

Kairos Palestine

Easter Alert

Together

towards the

Year of Jubilee



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*“The spirit of The Lord is on me,
because he anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recover the sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour”*

(Luke 4, 18-19)



Introduction

By Hind Khoury, KP Secretary General

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Easter is the time to turn to Jerusalem where Jesus manifested his infinite love to all people. Through his immeasurable sacrifice he redeemed us from sin and through his human fullness, made us all worthy of life. Through his death and resurrection, He elevated us to be one with Him, if we so choose.



More than anything else, it is this “new human being capable of rising up in the spirit to love each one of his or her brothers and sisters” (Kairos Palestine -KP- 10) that is direly needed today. This aching Holy Land needs to be healed from the wounds of violence, the blindness of extremism and the destructive forces of oppression and death. Together we need to be empowered by love and truth so that we can roll away the stones of injustice to bring freedom and dignity to the oppressed and downtrodden.

We, the Palestinian people and the indigenous people of this Holy Land, still seek salvation from oppression and occupation after a century of struggle for life with dignity. The hope for peace, which we all seek in this part of the world, is not looming on the horizon. Unfortunately, Israel is adamant to continue to plague us with colonial settlement expansion, the grabbing of our natural resources, and the denial of our basic freedoms and God given rights in order to rid the land of as many Palestinian Christians and Muslims as possible.

The latest escalation of violence began in October 2015 in the Holy City. This is the revolt of a new generation of young Palestinians who object and stand in the face of painful discrimination, land expropriations, home demolitions, illegal detentions, daily oppression and humiliation. This new wave of violence killed over 180 Palestinians and 28 Israelis by the end of February 2016. While we mourn all loss of life, we condemn Israeli collective punishment of the Palestinian people which is bringing more destruction, poverty, devastation and despair to the four million Palestinians living in occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the besieged Gaza. No one is spared, even the youngsters between the ages of 9 and 18 years. Clearly the occupation seems adamant to terrorize and paralyze a whole generation of young Palestinians so that they never lift their heads to object to their own oppression and humiliation.

Jerusalem continues to be out of reach to Palestinian Muslims and Christians for pilgrimage and for prayers, except through a hard-to-obtain permit system, made especially rigorous during the last ten years. Upon arriving at the Old City of Jerusalem, even with permits, Christians face road blocks and the closed gates



of the Holy City by Israeli security forces. Armed with the excuse of security, Israeli occupation seems determined to destroy the spirit of Easter, not only by imposing confrontations and violence but also by denying us the continued practice of our centuries-old Christian traditions so far preserved in Palestine in spite of millennia of occupations and wars.

We, Palestinian Christians, will not stop seeking the salvation promised to us through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem: a salvation from the five-decades long occupation of our land; a salvation from the mourning and sadness we feel with every Palestinian killed, held in prison or evicted from his or her home. As people of faith and conscience, we hold on to the promise of life with dignity.

This Easter we mark the forty-ninth commemoration of the occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights. The Old Testament calls the faithful to celebrate the fiftieth year as a Jubilee (Lev. 25:11-12), a special year, a KAIROS year, a special moment to raise the voice of the righteous, to take the side of justice and to promote just peace and true reconciliation. This Easter Alert is guided by the scripture of Luke 4:18-19:

“ The spirit of The Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

For this Easter celebration, all the way to Pentecost, we invite our brothers and sisters to share and pray with us over seven weeks, guided by theological reflections and professional reports. Let us all, congregations, seminaries, organizations and individuals, amplify the voice of justice as called upon in our Kairos Palestine document, and insist on accountability and liberation of both the oppressed and the oppressor .

In the following literature, **H.B. Michel Sabah** is calling Israel and the world for a new human vision which will bring freedom and security to all.

Bishop Atallah Hanna reminds us how the Palestinian people are still waiting for their resurrection from occupation and injustice.

Dr. Nassar Ibrahim from the Alternative Information Center (AIC) in Beit Sahour describes the systemic destruction of the Palestinian economy and its subjugation to Israeli hegemony.



Defense for Children International – Palestine (DCIP) describes the inhuman conditions and flagrant violations of the rights of Palestinian children through detentions, investigations and torture.

Reverend Dr. Munther Isaac shed the light on how Christian Zionists are viewed through the perspective of Palestinian Christians.

Al Mezan for Human Rights, Gaza shares with us the experience of one of the biggest human catastrophes: life in Gaza. Gaza is the isolated little strip of land on the Mediterranean coast, where Palestinians are confronted with devastating living conditions, the inability of reconstruction under conditions of siege and three consecutive wars and the apathy of the International Community.

The Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ) describes “Israel’s settlement enterprise” which may end with a tiny and fragmented Palestinian state tailored to Israeli colonial interests, far away from justice and a life with dignity for Palestinians.

Rev. Dr. Yohanna Katanacho beautifully presents the power of liberating love without which no peace can be built, no fear can be overcome and no hope can be found.

BADIL, which follows the situation of the refugees, tells us the story of millions of internally displaced Palestinians and their second class treatment as Palestinians living inside Israel. Little is known about the dramatic discriminatory situation Palestinians are living under in the so called “only democracy in the Middle East”.

Al-Haq, the Ramallah-based human rights organization, reminds us of the responsibility of the international community. How many resolutions have been passed? How many International Laws have been violated? It is time to hold the occupying power as well as the International community accountable for what is happening in Palestine!

Finally, **Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb** introduces us to the claim of Jubilee and its background and interpretation in the Bible. After nearly fifty years under occupation, he call upon the Arab, Islamic and Western nations to seize the moment now before it is too late.



We hereby provide you, dear brothers and sisters, with different perspectives of the truth and recall a theology that can lead to liberation, justice, dignity and security for all. We seek the prophetic in each one of us to struggle for what we believe is true; we also seek the courage that will expose and reject false accusations and reject ongoing patterns of criminalizing the victim and victimizing the criminal, or launching accusations of terrorism, anti-Semitism and replacement theology to hide injustice and instill fear.

Let us promote truth, life and joy. Join us in this campaign of love and justice. Let us work incessantly for true peace and reconciliation. Let us partake in the redemption of our shared humanity.

Wishing you all, our dear brothers and sisters, an Easter of renewal and rebirth.

Hind Khoury,
Secretary General, Kairos Palestine



Week 1 – The Spirit of the Lord is on me

A call for action is a call for hope!

By His Excellency Patriarch emerit. Michel Sabbah

Christ is risen. We believe. We rejoice. In our endless Palestinian-Israeli tragedy, we look to the Resurrection. It is the joy of the risen Christ. For us it is the power of life over death and sin.

Before his death, Jesus said to his apostles: “The prince of this world has come. He has no power on me” (Jn 14:30). The prince of this world is here now present in our tragedy. But Jesus told us also, and we believe: “He has no power over me», neither over us. He can kill bodies, but he cannot kill the human being created by God. Jesus said, “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul” (Mathew 10:28).



Our situation, i.e., the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in its essence has been at an impasse for years. There is no light in the deep, long tunnel in which we live. The Israeli will is clear: no Palestine, no peace, the taking of more and more Palestinian land for settlements and settlers, and keeping Palestinians in bantustans with a shadow Palestinian Authority.

The situation is unbearable: no freedom, no dignity, no normal economy. Daily humiliation at checkpoints, where Israeli soldiers have carte blanche to humiliate and even to kill a Palestinian, for the least threat, real or perceived.

Palestinians do not know what to do. There are Palestinians today, in the present Intifada, who want revenge; they seek to kill and to be killed. They do so out of despair: no freedom, no dignity, sometimes no home and no bread.

With this desperate situation, our Easter message is an Easter alert. A cry to the Israeli authorities: change your vision. Embrace a human vision. Your own security depends on a broadened vision in which you see the Palestinian as a human being, not someone to crush and to make disappear. Free yourself from a distorted vision. Stop sending settlers to Palestinian land. Share the land, keep the land you conquered in 1948, the 78% of historic Palestine. Give back to the Palestinians the land you have occupied since 1967, the shrinking 22%.

If you want to make the land human, if you want to make it once again a land for God and humans, you have to change your vision. You will be the winners, if you achieve peace, both for yourselves, and for the Palestinians.



Palestinians, be patient. You, who go to get killed, keep your lives. Do not die. Do not kill. Listen to the Holy Scripture: "I shall not die, I shall live" (Psalm 118: 17). Peace, justice and Palestine need you alive. Do not despair. You believe in God. He is great. He is almighty, he is greater than all earthly powers. Trust Him, though His time is long. Try to bring dignity to your daily lives despite all the humiliation and oppression that the Israelis impose upon you. The best resistance to the Israeli occupation is to remain alive and to believe in your God given dignity.



Israelis, who see the right vision, help your government to see. Help your people to understand that Palestinians are not terrorists, but people deprived by your government's policies and your actions of their freedom and dignity. They want freedom and independence. They do not want to kill. They are able to live in peace, side by side, with you. Your own security depends on the security of the Palestinians. The Palestinians, free and independent, will be your protectors and your key to embrace and be welcomed by the entire Arab world.

Israeli authorities, listen to the word of God who is peace. Who speaks peace. Who listens to the poor and the oppressed. "I am listening to what God the lord will speak; He will speak peace" (Psalm 85: 8). "They cry in anguish and God hears. His ear turned to their cry. God is near to the broken hearted. He helps those whose spirit is crushed" (Psalm 34: 17-18).



