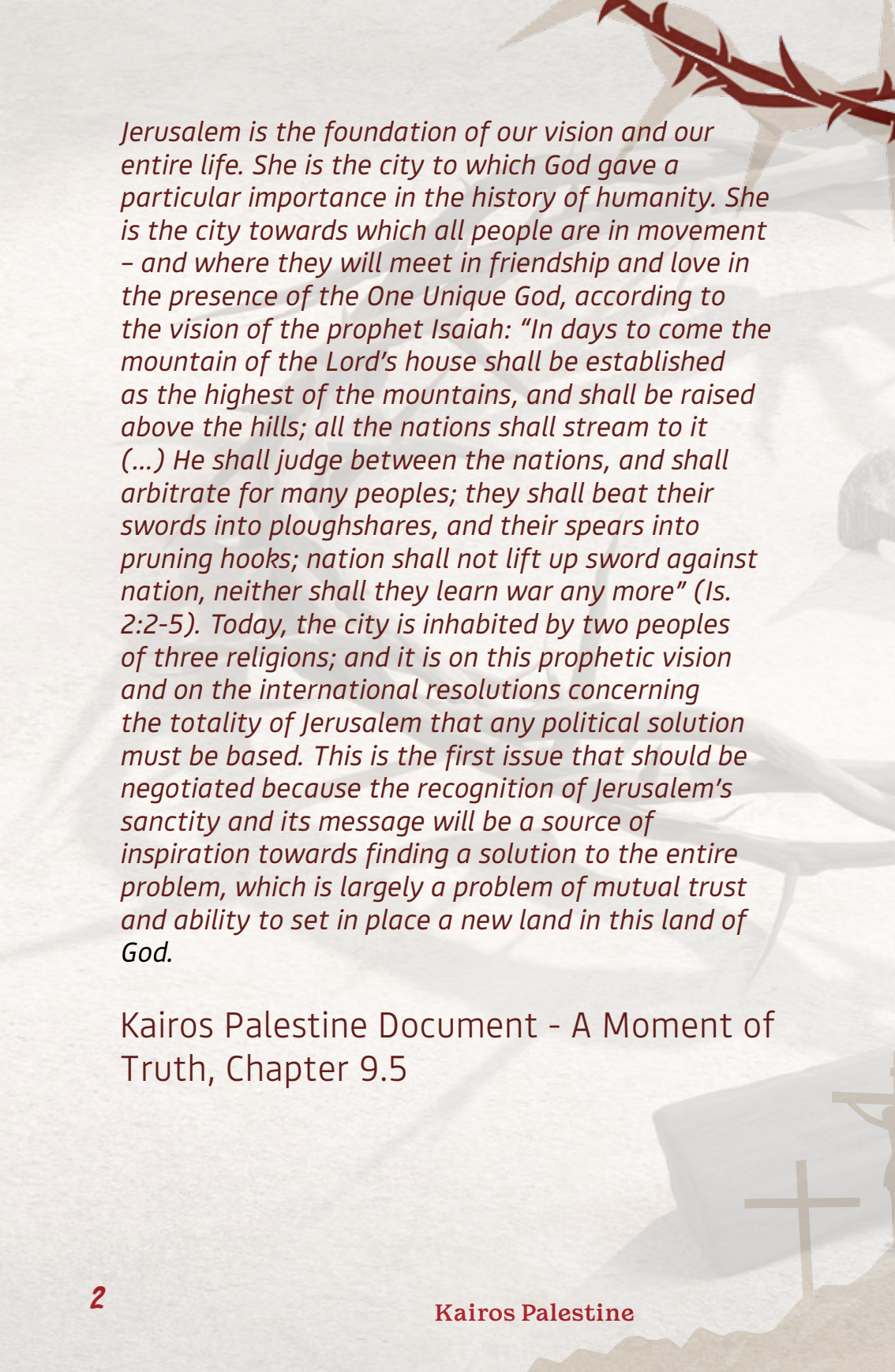




# **Easter** **Alert** 2021





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

Kairos Palestine Document - A Moment of Truth, Chapter 9.5



# Foreword

## Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen! Let us rejoice

In Jerusalem and the whole world, Jesus is Risen. Jesus conquered death and sin, resurrecting to a new life. Jesus is God's Word who "became flesh." (John 1:14) With Jesus and through Him, humankind rose to a new life. Paul the Apostle said, "When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." (Colossians 3:4) With Jesus, human beings became capable of conquering death and sin, war, hatred and dispute. Human beings became capable of love, capable of rendering their relations with all their brothers and sisters a relationship of love instead of war, dispute and hatred.

The Easter Alert this year will address these four topics:

- The religious importance of Jerusalem.
- Jerusalem: a cause of violence or an instrument of peace?
- Jerusalem, a divided or united city?
- Jerusalem is the road to a global peace.

Jerusalem is a holy city for the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This is the reason for the love that all feel for Jerusalem and for their attachment to the city. In the name of religion, the three faiths have an equal right to live on this land. However, this common right does not justify violence by any party to gain acknowledgement for their political right to the city.

The agreement on the holiness of the city is, logically speaking, an agreement to follow the path of peace that would guarantee existence, decent living and equality for the believers of all three religions. Because Jerusalem is a

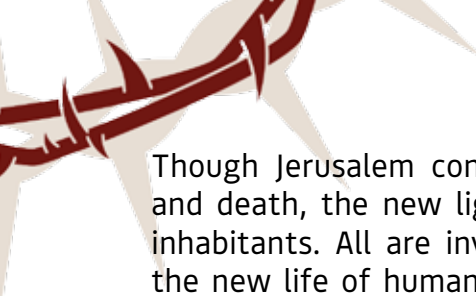


holy city for all should encourage its inhabitants to agree on the way of governing the city, a way which would allow them to remain united, whether they decide to divide the city or keep it whole. The city should be controlled by hearts that are united. When Jerusalem finds its peace, then it will be the real path for global peace, instead of being the reason for local and international contention and disagreement as is the case presently.

Jesus has Risen in Jerusalem, conquering death and sin, and been resurrected to a new life: "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4) As such, Jerusalem has become the heart of the universe - its light, its new life, and the birthplace of the new humanity.


Jesus is Risen. Indeed, He is Risen! Jerusalem is the place of encounter between God and human beings, and of the reconciliation of humanity with God. (Ephesians 2:16) All this happened in Jerusalem, with the power and might of God who loves every child, all peoples of the earth. Jerusalem is a source of new light, glory and life to humanity.






Though Jerusalem continues today to be a city of war and death, the new light in the city is offered to all its inhabitants. All are invited to make the city a place for the new life of humanity, for the new human being, and a place in which God's power, righteousness and love are manifested. Some have already taken this path; others continue to walk it - all worshippers in "spirit and truth" (John 4: 23) from all religions: Christians, Jews, and Muslims seeking through their worship to create in Jerusalem the new human being and, consequently, to create a new Jerusalem that rises from the ruins of war, destruction and death. Others, however, continue to walk in the old path of death.

