly include, express and observably manifest Kairos Palestine's message towards the liberation of the other in all our prayers and liturgies, daily encounters, programs, strategy planning, conferences, workshops,

statements, publications, projects, campaigns, marches as acts of resistance. We have to share our real-life stories about resistance and liberation with love as its logic.

The responses of the other to the love we declare and demonstrate is not our concern. To love and to be this love, in resistance, is our core and only concern. Success is guaranteed. It is through this power and the logic of this love that the cycle of history is naturally and logically certain to be broken, changed and transformed, for “Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:8).

A luta continua! Vitória é certa! The struggle continues! Victory is certain! Love never fails regardless of the route of healing and transformation.

I love, therefore I resist.

Stiaan van der Merwe is a South African christian for whom, albeit in fear and trembling, this journey is one of experiencing profound certainty beyond understanding, in surrendering to and stepping into the unknown... A journey that will never end.

Kairos and Hope

Wendy Gichuru

A recent personal tragedy significantly challenged my assumption that I understand what it means to “have hope.” Immersed in a deep despair of the soul, I find myself sometimes struggling with how to sustain hope.

To be blunt, I often feel angry and frustrated by well-meaning people telling me to “have hope,” or saying, “You need to hold on to hope.” Why should I, I wonder? What difference does having hope make in situations of overwhelming and seemingly unending injustice? In life’s most challenging moments when all hope seems gone or futile, what concretely does being hopeful achieve? In whom or what am I supposed to place my hopes? As a Christian, my faith says to hope in Jesus Christ. While I have not lost my faith in God, hope often remains elusive. What happens to hope when injustice repeatedly triumphs?

I reflect on the many times when, in the face of this relentless occupation, I have urged Palestinian friends to not give up hope. I ask myself if I comprehended what I was urging them to do by saying that. Did I fully grasp the deep personal reserves of faith, integrity, strength and love they would have to draw upon to maintain their steadfast hope that justice will prevail, even when injustice and international indifference to Palestinian suffering persist? Is it fair or is it instead cruel to ask people in a daily struggle for their rights to be hopeful? Are we doing so in order to placate Palestinians’ righteous indignation at the injustice they live with daily? How practical is hope when the future for young Palestinians seems bleak and without potential?

“They say: ‘Peace, peace’ when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14)

Every day under occupation, Palestinians face injustice: forced displacements; home demolitions; arbitrary arrests and detention; the maiming and killing of their loved ones resisting occupation and injustice; land confiscations; denial of family reunification; denial of freedom of movement; denial of access to holy sites... the list seems endless. Decades into an Israeli occupation with no apparent end in sight, many might be led to despair. Every day, Palestinians face a choice of how to respond individually and collectively, privately and publicly. Do they give into the despair or hold on to an ever-elusive hope?

As partners in solidarity, we need to ask ourselves what we must do to sustain

hope when it is constantly tested. Prayer alone is not enough; offering words of hope is insufficient to the task. Hope fades when the world is silent about the repeated use of teargas and bullets against unarmed Gazans showing up each week to reclaim their right to life with dignity. Hope is tested when Christians negate the rightful presence of indigenous Palestinian Christians in the land of Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection. Hope is weakened when Christians succumb to fears of false accusations of antisemitism, and refuse to name the occupation as sin. Hope retreats when privilege and colonized solidarity continue to dominate the discourse on human rights. Hope diminishes when churches support the status quo instead of responding courageously with non-violent action in order to end the occupation.

Kairos time

In times of profound pain and despair— kairos time— hope is alive in Palestine. It is found in Palestinians' refusal to be dehumanized in the face of the dehumanizing occupation. It thrives in the enduring faith of indigenous Palestinian Christians, the Living Stones, who trust in a just and loving God who always stands with the oppressed, the marginalized and the rejected. Hope is in the intersectional solidarity between the Palestinian liberation struggle and those of other social movements such as the Movement for Black Lives, also engaged in non-violent resistance against oppression. Like other indigenous and racialized peoples fighting for their rights, Palestinians are a living testimony to remaining hopeful under impossible conditions.