It is Easter. It is Pesach, with its memory of the Exodus. Moses said to Pharaoh: "Let my people go" (Exodus 5: 1) from slavery to freedom. Moses and God tell you today: find your own freedom again by giving freedom to the Palestinian people whom you keep under occupation. "Free the Palestinian people from your occupation."

Palestinian leaders, maintain your attitude of readiness to make peace. Your situation is difficult as you face the rebellion of your people. Palestinian people, you have to resist, in a way that will help your leaders, and the Israelis themselves put an end to the Occupation. Claim your freedom, your land, your independence. Your aim is not to kill Israelis but to be given back your freedom and dignity. With the logic of life, of humanity, resist and insist on your rights, to be human beings enjoying what God has given just as He has given every human being on earth.

Easter is Resurrection after the Passion and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that our suffering which has gone on for generations has redemptive value. We believe that our lives in the light of the Resurrection will enlighten us and the Israelis to bring our tragedy to an end.

Jesus, the risen Lord, confirms us in life: "In the world you will have hardship; but be courageous, I have conquered the world" (Jn 16: 33).

Christ is risen. We believe. In the risen Lord we renew our life, our faith, and our strength.

H.B. Patriarch Michel Sabbah served as the Latin (Roman Catholic) Patriarch of Jerusalem from 1987 to 2008.

He made higher studies and obtained PHD in Arabic philology. After having taught Arabic language, and after several pastoral works, he was appointed President of Bethlehem University. In 1987, Pope John Paul II appointed him Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Since 1999, Patriarch Sabbah has been the International President of Pax Christi, a Catholic organization promoting peace.

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.



Week 2 – Proclaim good news to the poor

The Cross of Injustice – Easter Reflections

By His Excellency Bishop Atallah Hanna

In the period of Lent we seek repentance and a return to God.

During Holy Week we put the cross of our redeemer in front of us, contemplate his sacrifice, redemption and what he gave us for our consecration and emancipation from sin. His love was incarnated on the cross. He was buried in the tomb and rose triumphant over death on the third day. Therefore, on Easter we share greetings among ourselves by saying Christ has truly risen.



Palestine is the land of the cross, suffering, burial and resurrection: the land where the love of God for man was personified. Therefore we have the right as Palestinians, Christians and Muslims, to be proud and gratified that our homeland is a sacred place and honored by all believers of the three monotheistic religions. It is the land of redemption and holiness, and every corner speaks of its history, culture, spiritual and human identity.

Palestinian Christians during Holy Week carry the cross and walk through the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem to Calvary and the empty tomb. They carry the cross and pray to our crucified Lord in order to bless them and grant them mercy, peace and justice.

Palestinian Christians carry the cross of passion and agony of the Lord Jesus Christ and walk toward Calvary knowing that they are also carrying another cross of a different kind: the cross of injustice, racism and oppression against the Palestinian people for many years. It is the cross of occupation and discriminatory practices carried by the Palestinians Christians and Muslims as they walk with pain and suffering without interruption from 1948 and 1967 until today. They live in the hope that the day of freedom will come and the dawn of resurrection of Christ and his holy light will enhance their conviction that there is an end to the suffering and pain of their people.

The Easter message to our Palestinian people is a message of hope and faith in these difficult days that we are living. Our Arab region is inflamed, the Palestinian divisions are still going on and the occupation is persisting in its policies in targeting our holy places, land, identity, culture and humanity.



At Easter we emphasize that we are united with the light of resurrection. Our faith and resolve, consistency and steadfastness will not quench our resurrection. Our enemies want us to be in a state of defeat and despair. At Easter, as in all our feasts and events, we say that we will not despair and will not give up our right to live in freedom and dignity in our homeland.

Christ was resurrected for all. The Resurrection of Jesus is for all human beings. He was resurrected to remove the barriers which separate man from his fellow-man; to say to the suffering people that he is with them in their pain and suffering; and to the oppressed and mistreated that he wants to remove injustice and oppression so that they can enjoy freedom. His resurrection is a message to each and every one of our people that they deserve freedom; they have to continue their struggle and quest for liberty, and keep devoted to the high values, ethics and principles. Our cause is just and we should all strive to defeat the occupation and liberate our people from all discriminatory practices.

Kairos Palestine is a document of hope at this difficult time in which violence and terror is spreading everywhere and our people are still under occupation. This document is not a message of solidarity with the Palestinian people only, but a message which adopts our just cause and defends it by peaceful, human and civilized means.

At Easter as in all our feasts and events, we, the Palestinian Christians, emphasize that we are supporting the just cause of our people and their legitimate struggle





for freedom. Let the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ be a source of blessing, hope and good for this tormented Holy Land. Let the end of pain and suffering of our people lead to freedom, decent life, safety and peace in our dear homeland, away from the walls of segregation and inhumane practices, oppression and injustice.

I hope that the churches of the world in this period of Lent, Holy Week and Easter will remember our people in their prayers, and pray for the city of Jerusalem, the city of Passion, Resurrection and light of the Lord.

Born in 1965 in the Galilean village of Al Rameh, Theodosius (Atallah) Hanna attended local primary and secondary schools before entering the Clerical Patriarchate School in Jerusalem. In 1983 he matriculated at Thessalonica University in Greece in the Faculty of Theology. After graduating with honors, he went on to complete a master's degree and doctorate. In 1991 he was ordained as a deacon and priest in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The late Patriarch Diodoros invested him as Archimandrite, and there after he was appointed Head of the Arabic Department for the Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem in which he acted as a spokesman for the Orthodox Church in Jerusalem and the Holy Land.



“ 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 lords 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 Document, Chapter 9.5



Palestine: Destruction, Distortion, Domination and Annexation

By Dr. Nassar Ibrahim, AIC Beit Sahour

Palestinian economy has not been independent in centuries. Like the economies of other Arab countries, for four centuries, it has undergone control, looting and destruction during the Ottoman rule. Then it came under the British colonial rule in Palestine, followed by the Nakbah in 1948 which uprooted the Palestinians from their land. Following the Israeli occupation, the Palestinian economy came under the control of the Israeli colonial power. All of this made the already weak Palestinian economy an easy target for mutilation and destruction resulting in deep structural disparities.

When the Oslo Accords were signed on 13 September 1993, it was said that Palestine would witness tremendous economic prosperity, becoming something like 'Hong Kong'. Since that date, many efforts were made to enable the Palestinian economy, yet we did not see a new Hong Kong in Palestine, nor even what is much less than that. In fact, the Oslo Accords and its different annexes, like the Paris Economic Protocol signed on 29 April 1995, and the Cairo Security Agreement signed in 1994, placed the Palestinian people in the grip of a tight



triangle, like the Bermuda triangle, in which the incoming disappeared and the outgoing is not seen yet.

The three sides of this triangle are: First, a political blockade set by the Declaration of Principles of the Oslo Accords, which specified that the responsibilities and powers of the Palestinian Authority should not conflict with the interests of the occupation or realities imposed on the ground. Second, the Paris Economic Protocol tightened the control on the Palestinian economy, without leaving a chance for development or independence. Third, the Oslo Accords eased the burden on the Israeli occupation by giving the responsibility of security in the West Bank and Gaza to the Palestinian security services.

In fact, understanding the size of the suffering of the Palestinian people at the economic level requires an awareness of the contexts experienced by this economy and the factors which control it. The first of these factors is the Israeli policies and strategies for its control and destruction. These policies began with the occupation of Palestine and were designed to expel its inhabitants, confiscate their homes, land, and natural resources, and furthermore, restructure their economy to become subordinate to the requirements of the Israeli economy.

The awareness of this reality necessarily requires an attention to the equation which controls the relationship between the Israeli powerful and sophisticated economy and the Palestinian traditional agricultural economy. In this equation, the strong economy is using the weak economy in a way that increases its destruction and distorts its structure in order to increase the profit for the strong and dominant economy. It is enough here to point out the enormous difference between the Palestinian and Israeli economies, taking into account that there is no serious difference in terms of population: the GDP of the Palestinian Authority in 2013 was 5,435.1 million US Dollars in the West Bank, and 2,020.5 million in Gaza (totaling 7,455.6 million), while the GDP in Israel is 290.555 million. The GDP per capita in 2013 was \$ 2,202.2 in the West Bank, and \$ 1,187.5 in Gaza (overall rate of West Bank and Gaza \$3.016), with the average GDP per capita in Israel being \$ 36.067.¹

In lieu of this perspective, we can see the conditions provided by the Paris Economic Protocol. In fact, the role of this protocol was to control the process of development of the Palestinian economy in order to prevent any possibility of building a defying national economy. “This agreement was not an economic cooperation agreement between the two countries in the literal sense of the word, but an agreement to regulate the relationship of the Palestinian economy with the occupation, and to keep the control of the occupation on the Palestinian economy. One of the most prominent features is the continuous control of goods, people, crossings by land, sea and air, and thus the control of movement of exports and imports, and furthermore, the continuous control of the tax collection revenues

¹ Zaytuna Center for Studies and Consultancy - Beirut 2015.





to the Palestinian authority, which make up about 60 percent of local revenues, and the use of the return of this revenue to the authority as a tool to blackmail and subjugate the Palestinian people.”²