What is unfolding in Jerusalem presently - fighting, house demolitions, forcing people out of their homes to replace them with others, all this - is not coming from the logic of holiness. Jerusalem is today a political and military question, thus distanced from God. But Jerusalem is first and foremost a question between God and humans, all men, women and children. No one should kill God's creation in God's name, or force others out of their homes in God's name. Jerusalem does not need a change of its people, but rather a change in the hearts of the powerful within it. Until today, the Risen Lord says to Jerusalem, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace!". (Luke 19: 42)



Today, Jerusalem is the city of Resurrection and reconciliation between God and humanity. Jerusalem calls to its leaders to make it a home for the new humanity. Jerusalem calls to Palestinians and Israelis alike, to all its people coming from all over the world to worship within her gates. Everyone has the responsibility of maintaining Jerusalem according to God's will. For all, it is a new city, one city, where one new humanity must exist, where humans are capable, with the power, love, and righteousness of God, to overcome all




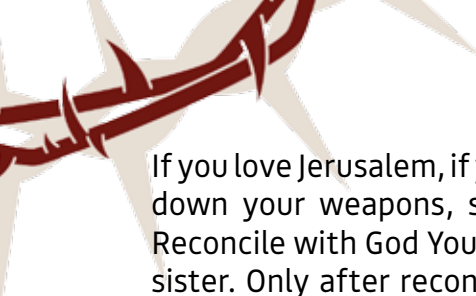
disagreements and disputes. Jerusalem tells its rulers that God is its real Lord. God is the Law in Jerusalem—the One who made it holy, the city of Resurrection and the new being.

Jerusalem calls upon the world, upon its people, to choose love over fighting. It is a difficult process, to change a fighter into a person filled with love. But where Jesus conquered death and changed in a new life, a fighter might conquer oneself and transform oneself into a person able to love. Each is capable of such transformation: the rulers and all the people of the city, Palestinians and Israelis. Everything starts with the will - the will to act and the will to change to restore Jerusalem to the city God wants it to be, a city of peace, reconciliation and love.

If every fighter in Jerusalem examines the reason why he or she is fighting, the fighter will discover that it is because he or she believes that God has made the city holy. This, then, requires being truthful with oneself, to ask oneself if by fighting - oppressing or killing one's brother and sister - is this fighting defending the city's holiness? Of course, no. The fighter should be led back to the logic of holiness and God's righteousness and allow oneself to share in the new humanity God brings.

This is the call of Resurrection to the leaders and people of Jerusalem: do not restrict or tie down the city in the old evil. Do not prevent the city from being what it truly is, what God wants it to be: The City of Resurrection, the City of Peace, Love and New Life for the whole world, for all its people united in its holiness and living in the light of new love. God is in Jerusalem, obey the Holy One. Your neighbors, the children of God, are in Jerusalem; honor them, do not kill, or humiliate them, do not expel them from their homes.






If you love Jerusalem, if you embrace its holiness, then throw down your weapons, stop shedding the blood of others. Reconcile with God Your Creator, and with your brother and sister. Only after reconciliation can prayers be accepted in Jerusalem. Only after reconciliation, life becomes new, and humanity becomes new. The moment has come for us to live into the new day that God is making in Jerusalem, the time when God pitches God's tent in the city and dwells among us, when "there will be no night there, no need for lamps or sun, for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever." (Revelation 22:5)

This year, may Easter, the celebration of resurrection, be a celebration of new peace, love, and full equality for all the people in Jerusalem, the entire region and the whole world. The people of Jerusalem are responsible, the international community is responsible, and so are the Churches, to bring back to Jerusalem its holiness where justice, peace, and love may prevail.

## **Christ is Risen. Indeed, He is Risen!**



Patriarch Emeritus Michel Sabah served as the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem from 1988-2008. He served the parish and the Palestinian nation locally and internationally. He is the president of the Palestinian Christian Initiative, Kairos Palestine, and one of the authors of the Kairos Palestine document, "A Moment of Truth.". He currently works in the field of interfaith dialogue and believes in pluralism, equality and preserving human dignity.



*Kairos Palestine would like  
to thank all the contributors  
for their contribution and  
help in this year's Easter  
Alert.*





# Maundy Thursday

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

*Kairos Palestine Document—A Moment of Truth,  
Chapter 1.1.8*



# Jerusalem Through a Christian Lens


By Rev. Yohanna Katanacho


Jerusalem has a significant religious importance in Christianity. It is the city of the temple, the Cross, the resurrection, Pentecost, the original church, and the heavenly city coming from above. Consider Jerusalem from a Palestinian Christian perspective in a dialogue with the Old and New Testaments.

## **First: Jerusalem is the city of the temple.**

In the Old Testament, God wanted to live amidst the chosen people. God, the liberator, intervened to free the people from the slavery of the Pharaohs, led His people through the desert, and appeared among them in the meeting tent. Many years later, at the time of King Solomon, a temple was built to replace the tent. The temple was built in Jerusalem; it became the house of God. That is how the religious significance of Jerusalem started to grow. The holiness of Jerusalem was linked to the Almighty God. The temple became a place for forgiveness where sacrifices were made to God.

The temple began to shape the identity of the people, the people of the promise. As temple theology evolved, we read how Prophet Isaiah links the temple to a peace that prevails throughout the world; he declares Jerusalem the city of peace and divine light (Isaiah 2). Prophet Isaiah has a vision of the end of evil and links Jerusalem to justice, calling it the “city of Justice.” (Isaiah 1: 26) Due to the evil of the people of the Old Testament, God sent the Assyrians who destroyed Samaria in 722 B.C. and, later, the Babylonians who destroyed the temple in 586 B.C. The temple was rebuilt when the people were liberated from





their exile. The name of Jerusalem was linked to hope. Men and women waited for the divine kingdom that will transform Jerusalem into a capital of peace and justice for the entire earth.

## **Second: Jerusalem is the city of the Cross.**

Jesus Christ came to the Jerusalem temple as a child with a revolutionary declaration, explaining that the future of Jerusalem was linked to Him personally. He is the temple where God dwells. He is the fountain, the king of peace and






justice, the alter and the sacrifice, the path of forgiveness.

The Lord purified the temple and threatened ideologies seeking to use religion to spread racisms and a sense of superiority. This brought upon Him the hostility of Jerusalem's Jewish religious leaders. The conspiracy developed further; a death sentence was issued against the God of peace. Jerusalem's religious leadership and political authorities became the enemies of God and His Christ. Rome wanted the peace of the cowards, a peace that creates a world of masters and slaves. Rome wanted to silence the voice of truth, conscience and divine justice, in order to replace them with the humiliation of peoples. Thus, Jerusalem became the city of the Cross. It became a city in which the sound of forgiveness, the voice of peace and conscience rise up. Jerusalem became a city where violence is exposed by the power of love.