Hope is a conscious decision to believe that death and destruction do not have the last word in moments of crisis. It is precisely in such moments, when all hope seems lost, that we must develop what Kairos Palestine refers to as a “Kairos consciousness”: the understanding that we must make a choice for life; that we must act for justice, because to do anything else is to side with the oppressor. Theologian Archbishop Desmond Tutu reminds us that there is no such thing as neutrality in the face of injustice because to be neutral is to side with the oppressor. To be “neutral” is to be complicit in the oppression; to be hopeful is to be complicit in the liberation. Genuine solidarity is always costly. Hope is manifested when we demonstrate our willingness to pay the cost.

In this 2019 Kairos Year, we must urgently renew our commitment to hope “in the absence of all hope.” (Kairos Palestine, Introduction) Being hopeful demands a response to the call to action. We must amplify the cry of hope from the heart of Palestinian suffering in the very kairos moments when hope is tested. When

deceitful power-brokers peddle false promises and so-called “deals” but deliver only ruin and destruction, we must stand for freedom, equality and justice. Hope demands that we find the courage to overcome our fears and hold those in power accountable.

Hope is acknowledging the despair, grief and anger we feel and using it to compel us into action. It is the conscious act of holding on to the belief that even when all seems lost justice will prevail.

Wendy Gichuru, who has a degree in Political Science focused on International Relations, was born and raised in Nairobi, Kenya. She, along with her husband and their two young children, immigrated to Canada in 1989. Before becoming Program Coordinator for Partnerships in Africa and the Middle East in the Church in Mission Unit of the General Council Office, Wendy worked with: the United Church of Canada’s Racial Justice portfolio; the UCC’s Division of World Outreach; the Hamilton Urban Core Community Health Centre, and the North Bay Immigrant and Visible Minority Women’s Organization where she was the coordinator. Wendy’s role at present is to provide overall coordination of the United Church of Canada’s Partnership Program in East & Central Africa and the Middle East, including the nurturing of partner relationships, the sharing of resources (human and financial), advocacy, animation, congregational engagement, emergency response and the sending and receiving of people in mission to and from the two regions. Wendy is a volunteer with the Chez Marie Refugee Assistance Centre in St. Catharines, Ontario, a member of Amnesty International Canada, and sings in the church choir in her home parish of St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church.

Afterword

The Board and Staff of Kairos Palestine are grateful to the authors of this publication whose words and work amplify the Kairos call for justice. We give thanks for their steadfast commitment to a just peace in Palestine/Israel and for their efforts to bring Kairos Theology to bear in many corners of the world where people suffer under economic, racial, social, military and political occupation. After you have looked back on the past ten years, we encourage you, Dear Reader, to recommit to work for a just and lasting peace in Palestine before another ten years have passed. Look around your own community to find the pockets of poverty, injustice, mistreatment and marginalization. Then pray and work to toward the time when all of humankind shall see “‘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.” (Kairos 10)

To this end, we implore you to do the following:

- Share this publication—and the Kairos Palestine document—with leaders in your congregations, regions, conferences, presbyteries and dioceses across your country.
- Join a Global Kairos group in your country or create one if one does not exist.
- Support the growing international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against the State of Israel until it complies with international law and UN resolutions.
- Support the right of persons, corporations, states and nations to boycott Israel as an expression of freedom of speech.
- Send letters of solidarity and support for justice in Palestine/Israel to your elected leaders and to the Israeli embassies in your country.
- “Come and see.” We will fulfill our role to make known to you the truth of our reality, receiving you as pilgrims—brothers and sisters—coming to pray with us, carrying a message of peace, love and reconciliation.
- Let your resistance to injustice be courageous and informed by the logic of love.