All of these ongoing operations resulted in a weak and fragile Palestinian economy and its subordination to the Israeli economy. Furthermore, the external financing according to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank’s terms and conditions, is based on privatization which increased the economic burdens on the Palestinian citizen. This process was not spontaneous at all, but has been planned consciously. In fact, Shimon Peres, the Israeli Prime Minister during the first phase of the negotiations included in the negotiating team many businessmen and representatives of the Israeli economic interests. The goal of the Israeli businessmen was the transformation of the occupation into a new colonial enterprise in which the Palestinians cannot get autonomy, but at the same time, ensure the continuation of dependence of the Palestinian economy on his Israeli counterpart.⁵

These economic arrangements did not lead to any positive change in the Palestinian economy, but promoted the pattern which was prevailing since 1967, represented by the unilateral Israeli control of the customs system. The Palestinian economy losses from the customs revenue as a result of the application of unilateral customs system has been estimated in the period between 1970 and 1987 in the range of 6-11 billion US dollars, representing 13% of the Palestinian national

² Zaytuna Center for Studies and Consultancy, Beirut, 2015

³ Selby, 2003: 9-76, 7-95.



income. Thus, it is possible to assume here that this revenue level has risen with the beginning of the year 1995, the year when Israel began to transfer customs revenues to the treasury of the Palestinian Authority. The agreements signed between the two parties did not refer to this revenue and did not oblige Israel to return it to the Palestinian treasury.⁴ In the same context, a study prepared by the Alternative Information Center and KAV Foundation indicates that the total amount with the bank interest owed by the State of Israel for Palestinian workers for the period 1970 - 2009 equals 8 billion and 346 thousand US dollars.⁵

These facts make us aware of the structural problem facing the Palestinian economy, despite the launch of several strategic development plans since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority under the title of sustainable development. The result was an evident decline in the standard of living and the erosion of wages due to higher prices and the increase in unemployment. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) report in 2015, the GDP in Palestine fell 2.5% in 2014 compared with 2013, resulting in a lower income per capita in gross domestic product by more than 5% during 2014 compared with 2013. The total number of Palestinian workers in the local labor market has been stable in 2014 compared with 2013 despite the natural increase of the population. This shows the weakness of the capacity of the local labor market. The unemployment rate experienced an increase during 2014, up to about 27% from 24% in 2013.

Finally, the losses suffered by the Palestinian economy are the direct result of the systematic, historical and political process that led to the annexation of this economy to the Israeli economy. It is a deep and long-term process targeting a control over the natural resources, especially land and groundwater, as well as the industry sectors which have been marginalized and subjected to the requirements of the Israeli market and economy, as well as the exploitation of a high proportion of the Palestinian labor force in the Israeli black market; control of the foreign trade; taxation and financial movement.

Facing all these facts and policies is only possible through a radical Palestinian resistant economic strategy as part of the national political and social liberation process. In this context, the Palestinian people must focus on the importance of social solidarity and resistant economy. This requires an investment of all available capacities, fighting corruption, strengthening social solidarity, good management of human and natural resources with priority to the public sector and public infrastructure. We should resist any attempts aimed at subjugating the basic needs of the people to the mercy of the brutal market governed by the devastating Israeli neoliberal economy approach.

4 Gordon, 2008 p.186. Sher Hefer. Political Economy of the Israeli Occupation: The Exploitation as a Tool for Repression. Pluto Press, London, 2010

5 Hanna Zohar, Sher Hefer. State of Israel Owes Billions of Shekels for Palestinian Workers. 2010, p. 7.



Nassar Ibrahim is a Palestinian political analyst, writer, author and Co-Director of the Alternative Information Center (AIC). The AIC believes that peace can be just and lasting only when based on ending Israel's colonial occupation, securing the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the right of refugees to return. Only such a just peace, based on international law, can guarantee individual and collective rights of both Palestinians and Israelis.

Founded in 1984, the AIC acts as a material bridge and platform for politically responsible cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis and a counter to the prevailing philosophies and practices of separation between the two communities. What has allowed the AIC to flourish over 30 years when so many other joint initiatives came and went, is its clear socio-political foundation.



What is the meaning of resistance to us?

“ We say that our option as Christians in the face of the Israeli occupation is to resist. Resistance is a right and a duty for the Christian. But it is resistance with love as its logic. It is thus a creative resistance for it must find human ways that engage the humanity of the enemy. Seeing the image of God in the face of the enemy means taking up positions in the light of this vision of active resistance to stop the injustice and oblige the perpetrator to end his aggression and thus achieve the desired goal, which is getting back the land, freedom, dignity and independence. ”

Kairos Document, Chapter 4.2



Week 3 – To Proclaim Freedom for the Prisoners

No Way to Treat a Child

By Defense for Children International - Palestine

Amid heightened violence in the fall of 2015, the number of Palestinian children in Israeli prisons skyrocketed to the highest it has been since February 2009. By the end of December, 422 Palestinian children were in the Israeli prison system. Among them were 116 between the ages of 12 and 15, the highest known total since January 2008 when the Israel Prison Service began sharing data.

Palestinian children in the occupied West Bank, like adults, face arrest, prosecution, and imprisonment under an Israeli military detention system that denies them basic rights. Military law has applied to Palestinians in the West Bank since 1967, when Israel occupied the territory following the Six Day War. Israeli settlers, however, who reside within the bounds of the West Bank, in violation of international law, are subject to the Israeli civilian legal framework. Accordingly, Israel operates two separate legal systems in the same territory.

Estimates place the number of Palestinian men, women, and children convicted in Israeli military courts in excess of 700,000, according to UN sources. The U.S. State Department’s 2014 human rights report on Israel states that military courts have more than a 99 percent conviction rate for Palestinian defendants.

Israel has the dubious distinction of being the only country in the world that systematically prosecutes between 500 and 700 children in military courts each year. Since 2011, Israel has held an average of 201 Palestinian children in custody each month, according to data provided by the Israel Prison Service.

Ill-treatment in the Israeli military detention system remains “widespread, systematic, and institutionalized throughout the process,” according to the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) report, *Children in Israeli Military Detention Observations and Recommendations*.

Defense for Children International – Palestine (DCIP) collected affidavits from 429 West Bank children detained between 2012 and 2015 that three-quarters of them endured some form of physical violence following arrest. In 97 percent of the cases, children had no parent present during the interrogation or access to legal counsel. Israeli police also did not properly inform them of their rights in 84 percent of the cases.

Interrogators used position abuse, threats, and isolation to coerce confessions from some of these children. DCIP documented 66 children held in solitary confinement, for an average period of 13 days, during the reporting period. In





2015, Israeli authorities held Abdel-Fatah Ouri, 17, in isolation for 45 days. More than 90 percent of children held in solitary confinement provided a confession.

Recent amendments to Israeli military law concerning children have had little to no impact on their treatment during the first 24 to 48 hours after an arrest, when most of the ill-treatment occurs at the hands of Israeli soldiers, police, and the security service.

Israeli military court judges seldom exclude confessions obtained by coercion or torture, even those drafted in Hebrew, a language that most Palestinian children do not understand. In fact, military prosecutors rely, sometimes solely, on these confessions to obtain a conviction.

Children most commonly face the charge of throwing stones – 235 out of 297 cases closed by DCIP attorneys between 2012 and 2015 involved at least one count of the offense – which carries maximum sentences of 10 or 20 years, depending on the circumstances.

Children must appear before a military court judge within 24 to 96 hours after their arrest, depending on their age. For most, this serves as the first time they see a lawyer and their family.

Many children maintain their innocence, but plead guilty – most receive plea deals of less than 12 months – as the fastest way to get out of the system. Trials,



on the other hand, can last a year, possibly longer, during which children remain behind bars as the military courts deny bail in the majority of cases.

Israeli authorities transfer nearly 60 percent of Palestinian child detainees from occupied territory to prisons inside Israel in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, according to Israel Prison Service data. As a practical consequence, children have limited family visits as parents struggle to obtain entry permits to Israel.

East Jerusalem

Palestinian children living in the West Bank might sometimes envy their East Jerusalem peers for their relatively higher levels of freedom of movement and enshrined legal rights. The latter of these is particularly salient as Palestinian children living in Jerusalem are generally entitled to trials in Israeli civilian courts.

The legal distinctions between East Jerusalem and the West Bank trace back to 1967, when Israel captured that part of the city and declared all of Jerusalem its “indivisible” capital. Since then, Palestinian children who happen to live in Jerusalem fall under Israeli civilian law.

The legal gap between Palestinian children in the West Bank and Jerusalem expanded further—at least, in theory—when Israel amended the 1971 Youth Law



(Adjudication, Punishment and Methods of Treatment) in 2008. The amendments promised new protections for children, including East Jerusalemites, in conflict with the law during the entire process— arrest, transfer, interrogation, and trial. These safeguards included the use of arrest as a last resort, advance notice before questioning takes place, minimal use of restraints, and the presence of a legal guardian or adult family member during questioning.

Given the prescribed differences in these two legal systems, one would logically expect fairly different rights outcomes for Palestinian children in conflict with the law based on whether they live in Jerusalem or the West Bank. At least on paper, Palestinian Jerusalemite children are entitled to more protections than West Bank youth.