### **Third: Jerusalem is the city of resurrection.**

They arrested Jesus, tortured and crucified Him, and took His life away. However, they were not able to silence the Lord. His words continue to echo on the horizon, like thunder scaring off the evil, as a whisper penetrating hearts. When desperation and injustice became widespread, looting prevailed and religious and political leaders became corrupt. The earth shook in Jerusalem. Just when the devil believed that the world's kingdoms were under his control, Jesus' tomb opened to reveal that Jesus was no longer there, for He is Risen. Through Jesus' resurrection, we witness the victory of truth and the triumph of righteousness. God made Jerusalem the city of resurrection. It is the new city, and the new humanity. The city of hope. The resurrection of Jesus is not only that of an individual, but also of the whole world. It is the resurrection of a world of love, peace and justice. It is the true essence of the Bible.






#### **Fourth: Jerusalem is the city of Pentecost.**

The Almighty God dwelled in Jerusalem's temple. God-the-Son was crucified and rose from the dead in Jerusalem. Now, God-the-Holy Spirit appeared in it. Fifty days after His resurrection, Jesus' disciples were in the city awaiting the power of God to spread good in the world of darkness. "Tongues of fire" appeared and God gathered the pure of heart from every nation in Jerusalem and poured upon them His Holy Spirit. Thus, the name of Jerusalem was linked with changing the fate of humanity, making the Church the home of the Holy Spirit. The church faced poverty, political injustice and religious heresies with the power of God's Spirit. Following the confusion of tongues and languages in Babel, as described in the Old Testament, we see the nations and peoples of earth unify through the Holy Spirit of God that descended upon human beings. A new era starts with a comprehensive vision, which leads to our understanding of Jerusalem as the mother.

#### **Fifth: Jerusalem is the home of the Mother Church**


The Old Testament speaks of Jerusalem as the mother and calls it Zion. Zion became the mother of love, peace, equality and justice. Jerusalem is more than simply a place; it is a theology. The Mother Church was born in Jerusalem and from it all churches around the world evolved. Jerusalem became the city of missionaries to spread the good news. Jerusalem became the city of the united church. The first Church Assembly (Acts of the Apostles 15) was convened in Jerusalem, during which the church affirmed its identity and its openness, thus including peoples of all colors and races. Jerusalem became the ecumenical home for the people of the New Testament. The city became the vibrating heart for the spread of Jesus' mission.



#### **Sixth: Jerusalem is the harbinger of the Golden City.**

The dream of Jerusalem did not end, but rather was





associated with the Golden City to come down from heaven. It is the Holy City where no death, tears, sorrow, screams or pain exist. It bears witness to heaven's joy. Thus, we see that Jerusalem is the opposite of Babel, the opposite of Rome in the Book of Revelation. It is the place of holiness, and the place of God's presence.

### **Finally, seventh: Jerusalem's life at present is painful.**

Due to injustice, evil and humanity's move away from values of love and justice that were spread by our Lord Jesus Christ, Jerusalem suffers now. The road back to Jerusalem lies in surrendering to God - holding on to His love, accepting His forgiveness, spreading justice and peace, and fighting all forms of injustice and evil. The message of Jerusalem relies on the message of its Church, and on the manifestation of the Bible in the identity of its children.



The Rev. Yohanna Katanacho is the Academic Dean at Nazareth Evangelical College. He is a Palestinian Evangelical who studied at Bethlehem University (B.Sc.), Wheaton College (M.A.) and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (M. Div.; Ph.D.). He is the author of "The Land of Christ: A Palestinian Cry" (2013), "Praying through the Psalms" (2018), and "Reading the Gospel of John through Palestinian Eyes" (2020).





# **The Religious Significance of Jerusalem**

**By Rev. Dr Anna Karin Hammar**

Jerusalem is a holy city, embedded in the spiritualities of Jewish people, Muslim believers and Christian worshippers all around the world. As a Christian, I write from the perspective of my tradition, context, and will try to tell about Jerusalem in my heart.

When I visited Jerusalem, I always tried to come close to the Holy Sepulcher, the Church of the Resurrection. My favorite place was a small stair where I could sit for a while, given that nobody was passing.

The stair is on the roof of the Church of the Resurrection just above the Ethiopian chapels. Here I can see the sky, birds, trees and laundry drying in the sun. Here I feel as close to the Triune God as I can in Jerusalem, where the political realities still make it difficult not to lament. The holy city is important to me as it is the place where Jesus Christ spent so much of the time of his life - maybe not in quantity but in quality.

I remember when he was a young Jew and remained with the teachers in the temple. Already by the age of twelve he challenged leaders with wisdom and authority. I think of the movements of young people around the world inspired by the example of a then 15-year-old Greta Thunberg, who started a School Strike for the Climate in 2018.

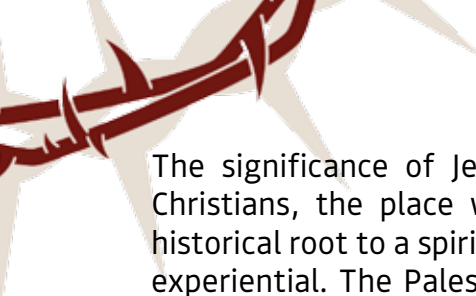
The prophetic task in every age is to challenge fixed mindsets and structures that hinder the flow of justice, peace and the wellbeing of Creation. Jerusalem in my heart is an invitation to prophets all over the globe to continue

the ministry of Jesus Christ according to gifts and wisdom.

I remember when John and Mary, side by side, stood at the foot of the cross. Powerless in view of Jesus' suffering, they did what they could. They remained close and present. Standing there with them, how I wish I could be strong enough to draw out the nails from the body of Jesus!

I remember when a Jewish leader, Josef, took care of the dead body and laid it in a new tomb. Given that history is correct, I have been to that tomb and it is empty. The holiest of holy places in Christian tradition is empty. For Christ is risen and fills the universe with presence.





The significance of Jerusalem is therefore immense for Christians, the place where it all started. The city is a historical root to a spiritual reality, making it real, palpable, experiential. The Palestinian witnesses to this history are the first witnesses to this Easter event and its unfolding in the Christian church. Palestinian Christian families still trace their roots to Pentecost. For many of us around the world, Palestinian Christians are sisters and brothers of Jesus Christ in all senses.

We lament with them when the Crusaders slaughtered Jews, Muslims and Orthodox Christians.


We lament with them any time there is the presence of occupation forces. Now, it is the Israeli occupation of Palestine as well as discrimination within Israel—named as apartheid rule from the Jordan river to the Mediterranean Sea by the Israeli human rights' organisation, B'Tselem.

We lament, and we ask the Triune God to move us into action for a just peace and fulfilment of international law.

As Christians, we share with many Jews and Muslims around the world the religious significance of Jerusalem. Inspired by its sacred importance we also share a commitment to freedom for Palestine and Israel. We are determined to turn occupation, blockade, apartheid and annexation into wellbeing for the whole Creation.



The Rev. Dr. Anna Karin Hammar, Church of Sweden, is the Ecumenical Coordinator of Kairos Palestine Sweden and Global Kairos for Justice/Europe.