However, data compiled by DCIP found that, in practice, Palestinian children in Jerusalem are not enjoying their enshrined rights. Out of 65 cases documented by DCIP in 2015, more than a third of Jerusalem youth were arrested at night (38.5 percent), the vast majority (87.7 percent) were restrained during arrest and only a slim minority of children (10.8 percent) had a parent or lawyer present during interrogation.

In fact, in the last year, East Jerusalem children suspected of committing criminal offenses saw rights violations in several categories at comparable rates to West Bank children. For example, cases documented by DCIP showed 69.2 percent of detained Jerusalem children suffered some form of physical violence at the



hands of Israeli forces compared to 74.5 percent of West Bank children. For night arrest cases, there was nearly no difference between the two groups.

Although they had better outcomes than their West Bank peers along a few axis, such as rights notifications and access to a toilet between arrest and interrogation, they also suffered much higher rates of position abuse during interrogation.

As a whole, it is apparent that Israeli civilian laws, when applied to Palestinian children from Jerusalem do not approach “guarantee” rates. DCIP analysis found that this is because Israel over-applies the exception clause of its Youth Law to Palestinian children—meaning that for East Jerusalem children, the exception is the rule.

Administrative Detention

In December 2015, Israeli authorities approved a six-month administrative detention order for a 17-year-old youth from Jerusalem, Mohammad Hashlamoun. Up until October 2015, DCIP had never documented cases of administrative detention for Palestinian children from East Jerusalem. That month, the measure was used against three East Jerusalem youth. Administrative detention is the imprisonment of individuals by the state for prolonged periods without charge or trial.

Mohammad was arrested from his home in the Ras al-Amoud neighborhood of Jerusalem around 2 a.m. on December 3, 2015. He was denied access to an attorney, and subjected to repeated prolonged interrogation sessions while being held in solitary confinement for 22 days. He denied accusations that he was planning to carry out unspecified future attacks, even when the interrogator threatened to have his family home demolished.

“The last time I appeared in the magistrates’ court in Jerusalem, the court decided to release me on bail,” Mohammad told DCIP. “But before my family could post the bail, an intelligence officer came to the detention center and asked me to sign a document stating that I had received an order of administrative detention.”

The administrative detention order against Mohammad will expire on June 20, 2016. However, the Emergency Powers Law of 1979 permits the administrative detention of any person in Israel for a period of up to six months, subject to indefinite renewals.

Between October 2015 and February 2016, Israeli authorities also placed four Palestinian teenagers from the West Bank under administrative detention. Israeli Military Order 1651 permits a military commander to issue an administrative detention order for a period of up to six months, subject to indefinite renewals.



The most recent order was against the youngest of the children, 15-year-old Abdul-Rahman Kmail, from Jenin. An Israeli military court confirmed his administrative detention order on February 16, but reduced the period from six months to four.

These cases mark the first time Israel has used the measure against Palestinian children in the West Bank since December 2011.

Control System

Arresting children from their homes in the middle of the night, abusing them during arrest and interrogation, and systematically denying them basic fair trial guarantees works to stifle dissent and control Palestinian families and communities throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

There is a notion that Israeli military courts are «broken» and can be improved or “fixed.” This mistakenly presumes that the Israeli military detention and court system is interested in administering justice. In Jerusalem, increased legal rights have done little to increase protections for Palestinian children.

As Palestinian children continue to experience widespread ill-treatment and torture and the systematic denial of due process rights, it becomes evident that a system of control is masquerading as justice.

Defense for Children International Palestine (DCIP) is committed to securing a just and viable future for Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. For more than twenty years, DCIP have supported and advocated for this child population: investigating and documenting grave human rights violations, holding both Israeli and Palestinian authorities to account, and providing legal services to children in urgent need. DCIP will continue to demand national and international bodies enact stronger measures to safeguard this vulnerable demographic of Palestinian society.





“This is a time for repentance. Repentance brings us back into the communion of love with everyone who suffers, the prisoners, the wounded, those afflicted with temporary or permanent handicaps, the children who cannot live their childhood and each one who mourns a dear one. The communion of love says to every believer in spirit and in truth: if my brother is a prisoner I am a prisoner; if his home is destroyed, my home is destroyed; when my brother is killed, then I too am killed. We face the same challenges and share in all that has happened and will happen.”

Kairos Document, Chapter 5.2



Week 4 – Recovery Sight of the Blind

Christian Zionism through Palestinian Eyes

By Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac

How do Palestinians perceive Christian Zionism? I will argue, that Christian Zionism is more than just a theological belief about Israel and Jews – it is an Imperial Theology. Today, it is also – willingly or not – a political movement. Let me start with a short definition of Christian Zionism as Robert Smith defines it:



Christian Zionism is political action, informed by specifically Christian commitments, to promote or preserve Jewish control over the geographic area now comprising Israel and Palestine.

With this paper I want to show that Christian Zionism is an Imperial Theology. These thoughts are the result of years of engagement with evangelical Christians around the issue of Palestine and Israel. The quotes I will use are representative of what I heard over the years. My aim is not to attack individuals, but beliefs and positions.

A Chosen State!

Christian Zionists emphasize that the Jews are the chosen people of God today, and with that chosenness comes entitlement and privilege. This is not simply a theological belief about the Jewish people. But with the modern state of Israel being confused with the Jews and biblical Israel, any opposition to the state of Israel or the occupation is deemed anti-Jewish, and by implication anti-God!

Joel Rosenberg, a regular Fox News analyst and NY Times bestseller, explains that if the US would turn against Israel, this would result in an existential threat to the future of the United States. Rosenberg, like numerous others, bases this on Genesis: “In Genesis 12:1-3, the Lord God vows that He will bless those who bless Israel and the Jewish people, and curse those who curse them.”

What amazes me is that Gen. 12:1-3 does not actually mention Israel. It is about Abraham. This verse comes in the midst of a glorious mandate to Abraham to become a blessing to the nations – a mandate that was eventually fulfilled in Jesus, who is Abraham’s seed according to Paul, when he died on the cross. How was this glorious promise turned into the recipe of foreign policy today towards a secular state?



Justice Relativized

In this rational even the justice of God is relativized or qualified – it is relative to Christian Zionists presuppositions. As such, Daniel Juster, a Messianic Jewish theologian, can argue: if Palestinians refuse to recognize what God says about the Jewish people and their connection to the land of Israel, then suffering will result. Justice in regards to the Land requires that there be a submission to what God has declared about this Land. So if the Palestinians do not acknowledge God’s promise, they are foundationally unjust and are themselves resisted by God and lose their rights in the Land. The quote speaks for itself.

Control the narrative

Christian Zionism is strong and powerful in controlling the narrative. Language here matters. Consider, for example, the notion that Jews “returned” to “their” Land. So, now, if someone who is born in Russia today can prove that his grandmother is Jew, he has more right to live in this land than a Palestinian refugee who was born here and who can trace his roots in the land for hundreds if not thousands of years.

We can also speak here about the role of archaeology and historiography, where Palestine is portrayed as ‘virtually barren, desolate and empty, waiting to be made fertile and populated by Israel.’

There is also a double standard when it comes to contemporary realities. Almost every time I speak to a Christian Zionist group I am asked: “Do you acknowledge Israel’s right to exist?” It is quite amazing to me that I, the occupied am being asked to recognize the right of my occupier to exist! Does Israel acknowledge my right to exist? And do you as Christians who seek to defend Israel give me the right to exist and the right for self-determination? The same applies about self-defense. Christian Zionists insist that Israel has the right to defend itself. But do Palestinians have the right to defend themselves when their land is confiscated or when settlers burn their fields or homes?

Palestinians Dehumanized

A theology that privileges a people group produces prejudice and even bigotry. In the theology of Christian Zionism, Palestinians are often viewed as an irrelevant after-thought. They are secondary to the interest of Israel. From the very beginning, even before the birth of Zionism, Lord Shaftesbury (who was president of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews (now known as CMJ) argued for: “A country without a nation for a nation without a country”. I often wonder, did he know that the country had a nation? I am sure



he did, but you see, we were irrelevant. There was something more important. This, I believe reflects a typical colonial – dare I say even Christian – mentality. The land had people, but they can be easily moved.

Fear

This attitude of marginalizing becomes dehumanizing - and even the demonizing is utilized to create fear. Christian Zionism instills fear! Today, it is so easy to portray the Arabs and Islam as the enemy that we all need to fight and unite against. The world is divided into “good” vs. “evil”. The tragic persecution of Christians in the Middle East has provided the perfect opportunity for some to make political gains. This is why it suits many people in the West to characterize the conflict in Palestine as a religious one, where the good becomes the Judeo-Christian tradition (us), and the evil is Islam (them: the Palestinians). This, in return, justifies actions by Israel as war on terror, even fighting the war of God!

Judeo-Christian Tradition and Cultural Superiority

One of the common phrases we hear today in many Christian circles is the reference to the “Judeo-Christian” tradition or values. There is no time to consider the roots of this phrase. At first glance the phrase seems to affirm the common roots of Christianity and Judaism. Clearly, such an affirmation was and is needed in response to years of anti-Judaism.



The problem however is that the term is used today in such a way that it communicates superiority and prejudice. I am more and more convinced that the use of this term today has come to refer to cultural superiority. Mitri Raheb says, "It is utilized theologically and implicitly against the Palestinian people and within the context of the clash of civilization against Islam."