*And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem,  
coming down out of heaven from God, prepared  
as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a  
loud voice from throne saying,  
“See, the home of God is among mortals.  
He will dwell with them as their God;  
they will be his peoples,  
and God himself will be with them....”  
Revelation 21:2-3*

## *Reflect*

*Ponder the significance of your community through “a Christian lens.” What do you see of the Holy? How does it call you to specific acts of justice, kindness and walking humbly with God?*

## *Pray*

*Blessed are You, Holy One. You appeared among us, pitched your tent, invited us in, and are shaping us for service in your name. Lead us out now as witnesses to your love and justice - in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

## *Act*

*Consider not receiving communion today in remembrance of our Palestinian siblings who, because of apartheid restrictions, are unable to travel to their places of worship.*





# Good Friday

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

*Kairos Palestine Document—A Moment of Truth,  
Chapter 2.3.2*



# Jerusalem


By Nadine Bitar-Abu Sahlia

*"God is within her; she will not fall; God will help her at  
break of day."  
Psalm 46:5*

Jerusalem, Oh Jerusalem, my heart aches as I pronounce your name. You have survived so many wars and conflicts. You have proved God right as we read in our Holy Scriptures, "She will not fall." Jerusalem sets the perfect modal of existence and pride. Being a Jerusalemite young lady, I see the city as a source of strength and hope. My heart does ache as I pronounce her name; but every time she is mentioned I feel the power of her name. Despite all the pain that our earthly Jerusalem is facing, she continues to be the source of hope and faith which leads us to the New Jerusalem in heaven.

As we prepare our souls and minds for Easter, to celebrate the fundamental truth of our Christian faith - the resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ - we see Jerusalem present in all of our biblical reflections. She was and still is the witness of God's greatness and Jesus' most powerful act of Love. She is the witness of Jesus' Humanity and Divinity. Jerusalem leads us to the resurrection. She leads us to sainthood. Jerusalem teaches us how to submit to God's will; she teaches us how to be true disciples of Christ. I see Jerusalem as a mother, a sister, and a true friend. She walks with me the path of holiness. She helps me remember what a great sacrifice Jesus has made for my salvation. She passes on her greatness and holiness to her people. She includes us in the story of salvation and imparts her youthful energy to continue God's work.

Allow me to thank you, Oh Jerusalem, thank you for holding



on to the message of the gospel through your toughest times. Thank you for teaching me the importance of my presence in the Holiest City on earth. Thank you for believing in your youth. Thank you for allowing us to learn from you. Thank you, Jerusalem, for all the love you have shown us throughout your history.



Nadine Bitar-Abu Sahlia was born and raised in the Christian Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. She has been involved in ministry since a young age. Ministry has a special place in her heart. To truly understand ministry and for the love of serving others better, she obtained a BA in Youth Ministry from North Park University/Chicago in 2014. After serving Jerusalem and its church for two years through the Central office of Terra Sancta Schools, she continued her studies at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago, obtaining a MA in Christian Ministry. A proud member of Youth of Jesus' Homeland (YJHP), Nadine currently works at the Catechetical Office of the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem.





# Loving Resistance—from Crucifixion to Resurrection

By Fredrik Glad-Gjernes


The holy city of Jerusalem is crucified by violent occupation. The inhabitants are divided and oppressed. People have lost houses, jobs, family members and access to holy places. The powerful occupier uses policies of violence and discrimination to favour one group over another. There is apartheid in the public domain of the Holy city.

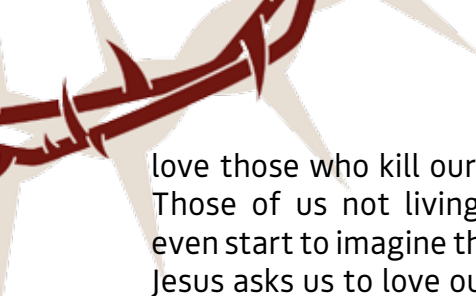
The oppressed are calling for costly solidarity. Words are not enough. Resolutions must be backed by action. Jesus died crucified, showing us that love without sacrifice is illusionary. That love makes us vulnerable. Jesus showed us the power of powerlessness. Jesus was born a powerless child, died a defenceless man, with vulnerability as his source of power.

Are we willing to sacrifice our comfort, time and resources for the freedom of others? Can we contribute to the liberation of Jerusalem? Can our action put pressure on those who keep Jerusalem occupied? So far, the international community has offered a lot of resolutions and talks. Are we ready to offer actions that can redeem Jerusalem?

Kairos calls for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against the structures of occupation. The movement for BDS is growing, not as an act of hatred, but of love. Liberation for the oppressed will bring liberation to the oppressor. Loving resistance does not promote hate. It is based on the words of Jesus: Love your enemy. It is a commandment to let our powerlessness show.

Is love for our enemy naïve or even tabu? Is it too much, to





love those who kill our parents and imprison our children? Those of us not living under military occupation cannot even start to imagine the struggle of the Palestinian people. Jesus asks us to love our enemy, not because we are weak, but because loving resistance is the most efficient road to justice and peace.