"Proper" Theology

Christian Zionism has no place for opposing views. You are either a Christian Zionist or anti-Semite! There is no middle ground. As a result, Palestinian Christians must conform to the Christian Zionist theology or else we are heretics or anti-Semites! This, again, reflects a mentality of superiority, a colonial mentality.

Don't get me wrong. We do reject and condemn any theology that teaches that God rejects the Jewish people today, or that they are cursed, or that the Jews of today are to be blamed for the death of Christ. But to demand from us that we should endorse Christian Zionist beliefs about the Jewish people and the land in order to have the right to protest our 68 years of tragedy is unacceptable!

A Kingdom of Meekness: An Alternative

The theme of the Christ at the Checkpoint conference is 'the Gospel in the Face of Religious Extremism.' We should offer a Gospel response – a Gospel message.

Jesus' theology – his kingdom theology – is solidarity with the marginalized! Who were his friends? Whom did he honor? Where did he mostly preach? This is important! Jesus never let fear cripple him from meeting people – even the rejected and despised.

What I call for is for Christians to reclaim the ethics and life style of Jesus, if we claim that he is the LORD - and to live out and declare what I will call a "Kingdom of Meekness". Probably the best place where we find this is the sermon on the mount, and in particular in the Beatitudes.

I suggest that we read the Beatitudes as Jesus' way of challenging the empire. Consider for example the qualities Jesus introduces for the people of the kingdom and how radically these qualities are different from those of the empire:

The poor in spirit – not the proud. Those who mourn – not those who live in prosperity. The meek – not the powerful; not empire builders. Those who hunger and thirst for justice – not for money, comfort, power, or fame. The merciful – not the powerful or the ruthless. The pure in heart – not those who seek a "pure" society. The peacemakers – not those who are indifferent to suffering! Those





persecuted for justice's sake – not the ones who stay in their comfort zone and do not speak the truth.

Jesus' way, his kingdom way, is radically different than that of the empire, from that of Christian Zionism.

Jesus said: "Blessed are the Meek, for they shall inherit the Land". The Meek – the powerless – empowered by truth and love – inherit the Land – any land. This is the Gospel in the face of power and extremism. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac (PhD, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies) is assistant professor at Bethlehem Bible College and director of the Influential Christ at the Checkpoint conferences. He is also a Reverend at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. His PhD research focused on the theology of the Promised Land.



Staring into the Abyss: Effects of 10 Years of Closure on Gaza and its People

By Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, Gaza

The continuously deteriorating human rights situation in Palestine, particularly in the besieged Gaza Strip, is largely shaped by the 49-years-long Israeli occupation and closure, frequent military attacks including large-scale military operations, as well as the internal Palestinian political schism.



Since the complete lockdown of the Strip began in 2006, Gaza's population had to endure three devastating wars that exacerbated the already precarious humanitarian situation. The Strip, stretching over 360 square kilometers, is home to roughly 1.8 million people, making Gaza the most densely populated area in the world. 1.1 million of the entire population in Gaza are refugees who need daily assistance by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). With one of the youngest populations in the world, where more than 50% are below the age of 18, Gaza is strained with the world's highest unemployment rates amounting to 38.4% (63% among youth, and 59.2% among women). As such, roughly 80% of Gaza's inhabitants are dependent on humanitarian aid.

In September 2015, developments in Jerusalem, including Israeli police raids at the Al Aqsa mosque plaza in Jerusalem's Old City and Israeli government threats to alter Jerusalem's status quo, instigated a wave of protests and attacks in the occupied West Bank. These developments gripped the already volatile region, with the conflict claiming more victims. The events have not gone unnoticed in Gaza. Demonstrations have also regularly been held in Gaza, resulting in 11 deaths and dozens of injuries. Since the beginning of the latest wave of violence, at least 170 Palestinians have been killed, thousands wounded, and dozens of Palestinian homes punitively demolished.

With the Gaza closure measures inflicting further harm to the population, the reconstruction of Gaza proving to be impossible under closure measures, violent Israeli responses to demonstrations, and deeper de-development pushing the population, especially the younger generations in Gaza, into despair, there is a growing concern that another escalation of the conflict in Gaza is looming



on the horizon. There is greater concern by this situation as the plight to ensure accountability and justice to improve protection has not been met with any adequate responses on either domestic or international levels.



As Israel's tight closure continues to be implemented in full effect, the quality of life for the people in Gaza has gone from bad to worse: the electricity and water supply are at an all-time low with outages reaching up to 16 hours a day for both water and electricity. Roughly 80 tons of untreated sewage continues to daily flow into the sea and permeate Gaza's already exhausted aquifer under the ground, all while the prohibition of importing materials essential for repairing the supply of these basic necessities continues to be strictly imposed by the occupying power. In addition, Israel still continues to control movement of people and goods, and comprehensively limits the access of people to healthcare and other basic services available in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Gravely ill people are largely denied permissions to travel and seek treatment, and when permitted, they are often detained for hours and coerced into collaboration with Israel in exchange for a free passage to a health facility.

The imposition of access restricted areas (ARA) for Gaza's farmers and fishermen, and Israel's embargo on export of most of Gazan produce have put a heavy burden on the already perishing economy. In spite of the fact that the Oslo agreement guaranteed sea-access of 20 nautical miles (nm) off the shore, Gaza's fishermen are today limited to fish within 3nm, and even within those limitations are subjected to frequent armed attacks, arbitrary detention and confiscation of boats and fishing gear by the Israeli navy. At the same time, Israel heavily inhibits import of building materials and goods that would help rebuild factories and infrastructure destroyed in previous wars.

In addition to these, in spite of the promise that Gaza would be reconstructed after Israel's military operation in 2014, rebuilding of housing is to this day almost non-existent, complicating the already catastrophic situation even more. The Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM) has completely failed to satisfy people's needs: the houses that were completely destroyed have not yet been rebuilt and the victims continue their life in displacement a year and a half after the destruction of their homes. The mechanism itself has proven to be a failure because it re-institutionalizes the closure over Gaza by the very severe measures on who is eligible for reconstruction and how. The shipments of cement are highly restricted, and responsibility is pushed from one party to the other, whereby victims suffer enormously. More than 60.000 families are still waiting to receive any kind of funding to reconstruct their partially damaged homes, while roughly





7,000 families have yet to receive financial support to start rebuilding their totally destroyed homes. In the background of these conditions, the prevalent culture of impunity blocks any attempts to change this situation, thus allowing for further violations to be committed and denying victims their right to justice or redress.

Although Israeli occupation is principally responsible for the devastating deterioration of living conditions for besieged Gazans, the internal split and its dangerous dynamics have had a significant role as well. Very little progress has been made to reconcile the two Palestinian political parties. The May 2014 agreement between the two political actors to bring the intra-Palestinian split to an end failed to be honored by both parties. At that time, Gaza had just started to recover from a devastating war in the summer of 2014, which led to thousands of casualties, injuries and property destruction. Although both parties have recently been claiming commitment to the cessation of the political divide, concrete actions have yet to be made in order to administratively unite the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

These developments have been used to excuse tightened control over Gaza's citizens. 2015 has seen further restrictions on freedom of speech and deterioration of respect for human rights in general. The Strip has seen an increase in criminal behavior, and with governmental employees receiving their salaries irregularly, the police have less resources to work with towards criminal cases. More people are choosing to take justice in their own hands. The internal split has also strongly affected the legal and justice system, where lack of unity starkly prevents the judiciary system from being in service of the people.

In its 2012 report, the United Nations Country Team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory noted that by 2020, Gaza would become unlivable. With Israel's impunity being modus operandi, tight closure over the Strip and effective control over land, sea, air, population registry and movement of goods and people, deteriorating environment and perishing natural resources, this UN report is slowly and steadily becoming a reality.

Al Mezan has declared its mission to be: 'to promote respect and protection for all human rights; particularly ESCR, in the Gaza Strip as part of OPT throughout research, legal intervention, advocacy and awareness with a sound combination of professionalism and community participation. Our guiding principles include equal human worth, equal respect of all human rights, individual and collective, as enshrined in international law and jurisprudence'.



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

Kairos Document, Chapter 2.3

Disappearing Palestine



Week 5 – To Set the Oppressed Free in Palestine

The Israeli Settlement Enterprise

By The Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ)

The injustice in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) will continue as long as people are unable to get their hold on their God given rights in this land. Following the 1967 war and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, Palestinians faced an Israeli package of policies that aim to eradicate their rights as inhabitants of the land. To this end, Israel launched its settlement program right after the war, starting from the heart of the oPt from the Old City of Jerusalem, demolishing more than 700 Palestinian Jerusalemites houses and established what came to be known as the “Jewish” Quarter. From that point on, Israelis continued to build and expand settlements relentlessly and in a continuous manner that has built to this day 196 Israeli settlements accommodating approximately 750,000 Israeli settlers. The settlements stand as a built-up area on 196 km square and have a jurisdiction area of 485 km square (3,5% and 8.5%) respectively of the West Bank total area.

To accommodate the settlers’ occupation of the oPt, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) constructed in length a 939 km web of roads and called them bypass roads to facilitate the settlers’ movements within the oPt and beyond the 1949 Armistice Line (AKA: the Green Line). The purpose of such roads is to create two separate road systems, one for the Palestinians and the other for the Israelis. In 1996, the Israeli government and ICA indirectly facilitated the establishment of 232 outposts that exist in close proximity to settlements in an attempt by Israeli radical youth to take whatever land they can before any arrangements are concluded with the Palestinians. These radical Israeli youth come from settlements and have carried out organized attacks against Palestinians and their properties and places of worship, particularly in the past few years. During 2015, there have been 898 Israeli settlers’ attacks on Palestinians and their properties, fields, and religious sites (20% increase from 2014), of which 373 attacks (42%) were recorded since the onset of the Palestinians’ protests of October 2015. The escalating attacks certainly reflected negatively on the peace process as many witnesses and indications show the Israeli military providing protection for the settlers and the government manipulating legal issues for cover-ups.

Furthermore, the Israeli occupation took all possible measures and steps to fortify its grip on the oPt and established some 210 military bases on a total area of 49km square and have taken control of 1580 km square (28% of the total West Bank Area) along the eastern side of the West Bank under various pretexts, starting from declaring parts as “state land”, “closed military areas; including firing zones”, “nature reserve areas” down to being classified as area “C”. Israel established in the eastern zone area 38 Israeli settlements, 20 of which



are classified as agricultural settlements, cultivating 65000 km square of the Jordan Valley area within the eastern zone. Between the 9000+ Israeli settlers living in the eastern zone and the cultivated lands, the Israelis use some 45MCM of water, which counts for some one-third of the total use of the entire West Bank Palestinian population of 2.6 million. A World Bank report indicates that continued Palestinian inaccessibility to agricultural land and water resources continues to carry *significant opportunity losses in terms of output and employment. Irrigated agriculture is an important economic sector, contributing about 12% to GDP and employing 117,000 people.*

Also, to enforce their will and practice the false jurisdiction in the oPt, the ICA demolished Palestinian houses, which came simultaneously with the Israeli systematic forced eviction policy of Palestinians in area “C” throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In the latter, the party that carries out the demolition and thus the eviction is the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem and the Israeli Ministry of Interior. In other areas of the West Bank (area “C”), the Israeli Civil Administration carry out the demolition and eviction orders, hence, all demolitions are forced eviction and displacement of Palestinians. To this day, Israel has demolished more than 25000 Palestinian houses in the oPt, in addition to more than 20,000 houses with pending demolition orders.

On 28 September 1995, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel signed the second Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip commonly known as Oslo II or the Taba Agreement. It classified the oPt to various levels of control:



Area “A” (1,005 km square 17.7% of the West Bank Area) and it designates Palestinian absolute autonomy over administrative and security issues and includes the main Palestinian cities.

Area “B” (1,035 km square 18.3%) and it designates Palestinians civil/administrative responsibilities on education, health and restricted development. It includes populated rural areas, many of which are close to the main cities of the West Bank.

Area “C” (3456 km square 61%), where the status quo of the occupation remains as is and Israel retains full control.

While the vast majority of the Palestinian population (83.5%) lives in areas “A” and “B”, the vast vacant land available for construction to cope with the Palestinian population growth and for investment opportunities is situated in the bulk area (61%) of the West Bank defined as area “C”, which is the only remaining area available for the Palestinians to realize a sustainable and able state.

It is easily concluded that both areas “A” and “B” (36% of the West Bank area) are already congested with a population density exceeding 4620 per 1km versus a population density of 1546 Israeli settlers within the approved master plans of the settlements.



On June 2002, the Israeli Government launched its policy of unilateral segregation within the oPt. The Israeli Ministry of Defense injected several changes to the route of the Segregation Wall over the years, many of which accrued after the International Court of Justice «Advisory Opinion» in 2004 that referred to the



Segregation Wall as an illegal structure in oPt, and thus called upon Israel to dismantle it. According to the final route of the Wall as of September 2007, it will stretch a length of 773 km and stands to isolate some 733 km² (733 thousand Dunums/ 73300 hectare), 13% of the total area of the West Bank. The area of the West Bank to be isolated will include 103 Israeli settlements accommodating approximately 600,000 Israeli settlers. On the other hand, it stands to isolate 66 Palestinian communities, including those of East Jerusalem with a population exceeding 300,000 Palestinians, from their natural environment in the oPt. The Israeli actions in the West Bank conform to what the Head of Israeli opposition, Isaac Herzog, calls a “total separation from Palestinians“. According to Herzog, it is imperative for Israel to build the Wall to validate once and for all that “Unified Jerusalem” is the capital of Israel and whoever lives on the other side of the Wall is not a citizen of Israel, noting examples of Issaweyiah and Shu’fat Refugee Camp. This also applies to Kfar Aqab and a couple dozen communities on the outskirts of Jerusalem, which ultimately include some 150,000+ Palestinian Jerusalemites.

Ultimately, Palestinians will continue living in such unjust conditions as long as the international community remains incapable and immobilized from taking tangible actions to stop the Israeli acts on the ground.



Israel is sparing no opportunity to take advantage of the circumstances that surround its existence. It carries out steps that serve its long-term plan to create an independent Jewish state, in spite of its claim of being the only democracy and secular state in the Middle East. To this end, Israel persists to pave the way to take unilateral steps to create a Palestinian state tailored to its interests chained by the 500+ various types of obstacles controlling the movement of the people and the borders to the outside world. It uses whatever possible means to realize its goals, starting with multiple turmoil storming the region, and turbulences in the relations among the big players in the international arena, right down to the division of the Palestinians and even its own settlers' greed to quench its thirst for more stolen Palestinians' rights.

Founded in 1990, the Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem (ARIJ) / Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting sustainable development in the occupied Palestinian territory and the self-reliance of the Palestinian people through greater control over their natural resources. ARIJ works specifically to augment the local stock of scientific and technical knowledge and to introduce and devise more efficient methods of resource utilization and conservation, improved practices, and appropriate technology.



“ 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 Document Chapter 2.5



Week 6 – To Set the Oppressed Free in Israel

Love liberates us from being Prisoners of Hatred

By Rev. Dr. Yohanna Katanacho

I live in a country that treats its Arab ethnic population as second class citizens. Beginning with Herzl's vision up to the present, the dream of the State of Israel has always been associated with the Jewishness of its population and the Jewish identity of the state, even if that came at the cost of Palestinian and Jewish bloodshed. The State of Israel connects the past with the history of the Jews, the present with their welfare and the future with their aspirations. Israeli institutions in Israel and outside the country serve this dream, work hard to maintain it and fight all those who prevent it from happening. The Jewish dream has become more sacred than human beings, and human rights are transgressed for the sake of this dream. Judaism in Israel has become a nightmare because of its extremist views and the determination to create a world not only full of masters but also slaves. Jewish dreams have become a nightmare for Palestinians and a mantra for the hatred of the neighbor. This filled my living environment with hatred that was translated into discriminatory laws and other channels of injustice and murder.



My world has become a world of death and hate, a world far from God's envisioned creation that was supposed to be driven by God's love deeply entrenched in human hearts and motivating a true love and respect for the other. Theologians speak of sin and the fall of man. In Israel, this sin is embodied in hatred and humiliation of human beings. I live in a state that does not want its inhabitants if they are not Jews. While some are shouting "Death to Arabs", others are hard at work to enact laws that prevent us, the Arab ethnic in Israel, from talking about the Nakbah or teaching our children about their identity and heritage or connecting with our families and relatives in the occupied Palestinian territories. Even love is forbidden; the state will punish those dreaming to marry a Palestinian partner from the occupied Palestinian territories. In lieu of this context, Jesus speaks to us with a prophetic message that still echoes strongly in Nazareth where it was first delivered, a message of divine love and human liberation from hatred, where those who do not love their fellow humans hate God. We cannot cure hate with hate, but with love that liberates us. This is what I see in the work of Jesus as mentioned in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 4.

Lord Jesus entered the Synagogue in Nazareth, and in accordance with the traditions of the first century in the synagogues, they initiated the worship with a reading from Deuteronomy (6: 4) to remember that the worship of God is inseparable from loving God wholeheartedly and the love of every member of his human creation. Later Jesus spoke of liberation and presented in his preaching the two examples of Elijah and Elisha, as mentioned in the book of Luke. His message of liberation was intertwined with the message of love. God's divine



love liberates us from racism. God has sent Elijah to a non-Jewish woman (Luke 4: 26) and God's wisdom wanted Elisha to heal Naaman the Syrian. Naaman is a non-Jewish commander who wanted to fight Israel. Jesus in Nazareth challenged racial divides and privileges. In God's love and his quest to save mankind, there is no distinction between Jew and non-Jew. There is no second-class citizen in God's vision of his created world. In Nazareth, Jesus angered in his liberating program all those who insisted on the logic of hatred and anger, void from love and filled with violence and murder. The logic of hatred deprived people in the time of Elijah and Elisha from the celebration of God's work and the call for his people to bless every human being created in the image of God. Thus, Jesus surprised his Jewish listeners with a message which included non-Jews, because love and deliverance of God is for everyone equally. The rejection of the crowd of this inclusive divine love will not invalidate the true emphasis of God's love. The rejection of the message of Jesus Christ does not make it untrue, but shows that the path of liberation is in the confrontation of hatred with love, violence with reconciliation, and racism with God's insistence on blessing all his creation. Love liberates from the prison of hatred and releases the prisoners of racism.