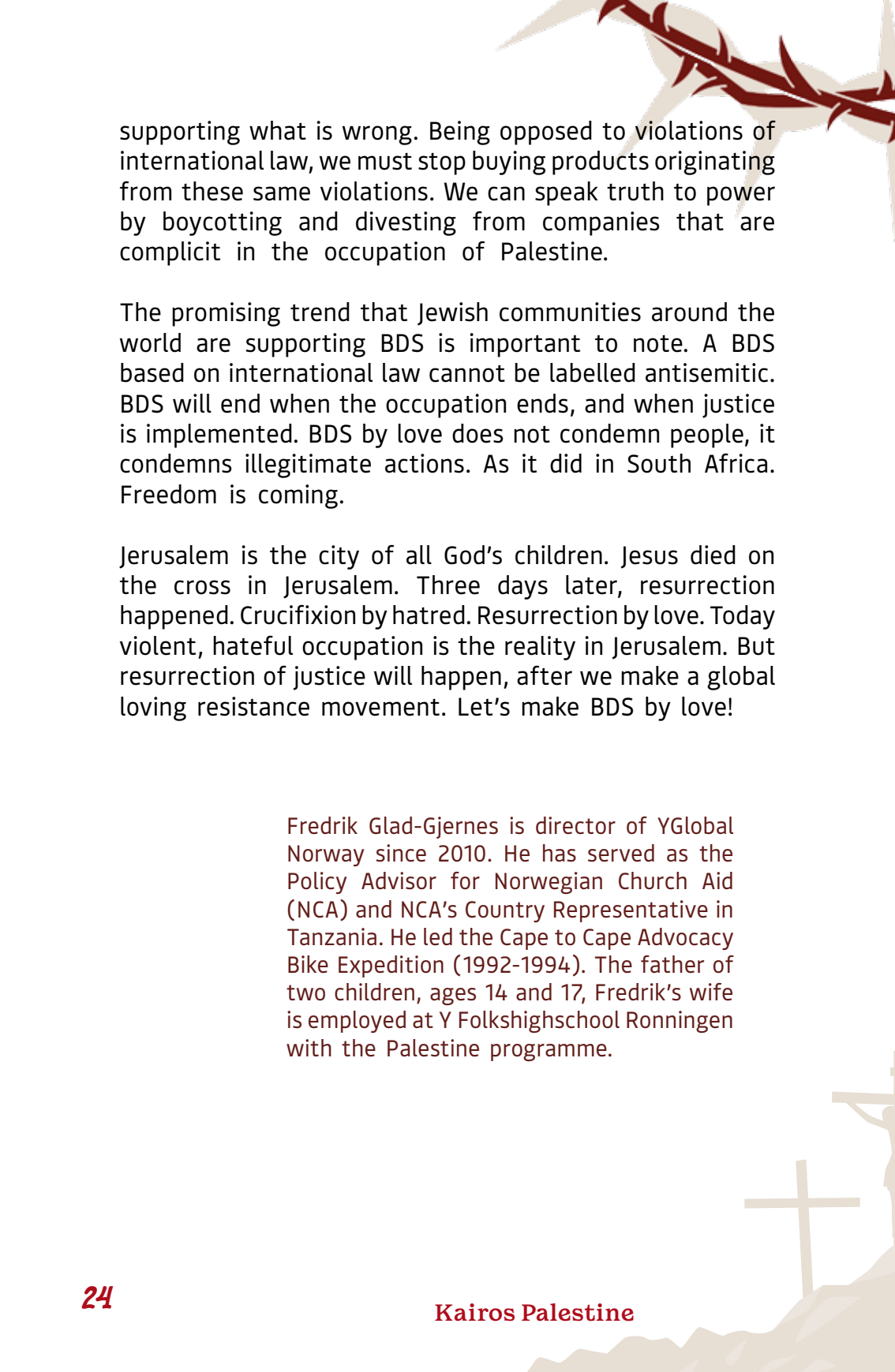
Just as we cannot chase out evil by adding more darkness, we cannot stop oppression by providing more violence. Love is stronger than hatred, just as light is stronger than darkness. Turning the other cheek is not a sign of weakness, but rather a strategic action to expose illegitimate violence and gather support from peace-loving communities around the world.

Israel is losing support when it meets peaceful resistance with violent oppression. However, if Palestinians use the same type of violence, then the world will continue to make the false conclusion that this is a complex conflict with two criminal parties. When Palestine promotes BDS by love, then this is a strategy that will produce global support for a just solution.

We must ask peace-loving people all over the world to disengage from injustice and stop







supporting what is wrong. Being opposed to violations of international law, we must stop buying products originating from these same violations. We can speak truth to power by boycotting and divesting from companies that are complicit in the occupation of Palestine.

The promising trend that Jewish communities around the world are supporting BDS is important to note. A BDS based on international law cannot be labelled antisemitic. BDS will end when the occupation ends, and when justice is implemented. BDS by love does not condemn people, it condemns illegitimate actions. As it did in South Africa. Freedom is coming.

Jerusalem is the city of all God's children. Jesus died on the cross in Jerusalem. Three days later, resurrection happened. Crucifixion by hatred. Resurrection by love. Today violent, hateful occupation is the reality in Jerusalem. But resurrection of justice will happen, after we make a global loving resistance movement. Let's make BDS by love!

Fredrik Glad-Gjernes is director of YGlobal Norway since 2010. He has served as the Policy Advisor for Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and NCA's Country Representative in Tanzania. He led the Cape to Cape Advocacy Bike Expedition (1992-1994). The father of two children, ages 14 and 17, Fredrik's wife is employed at Y Folkshighschool Ronningen with the Palestine programme.



*"...he will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*

*Death will be no more;  
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
for the first things have passed away."*

*And the one who was seated on the throne  
said, "See, I am making all things new."*

*Revelation 21:4-5*

## *Reflect*

*At the heart of the Kairos Palestine document is a call to resistance, "a right and a duty for the Christian. But," the document proclaims, "it is a resistance with love as its logic." What is the meaning of this phrase, "resistance with love as its logic," and how do you practice this in your own family and community?*

## *Pray*

*Maker of All Things New, we join the countless saints throughout history who have cried out, "Jerusalem, Oh Jerusalem, my heart aches as I pronounce your name."*

*Bless today the city's inhabitants - Jews, Muslims, Christians and others - each your child created in your image. Move in them and in us to renew your spirit that together we may more clearly reflect your will and ways for humankind and the whole of creation. In the name of Jesus, amen.*

## *Act*

*Call a friend or relative and share your concern for the people of the Middle East and how you are responding to the challenges they are facing.*



# Holy Saturday

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

*Kairos Palestine Document—A Moment of Truth,  
Chapter 2.5*



# Jerusalem is a Divided or United city

By Dr. Nasser Al Qudwa

One of the most striking outcomes of the 1948 Nakba was the division of Jerusalem. While the Old City and its Holy Sites remained under Jordanian Arab control, there was a massive loss of property and the forcible displacement of almost 100,000 Palestinians from the “new neighborhoods” and several villages of deep importance, such as Ein Karem. That is when the designations of “West” and “East” Jerusalem came to be known. Later in 1967, Israel occupied East Jerusalem in addition to the rest of Palestine. Jerusalem was “reunified,” Israeli’s claim. In reality it was nothing else but the realization of an illegal colonial-settlement plan.

Looking at the past 73 years, it is easy to understand the wisdom of Vatican diplomacy that from the beginning opposed the Balfour Declaration and then lobbied the United Nations to keep Jerusalem as one single city through a system of “Corpus Separatum.” While this didn’t happen, the idea of having Jerusalem as one single city - without Israel’s colonialist enterprise - remains in the hearts and minds of many, including undoubtedly the Palestinian people.


Palestine’s position has been consistent with international law and UN resolutions demanding the end of the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, which includes East Jerusalem and its holy sites. This position includes a firm commitment to the Status Quo of the Holy Sites as kept for centuries despite attempts by Israeli officials to change that reality. East Jerusalem is the capital of the State of Palestine. The Israeli position cannot be sustained under international law. Still, it is the position of a colonialist

power that aims to monopolize everything: the land, the people, the natural resources, holy and archeological sites, and even the historical narrative.

But no matter its efforts, Israel has not been able to defeat the vision of a free Jerusalem that can serve not only as the center for the three monotheistic religions but also the capital for two states. Jerusalem's Arabic identity - its centrality for Christians, Muslims and Jews as well as the multicultural mosaic of a city with deep Armenian, Greek, Moroccan, Coptic and Assyrian components, among others - should serve as a lesson that no matter the rogue policies of a colonial-settler occupation, Jerusalem cannot be defeated. It is in this context that the Palestinian people feel tremendous pride about our continued presence in the city, its centrality for our lives as we build up Jerusalem as Palestine's eternal capital.








The Kairos Document states that the Israeli occupation is a “sin against God and humanity because it deprives the Palestinians of their basic human rights, bestowed by God.” What a beautiful contrast to the ugliness of those who misuse religion to justify crimes, including the systematic denial of Palestinian rights. The document is an affirmation of the principle that Jerusalem’s historic message and sacred identity are not going to be honored as long as the Israeli occupation remains in place. The message of hope that our people has carried for generations will eventually defeat the voices of colonialism and Apartheid.

Ending the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem calls for a much-needed political separation in order to allow for the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and national independence. This necessary step can turn Jerusalem, through a special mechanism, into a city that won’t be divided by barriers or checkpoints, but rather can be united in humanity and respect for its special condition. This is the opposite of what the Israeli occupation and its monopolist colonialist enterprise has done to the land, to the people of Palestine, and to the city of Jerusalem.

Dr. Nasser Al Qudwa, born in Gaza, has held many positions of leadership in Palestine, including serving as a member of the Palestinian National Council since 1975 and completing an appointment as the PLO’s foreign minister in 2005-2006 and the head of the Palestinian delegation before the International Court of Justice. Dr. Al Qudwa is Chairman of the Board of the Yasser Arafat Foundation.



# **Jerusalem/al-Quds: Divinely United, Humanly Divided**

**By Dr Peter Makari**

The penultimate paragraph of the seminal 2009 document by Kairos Palestine, "A Moment of Truth," focuses on Jerusalem as "the foundation of our vision and our entire life." It states, "the recognition of Jerusalem's sanctity and its message will be a source of inspiration towards finding a solution to the entire problem." The authors of the document likely leave Jerusalem to the very end of the document on purpose, to bring together everything they have already articulated, and to offer an image of hope, pointing to the city that is a great symbol of justice, peace, harmony, and inspiration.

Jerusalem, al-Quds in Arabic (which means "the Holy"), indeed is the symbolic embodiment of universal and divine perfection. It is what the Psalmist described as "a city that is bound firmly together" (Ps. 122:3) and for whose admirers, prosperity is prayed. It is the place of veneration and longing for people of the three Abrahamic faiths - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Solomon's temple, Christ's passion and resurrection, and Muhammad's night journey to heaven are centered here, according to the respective sacred scriptures.

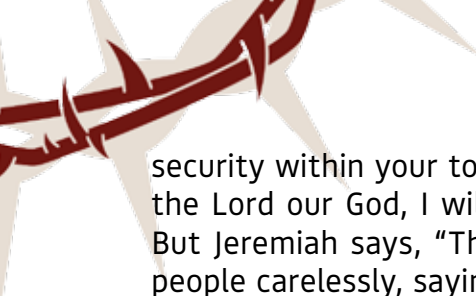
Today's visitors coming to tread these sacred streets and stones might well imagine an ideal place where Jews, Christians and Muslims live together and intermingle; where prayers are unabashedly spoken out loud and spiritual fulfillment is sought; where the aura of the divine is anticipated and expected. In the summer it is bathed in warm sunshine, and in the winter, an occasional snowfall

blankets the sites in picturesque white, slowing the pace of the city down, all the better for meditation. The wind blows through, a sound of spirit if one listens for it. But Jerusalem's residents know another reality that can be observed for those with ears to hear and eyes to see. It is a city caught in a struggle for its every centimeter. Israelis and Palestinians make claims on land and space, yet with the weight of the state on the side of Israelis, Palestinian presence - even with legal deeds - is superseded by Israeli law, which is sometimes written to justify displacement. West is built up while East is neglected or encroached upon. Israelis and Palestinians may encounter each other by necessity, but most often live separately, even in the same city. Settlements around the city are incorporated while Palestinian neighborhoods are cut off by the wall or denied municipal services. Israeli settlers threaten Palestinian households, neighborhoods, and communities within the city, taking over homes at will and evicting residents with the backing of government force.






The Wall cuts through Palestinian communities, separating family members from each other. It creates an enclave that prevents access by Palestinians in the West Bank while settlers move freely through and around the barrier. Palestinians pay taxes at the same rates as Israelis but derive disproportionately lower services including schools, health care, roads, utilities, and even garbage collection - all of which are lesser or non-existent. Palestinians leaving Jerusalem risk losing their claim to residence when they fail to demonstrate adequately that their "center of life" is not there. So even though Palestinians live in East Jerusalem, a part of the city Israel officially annexed, they are denied the right to participate in national Israeli political processes. How does this reality square with the image of Jerusalem as an ideal community? How does this reflect the holiness Jerusalem is accorded and which it claims? Again, the Psalmist: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: 'May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, and



security within your towers.' For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good" (Ps 122: 6-7, 9). But Jeremiah says, "They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, 'Peace, peace', when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14).

The Palestinian Kairos "Cry for Hope" states that "support for the oppression of the Palestinian people, whether passive or active, through silence, word or deed, is a sin." Human realities in Jerusalem are distant from the divine ideal for the city - and indeed for the whole of creation. Ideal Jerusalem is a powerful representation of God's kingdom. As imperfect as we are as humans, as children of God we can only continue to work for God's justice and peace, so that they may come about; and Jerusalem - the city of Christ's glorious resurrection - may attain its spiritual ideal and temporal potential.

Dr. Peter Makari has served since July 1, 2000 as Executive for the Middle East and Europe with Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), two partner churches of Kairos Palestine. An Egyptian-American, Peter has lived in the Middle East, where he served in mission with the churches before starting in his current capacity. Peter earned an M.A. in Middle East Studies from the American University in Cairo (1993) and a Ph.D. in Politics and Middle East Studies from New York University (2003). He is the author of *Conflict and Cooperation: Christian-Muslim Relations in Contemporary Egypt* (Syracuse University Press, 2007). He is a member of West Park United Church of Christ in Cleveland, OH.



*I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.*

*Revelation 21:22-26*

## *Reflect*

*We celebrate the rich diversity of Jerusalem's Arab population and mourn Israel's efforts to divide it along religious/ethnic lines. What are the forces of division in your community and how can you call them out and resist them?*

## *Pray*

*God of Abiding Peace and Over-Turning-Tables Justice, I add my prayer to the Psalmist's: May those who love Jerusalem prosper, may there be a just peace within its walls and a security within its towers purchased through a love that discerns when to rightly divide and when to courageously unite. For the sake of the Lamb who was, who is, and who will always be Jerusalem's lamp, amen.*

## *Act*

*Read (or re-read) the Palestinian Cry for Hope: A Call to Decisive Action ([www.cryforhope.org](http://www.cryforhope.org)). Commit to embracing one of the seven actions.*





# Easter Sunday

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

*Kairos Palestine Document—A Moment of Truth,  
Chapter 10*



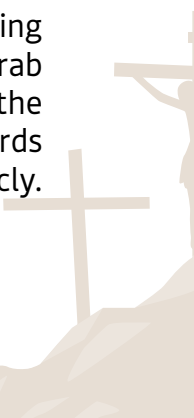
# Jerusalem is the Way to Global Peace

By George Zeidan

In normal days, before the pandemic stole plenty of time from our short lives, I happily took plenty of friends and visitors to explore the old city of Jerusalem. Typical for residents of any place, we tend to take our own cities for granted. As I cross the small corners and markets, visiting some of the most holy places for the three Abrahamic religions in the world, I am overwhelmed. It is always special: within the same block, so many different kinds of people sharing the ultimate reverence for God, praying for his support, his love and, yes, for peace.

Claiming to be missionaries from the Patrilineal Patriarch Abraham, Trump and Israel have signed peace deals with three Arab countries: The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan. According to the White House, the Abraham Accords “pursue a vision of peace, security, and prosperity in the Middle East and around the world.” Substantial rumors indicate that many more Arab nations are on the edge of signing peace treaties with Israel.

At first, it appears like Israel has done the impossible. Nobody would have imagined that signing a peace deal with three Arab nations would come the way it did, at zero cost. Three regimes have been in “war” status with Israel since 1948 without engaging in an actual war. Over the last ten years, we have constantly heard of rumors regarding potential secret meetings between leaders from the Arab world and Israel. With the Trump administration, the geopolitical spectrum has pushed these regimes towards normalizing relationships with Israel rapidly and publicly.




As the deals were announced, the aftermath has been extreme rage within the Arab world as well as the Palestinian street. It is true that these are not the first Arab countries to sign peace treaties with Israel. Both Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994) had signed. But among Arabs there has been a consensus about the reasons that pushed Egypt and Jordan to sign the treaties, as these settlements came after deadly wars with Israel that included losing and returning territories. Both Egypt and Jordan also share direct borders with the occupied territories.

For any legitimate government to declare significant changes to “war” status, it requires the overwhelming support of their people. The governments of the three Arab countries, however, have three other reasons: they respond to Trump; they care less about their people’s will; and they see Israel as a strategic ally against Iran. Whether the new treaties or the old ones, what is common knowledge is that the people and their governments are not on the same page.

Do not take my word for it. A recent incident involving the most famous Arabic actor who has dominated the screen over the last few years—and who indeed cares about his fan base—tells us a lot. Muhammad Ramadan, the Egyptian





star, appeared posing in a photo hugging Israeli singer Omer Adam in Dubai. Since then, Ramadan has faced outrage on social media, accusing him of betrayal. He has been trending in Egypt on twitter as “#Mohammad Ramadan is a Zionist.” Ramadan has been apologetic. He denied knowledge of the citizenship of the Israeli singer and has been very upset. He has asked for compassion, while constantly posting about his support for Palestinian people. The Arab world and Egyptians specifically who have signed a peace treaty four years ago, do not consider themselves at peace with Israel.

Our brothers and sisters in the Arab world understand that any peace process must start here in Jerusalem and then take off freely. Arab governments that are distant from their own people would not bring sustainable peace to the region. Arab leaders and Trump may claim the opposite. They can get as creative as they want in their “peace deals” or apply innovative methods and use science, art, and sports to secure the endorsement of the Arab populations. They may sign also more treaties. But we know better the truth.

Peace between Israelis, the Saudis, Egyptians, and the rest of the Arab people first requires reconciliation in the small corners of the old city of Jerusalem. Without ending the occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people and coming to a fair and just agreement on the future of Jerusalem, we will not be on the right path for peace.

George Zeidan is co-founder of Right to Movement Palestine, an initiative to illustrate the reality of Palestinian life through sports. A Fulbright awardee with a master’s degree from the Price School of Public Policy, University of Southern California, he is a program manager for an international humanitarian organization. He grew up in Jerusalem’s Old City.

# Jerusalem is the Way to Global Peace

By Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad

At a time such as Good Friday and Easter, our eyes are religiously focussed on Jerusalem.

Good Friday Message: Break down Jerusalem's Wall!

In 2002, the Israeli Government started building a so-called security wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the region around East Jerusalem. However, the harsh reality: it is an "apartheid" wall unjustly and cruelly discriminating against Palestinians. It is outside the ancient city wall of Jerusalem (Heb.13:12), at Golgotha, that Jesus was crucified. Being crucified outside the city signified that Jesus was not considered worthy of being counted among the chosen people of God. He was walled out.





However, his death signified the breaking down of barriers between different races of human beings, as Paul writes in Ephesians 2:13-16. Paul saw peace being generated between the Jews and the Gentiles through the death of Christ on the cross. No superiority could be claimed on the basis of a race - the chosen one of God among all the races. No pre-eminence could be claimed on the basis of circumcision because "real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal" (Rom.2:29). Indeed, Paul says in Galatians 3:28, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." In Jesus, one new humanity is generated.

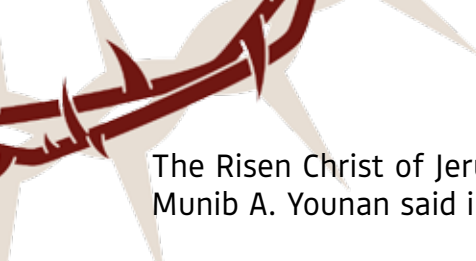
Golgotha of Jerusalem stands for global peace! The apartheid wall must be broken!

### **Easter Message: May Jerusalem be a Channel of Peace!**

On December 6, 2017, then U.S. President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and ordered the planning of the relocation of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. In a sense, Trump ratified the view of Zionists that "by law, by religion, by emotion, Jerusalem is the centre, the core, the heart of the Jewish people and the State of Israel." However, Zionism is incompatible with world peace.








The Risen Christ of Jerusalem stands for peace. Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan said in his Easter message in 2014,

“The promise of the Risen Lord of “Peace be with you” is also valid for Palestinians and Israelis. Even if the road to peace based on justice is hard and rocky with many roadblocks and checkpoints, the promise of Resurrection Peace revives in each one of us a new hope. There is no other way... than for there to be justice among the nations... I dream of the day when Jerusalem is a shared city between three religions and two nations. I dream of that day when there will be secure borders without walls. We look forward to having equal access to resources, religious sites, and a reciprocal democratic process.”

In the farewell address which the resurrected Jesus gave to his disciples, he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, saying to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:46-47) Jerusalem as a model of justice and peace would pave an “exemplary” way for current global fascist, racist, caste-ist, and communal forces to embrace justice and peace: “For out of Zion shall go forth instruction... to beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.” (cf. Isa. 2:3-4)

## Jerusalem: the way to ‘global’ peace!



Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in India, is Director of Theological Education, Mission and Evangelism for the Diocese of North East India, Church of North India. Dr. Gaikwad also serves as the Diocese’s Secretary and Moderator of the Indo Palestine Solidarity Network.



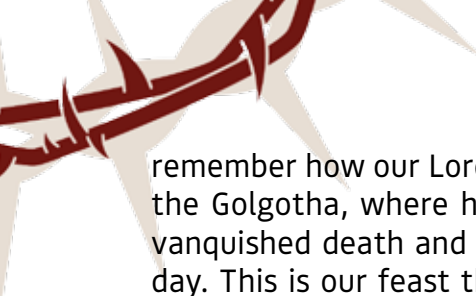
# **Easter: “The Feast of All Feasts, the Season of All Seasons”**

**By Archbishop Atallah Hanna**

Jerusalem is the city of our faith, the venerated city for the three monotheistic religions. No one has the exclusive right to claim that Jerusalem is theirs only. Jerusalem is the city of peace, but peace is denied because there is no justice in the city. There is rather injustice and the targeting of Christian and Muslim Palestinians regarding our holy sites, endowment properties, and our historic, deeply rooted presence in this holy place.

Jerusalem is the cradle of Christianity’s most important holy sites. We Palestinians think of the Jerusalem as our capital. But we are treated as strangers in the holy city. Trump’s declaration naming Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and his decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem consolidated the unfair and arbitrary measures against Palestinians, affecting every aspect of our daily life. We do not know whether it is the intention of the new American president to reverse these unjust decisions, but it doesn’t seem promising. We should not be overly optimistic about drastic changes in U.S. positions under the new administration, both in relation to Jerusalem in particular and toward the Palestinian question in general.

Apart from politics, I say from Jerusalem during this holy time of Easter, Jerusalem is the city of resurrection for Palestinians, our foremost destination. No place in Christianity is more prominent or sacred than the city that embraces the Holy Tomb, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher—the site of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Everyone knows that the resurrection is a main pillar of our faith. We




remember how our Lord carried His Cross and walked up to the Golgotha, where he was crucified and buried. Yet, he vanquished death and rose up from the dead on the third day. This is our feast that we celebrate. In the liturgy, we call it “the feast of all feasts, the season of all seasons.” On this glorious day, the most significant Christian celebration, we kneel before the empty Tomb and hail our Lord who rose up from the dead.

We pray to God that justice - so long missing - will prevail in our country, that the peace we so desire will prevail, that all injustices our people have suffered and continue to suffer are lifted.

Palestinians deserve freedom, deserve life. The vast majority of are educated, have a high sense of belonging to our homeland, and have always been true defenders of our just cause, making major sacrifices to promote it. Our sacrifices will never go in vain, no matter how long it takes. Our Easter message to Christians in the country and to our people in general is this: “never lose hope regardless of the severity of hardships, conspiracies, suspicious plots and empty proposals aiming to liquidate our cause.”

Our Easter message is one of hope during difficult times, especially now under the pandemic conditions we are facing and despite all the injustice and degradation of human dignity to which our people are subjected.

Inspired by the holy feast of resurrection, I tell Palestinians, “Fear not, never surrender, and refuse to be forced into frustration, desperation, and hopelessness. Keep up your morals high, your will strong, and love each other. Reject all divisions and be united in defending your cause, the cause of all free men and women in our world.”




I greet all Christians celebrating Easter, saying, “This is the Day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

May we experience a new and renewed resurrection for this holy land and for all of humanity. We pray to God that the whole world will come together to fight the pandemic and then continue to be united in facing all the other pandemics in our universe - especially racism, hatred, injustice, occupation, oppression, and degradation of human dignity. Jesus has Risen. He is Risen!



Archbishop Atallah Hanna was born in Al Rama in the Upper Galilee. After high school, he joined the Orthodox Seminary in Jerusalem in 1983. In 1984, went to Thessaloniki where he studied Greek and then joined, then graduated the College of Theology at the Thessaloniki University. Archbishop Hanna was ordained a monk in 1990 at the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem. Over the years, he has helped develop the unified curriculum for Christian religion taught in Palestinian schools, played a role in the Christian-Muslim dialogue, participated in local, regional and international conferences, and advocated for the Palestinian question in all forums. He is a member of several Christian and ecumenical institutions. In 2005, he was unanimously elected the Archbishop of Sebastia.



*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.*

*Revelation 22:1-2*

## *Reflect*

*It's been a seventy-years-long Saturday for Palestinians.*


*For many in our own communities and countries, as well, it has too often been a punishing season between Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday. Now early Easter morning, through the mist and shadows, where do you see glimpses of resurrected life? For what signs of new life can you shout, "Hallelujah, He is risen!"?*

## *Pray*

*Come, Lord Jesus, come soon as you promised. Come, wipe away tears, put an end to death and mourning and pain.*

*Come, grant the thirsty a drink of the water, bright as crystal, flowing from the river of life. Be our God. We'll be your children. Come. Amen.*

## *Act*



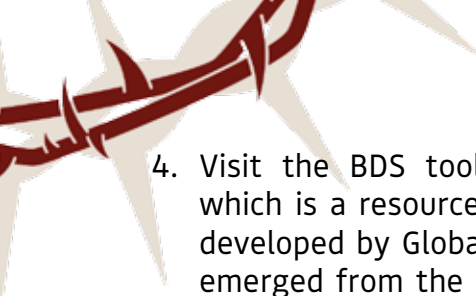
*It is not just despots who work to maintain the status quo. Progressive leaders caution against too much change; they resist the sharing of power. A just peace won't happen until civil society demands justice. Be encouraged to commit - or recommit - your heart, hands and voice to courageously work for repair, renewal and resurrection through a grassroots movement in your part of the world.*



***Kairos Palestine urges you to, please, do the following:***

1. Distribute and study these theological reflections in your places of worship throughout the holy week of Easter to inform and educate your community about the suffering of your Palestinian family living under Israeli occupation.
2. Share the alert with congregations, regions, conferences, presbyteries and dioceses across your country.
3. Read Kairos Palestine and its partners “Cry for Hope” which was launched on the 1st of July 2020; sign it by visiting the website ([cryforhope.org](http://cryforhope.org)) and support the implementation of its seven recommendations:
  - a. Initiate processes at local, denominational and ecumenical levels that lead to decisive action regarding the denial of Palestinian rights.
  - b. Confront theologies and understandings of the Bible that justify the oppression of the Palestinian people.
  - c. Demand that governments and world bodies employ political, diplomatic and economic means to stop Israel’s violations of human rights and international law.
  - d. Oppose equating criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism.
  - e. Support initiatives between Israelis and Palestinians and interfaith partnerships that oppose apartheid and create opportunities to work together for justice and equality.
  - f. Support Palestinian resistance, including Boycott Divestment (BDS) and Sanctions and direct political advocacy



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4. Visit the BDS toolkit website <https://bdstoolkit.org/> which is a resource launched on Nov. 16th, 2020 and developed by Global Kairos for Justice, a network that emerged from the Kairos Palestine conference held in Bethlehem in 2018 which was a follow up to the 2009 groundbreaking document, Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth. Please share the BDS toolkit website with congregations, regions, conferences, presbyteries and dioceses across your country.
  5. Come and see the reality in the Holy Land to stand in solidarity with grassroots initiatives for a just peace.
  6. Send letters of solidarity and support for justice in Palestine/Israel to the Israeli embassies in your own country. For further information, see [www.allembassies.com/israeli\\_embassies.htm](http://www.allembassies.com/israeli_embassies.htm)
  7. Inform your Palestinian brothers and sisters about the ways you have been involved with the Easter Alert by writing us at this email address: [kairos@kairospalestine.ps](mailto:kairos@kairospalestine.ps). Contact us for any other reason, too. Our strength and courage are emboldened by our contacts with you.