The liberation program of Jesus culminated in his death and resurrection. There, the hatred of man was met with the love of God. The logic of violence was faced with the message of truth. The sin of man killed the messenger of love and peace, our lord Jesus Christ. He was hanged on the cross but he rose to declare that God's love is stronger than hatred of people and that the liberation of man will not be completed without conquering hatred, violence and sin, individually



or collectively. We conquer hatred with the reconciling power of forgiveness and its notion of love towards our fellow man and despise all sin. The future of our country is linked with the stimulation of liberating love in our hearts and in the hearts of the peoples of the region. Political solutions are good but without love they will not be sustained. The military solutions are temporary and will captivate us with hatred and bloodshed. Religion without love is lethal and politics without love will not saturate the heart and liberate it. Love is the way to liberation. Love rejects slavery, racism and human humiliation. Love triumphs over fear and lack of forgiveness, and gives hope after a history of failure. Love rejects occupation and inequality. Love does not resist injustice with injustice and mistreatments with mistreatments, but resists evil with good. Love wants justice and peace, not only for Jews but also for Palestinians. Love fights racism and all that spreads hatred; it challenges unjust laws and seeks to build a better future in which justice and equality for all prevail. Christ is risen in order to fortify our love for God from all our hearts and to love neighbors in a fashion similar to how we love ourselves.



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The Oppression of Palestinian Citizens of Israel

By **BADIL**

The general narrative regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict tends to mainly focus on the situation of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), and only in rare occasions are Palestinian citizens of Israel taken into account by the media or international actors. Despite having different identity documents, their situation has many parallels to that of Palestinians in the oPt, and they are subject to very similar policies of forcible displacement, although these might represent themselves in a different form. This overlooking is especially obvious in the case of internally displaced Palestinians, who are seldom included when talking about Palestinian refugees, even if they view themselves as part of it.

Internally Displaced Palestinians in Israel

There are around 1.6 million Palestinians with Israeli citizenship.⁶ Often referred to as Arabs, Arab Israelis, or simply a minority, they account for around 20 percent of the population of Israel. From the 1.6 million Palestinians, around 380,000 are Internally Displaced People (IDPs).⁷ This group is composed by those Palestinians who were forcibly displaced from their homes during the 'Nakba', but remained inside Israel, as well as of those who were subsequently displaced until today.

Following the war in 1948 until 1952 UNRWA provided assistance to IDPs and dealt with them in the same way as with all other refugees scattered across the Arab world. In 1952, however, an agreement was reached between UNRWA and Israel according to which Israel would administer and take responsibility for those Palestinians internally displaced. In exchange, UNRWA would stop providing them with assistance and discontinue their registration as refugees. UNRWA's reasons were economic, as it lacked funds to attend to the needs of all Palestinian refugees displaced following the Nakba. For Israel, on the other hand, it was a political move, as the moment the agreement went into place it claimed that "the refugee problem in Israel had ceased to exist."⁸

Those Palestinian IDPs who were forcibly displaced from their homes in 1948 are still unable to return to their homes today. They are allowed to visit their villages and homes, but any attempt to settle in their properties is met with force and immediate expulsion by the Israeli forces.

An example of this ongoing displacement is Iqrit, a Christian Palestinian village located in the north of Israel, occupied on 8 November 1948. The Israeli army ordered its inhabitants to leave the village due to security concerns along the

6 http://www.cbs.gov.il/www/hodaot2013n/11_13_097e.pdf

7 <http://badil.org/phocadownloadpap/badil-new/publications/survey/Survey2013-2015-en.pdf>

8 <http://badil.org/en/publication/periodicals/al-majdal/item/1018-how-has-israel-dealt-with-the-internally-displaced?.html>



nearby Lebanese border. They left on the basis of assurances that they would be permitted to return within fifteen days. When this did not happen, the residents turned to the courts. The Israeli High Court ruled in July 1951 that the residents of Iqrit were entitled to return to their village because the reason for the temporary evacuation no longer existed, and no legal grounds existed to deprive them of their right to return. However, the military defied the order, issued the inhabitants with expulsion orders and destroyed both villages.⁹

On October 2001, the Israeli government officially decided to refuse to allow the return on the grounds of security concerns and because it would set a precedent for other displaced Palestinians. Ariel Sharon himself said, regarding the case of Iqrit, that the government could act freely when political will existed. This decision still represents the official position of the state of Israel regarding the right of return of displaced Palestinians who are Israeli citizens.¹⁰

A more recent case illustrating this ongoing displacement took place in June 2013, when Israel passed the Praver-Begin Bill, which if implemented, will result in the destruction of all “unrecognized villages” and the forced population transfer of their residents, numbering more than 80,000 individuals. At the moment these 80,000 Palestinian Bedouins live in 35 unrecognized villages in the Naqab desert, in the south of Israel. In designating these communities as “unrecognized”, the Israeli government denies those citizens who reside there access to basic services, including water, electricity, sewage and road infrastructure, as well as education and health care services. These are deliberately withheld in order to ‘encourage’ these Bedouin communities to abandon their ancestral land. This case serves as an illustration that practices of forcible population transfer are ongoing on both sides of the Green Line.

Despite the gravity of the policies and practices implemented by Israel resulting in the internal displacement and forcible transfer of Palestinians spanning decades, no UN agency or other authoritative body has been designated as primarily responsible for the protection of these displaced persons and communities, or the pursuit of a durable solution on their behalf.¹¹

Discriminatory policies affect all Palestinians in Israel

Leaving aside the denial of return of Palestinian IDPs, the majority of the oppressive and discriminatory policies Palestinian IDPs in Israel suffer from affect all Palestinian citizens of Israel. Following the 1948 War, Israel established a military government in the areas where the Palestinian population lived, in order to control those Palestinians who remained inside Israel and to

⁹ <https://www.badil.org/en/publication/periodicals/al-majdal/item/806-refugee-protection.html>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Karine McAllister and Karim Khalil, “Internal Displacement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,” Humanitarian Exchange Magazine, no. 44 (September 2009).



prevent the return of Palestinian refugees. Freedoms of expression and movement were severely restricted, and Palestinians were confined to controlled areas. For example, Palestinians leaving their towns and villages needed written permission from the military commander. In contrast, a civilian government governed the affairs of the country's Jewish population. The end of this military rule did not stop this institutionalized discrimination.

From the very beginning, Israel implemented a divide and rule strategy with the Palestinians which led to one of the first main divisions of the Palestinian community inside Israel. In 1956, all male Palestinians belonging to the Druze religion were required to serve in the Israeli army following an agreement between a small number of Druze leaders

and the state of Israel.¹² In 1957, the Druze were recognized as a specific ethnic minority in Israel and a specific curriculum and school system was created for them, reinforcing the Druze identity as a separate ethnic group and not only as a religion, and as such, isolating them from the rest of the Palestinians.¹³ Despite protests in many villages at the time, this separate status still exists today.

A more recent example can be found in the recent efforts by Israel to isolate the Christian Palestinians living in Israel from their Muslim counterparts. In 2014, legislation was discussed in the Israeli parliament - the Knesset - that would grant Christians a separate status and would give them special privileges.¹⁴ The organization, Adalah, stated that this policy sought to “fragment the original people of the land into small groups with narrowed identities to replace their national identity.”¹⁵



12 <https://electronicintifada.net/content/israel-tried-brainwash-us-says-druze-pioneer-who-refused-army-service/13047>

13 <https://electronicintifada.net/content/palestinians-must-resist-israels-efforts-foment-sectarianism/13269>

14 <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/palestinian-christians-not-really-arabs-says-senior-israeli-lawmaker>

15 <http://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/8250>



The issue of creating a separate identity for Christian Palestinians also gained relevance in connection to military service. Israel has been trying to conscript Christians to the army. Azmi Hakim, the leader of the Greek Orthodox community council in Nazareth has showed his opposition to this latest strategy on numerous occasions. "Israel has tried to use military service as a way to break us up as a national group since the state's earliest days," Hakim said. "It wants us to be weak, separate religious communities incapable of organizing and demanding our rights."¹⁶ This divide and rule policy for Palestinian citizens of Israel has been ongoing from the creation of Israel until today, and aims to fragment the Palestinians by giving them separate identities and different rights.

Finally, in the recent months, a more direct form of oppression against Palestinian citizens of Israel has found its way into the media. In September 2015 the Israeli security cabinet authorized the use of live ammunition to disperse demonstrations¹⁷, and excessive use of force has been a common element in the engagement of Israeli forces with Palestinian protesters inside Israel. Following the escalation in attacks against Israelis after October 1st, 2015, Israel has adopted different measures to suppress any attempt by Palestinians to protest against Israeli policies or to exercise their right to freedom of expression. This suppression has been implemented in the form of arbitrary arrests, preventive arrests of organizers or intimidation.¹⁸ More than 100 Palestinians were arrested only in October inside Israel, including minors, many of whom were denied access to a lawyer.¹⁹

Conclusion

The attacks carried out by some Palestinian citizens of Israel in the last months against Israelis showed that the idyllic integration and equality of Palestinian citizens that Israel claims to exist, is not so, and that the oppression is leading to ongoing frustration. As explained above, the policies of forced population transfer, discrimination and oppression against Palestinians inside Israel date back to the creation of the state of Israel, and cannot be separated from the wider framework of ongoing forced population transfer policies that are happening all across Historic Palestine.

BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights is an independent, human rights non-profit organization committed to protect and promote the rights of Palestinian refugees and internally displaced persons. Our vision, mission, programs and relationships are defined by our Palestinian identity and the principles of international humanitarian and human rights law. We seek to advance the individual and collective rights of the Palestinian people on this basis.

¹⁶ <https://electronicintifada.net/content/israeli-army-recruitment-plan-aims-incite-christian-muslim-tensions/12645>

¹⁷ <http://euromedrights.org/publication/escalating-violence-in-israelopt-time-to-address-the-root-causes/>

¹⁸ <http://euromedrights.org/publication/escalating-violence-in-israelopt-time-to-address-the-root-causes/>

¹⁹ <http://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/8652>



Our Word to the Churches of the World



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

However, it is also a call to repentance; to revisit fundamentalist theological positions that support certain unjust political options with regard to the Palestinian people. It is a call to stand alongside the oppressed and preserve the word of God as good news for all rather than to turn it into a weapon with which to slay the oppressed. The word of God is a word of love for all His creation. God is not the ally of one against the other, nor the opponent of one in the face of the other. God is the Lord of all and loves all, demanding justice from all and issuing to all of us the same commandments.

We ask our sister Churches not to offer a theological cover-up for the injustice we suffer, for the sin of the occupation imposed upon us. Our question to our brothers and sisters in the Churches today is: Are you able to help us get our freedom back, for this is the only way you can help the two peoples attain justice, peace, security and love?



Kairos Document, Chapter 6.1



Week 7 – Proclaim the Year of the Lord’s Favor!

Ending Israel’s Impunity

By Al Haq Center for Human Rights

In the past, the international community, and the United Nations (UN) in particular, have been provided with strikingly illustrative examples of the repercussions of decades of unerring impunity for the State of Israel in the face of persistent, well-documented and widely-condemned violations of international law. This impunity, facilitated by the international community’s dependence on condemnation without meaningful action, has led to devastating results within the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt).

For example, the UN and individual member states proved unwilling to take a strong position in condemning the disproportionate attacks by Israel on the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2014, despite their stated commitment to international humanitarian law. The UN Security Council, as primary UN body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, failed to come to any conclusion before the ceasefire was agreed, a further failure to address the violations. Within this prolonged climate of impunity, perpetrators of the most serious international crimes, including grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, go unpunished while their victims are denied their fundamental right to an effective remedy.

Israel’s Responsibility as Occupying Power

Crucially exacerbating the stark denial of justice for the Palestinian population is Israel’s own refusal to recognize the de jure applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention, incumbent upon it as the Occupying Power. This position is in defiance of numerous UN resolutions, the 2004 International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the oPt, and countless statements issued by governments worldwide.

Consecutive Israeli governments have also refused to recognize the State’s obligations under international human rights law with regard to the Palestinian population of the oPt, despite repeated statements made by UN treaty bodies reaffirming these obligations. The UN Fact-finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict joined a long list of UN Special Rapporteurs and, more recently, the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, whose entry into the oPt Israel has refused. Since his appointment as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Mr. Richard Falk and his successor Mr. Makarim Wibisono have not been allowed to enter the oPt to carry out their work.





Third State Responsibility

States must make clear that Israel’s growing disregard for the UN system and ongoing defiance of its international law obligations are not acceptable. Israel’s violation of peremptory norms of international law incurs obligations on third States. For example, Article 41 of the ILC Draft Articles provides that States not recognize breaches of peremptory norms as lawful, and that States actively cooperate to bring the unlawful situation to an end.²⁰ Furthermore, third States should ensure that Israel makes full reparations for the damages caused by its breaches of peremptory norms of international law. Under common Article 1 to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, States have obligations to ensure Israel’s respect for international humanitarian law and must refrain from condoning or rendering support to its illegal policies in the occupied State of Palestine.

Accordingly, States should refrain from actively encouraging corporations from negotiating business deals with Israeli companies which may contribute to gross violations of international humanitarian law. In addition, under Articles 146 and 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, States are obligated to search for and prosecute those responsible for grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions. Accordingly “extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly” amounts to a grave breach under Article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Conventions.²¹

20 See Legal Consequences for States of the Continued Presence of South Africa in Namibia (South West Africa) Notwithstanding Security Council Resolution 276 (1970) (Advisory Opinion) ICJ Rep 1971, paragraph 126.

21 Article 147, Fourth Geneva Convention (1949).





Corporate Responsibility

Another form to pursue accountability is through corporate responsibility. Notably the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights establish a role for corporations “as specialized organs of society performing specialized functions”, and require compliance with human rights and other applicable laws such as humanitarian and customary law.²² Corporations may be held accountable for their involvement in illegal activities in violation of international human rights and humanitarian law in the oPt. Accordingly, corporations benefitting from business opportunities supported by an environment of human rights violations, may be found complicit in aiding and abetting violations even where they do not positively assist in orchestrating the abuses. In particular the UN Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises with regard to Human Rights provide that “transnational corporations and other business enterprises shall not engage in nor benefit from war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide... other violations of humanitarian law and other international crimes against the human person as defined by international law, in particular human rights and humanitarian law.”²³

For international law to be respected and victims protected, the UN and its member states must put into practice their declared commitment to human rights by enforcing international justice mechanisms, without further delay.

Al-Haq is an independent Palestinian non-governmental human rights organization based in Ramallah, West Bank. Established in 1979 to protect and promote human rights and the rule of law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), the organization has special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

²² OCHR, Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, 6 < http://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/GuidingprinciplesBusinesshr_en.pdf>

²³ UN Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises with regard to Human Rights.



A Moment of Truth - Year of Salvation

By Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb

At the beginning of every year for the Christian Churches in Palestine and the whole world, the following excerpt from the Holy Gospel according to Luke is read: *“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, ‘ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised and to preach the acceptable year of the lord.’ And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them: ‘This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears’” (4:16-21).*

Jesus did not choose these words by coincidence. He was fully aware of the task entrusted to him; the message that he carried and the responsibility placed on his shoulders. Therefore, if we want to understand the nature of the mission of Jesus, we have to understand it as he understood it, as he interpreted it and as he lived by it. We have to read it in its geo-historical, cultural and religious context.

Jesus Christ, the eternal word of God, was incarnated on Palestinian land. He



was born in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth, taught on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and was crucified and resurrected in Jerusalem, the Holy City. Jesus was a son of this land, which was and will remain rich with diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds; a land that was occupied then, continues to be occupied now, and is struggling to end the present occupation determined to forestall future occupations.

Palestine in the time of Jesus was under Roman occupation which lasted for more than one hundred years. Throughout that century-plus, the population endured suffering and humiliation without surrendering or giving up its longing for justice, and its passion for freedom and dignity.

In light of this historical background, we need to read the words of the Holy Gospel. Jesus, via the message of the Prophet Isaiah's vision (61: 1-2) wanted to show the nature of God's divine purpose which is emphasized under three main headings:

Good News for the Poor!

Jesus came with good news and joyful tidings for the poor. These glad tidings emphasized a God of love. In essence, this meant turning away from a repulsive religious law which enslaves people, and makes the true faith a heavy burden, an escape from reality or a place to hide from the world with worthless, and manipulative exaggerations.

Jesus explained that our understanding of the nature of the divine message affects our daily actions. If God is love, humankind will be liberated from bondage based on fear and punishment rather than being built on love and compassion.

The biggest threat to people suffering from occupation and tyranny is a false association of God's divine message with its application to devious devices of the occupier who expects and demands from the occupied more than they can offer, and subdues them by various means, even the use of religion. The words of the poet Elia Abu Madi apply here: "*Life is a heavy burden for those who think that faith is a heavy burden.*" The message of Jesus was and still is: glad tidings for the world and glad tidings for the Palestinians, irrespective of what some fundamentalist mindset, or premillennial vow make it: "a harbinger of death not a source of life."

Appeal for Freedom

Jesus wanted also to show that an integral part of his message is the call for the deliverance of the captive and liberty for the brokenhearted. We cannot spiritualize the words of Christ. In sum, his words are an appeal for freedom.





Freedom for these people who suffered under the Roman occupation and freedom for the Palestinian people suffering long oppression under the Israeli occupation.

As God is love, He is freedom. True love is unrestricted love. As such, love and freedom go hand in hand, a point emphasized in the document, A Moment of Truth:

“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” (Kairos Palestine 2-4, 2-5).

A Year of Salvation

Jesus said: I came “to preach in the acceptable year of the Lord.” “The acceptable year of the Lord” is a term taken from the Old Testament. God ordered the people of Israel to observe the seventh year and to keep the seventh day of the week. The seventh year is one in which the soil rested and where poor slaves were released to live a free, dignified life, independent with the money they had earned.

But God was not fully satisfied with the seventh year, and thus commanded also the year of jubilee that comes after seven years times seven – that is after 49 years – a fiftieth year being a jubilee where God wills that people and clans



return to their original places of habitation, their homes, where captives and slaves are freed, deposits are returned and usurped territories are given back to their original owners.

These words of Christ have a particular impact on, and a different application for, our lives as Palestinians. This new year 2016, is the forty-ninth commemoration of the occupation of East Jerusalem, of the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights. Next year, 2017, will mark the centenary anniversary of the infamous *Balfour Declaration*, and the 50th commemoration of the 1967 war, thus the Palestinian Christian Initiative invites the churches and governments in the world to make 2017 the year of salvation where we end a prolonged occupation, a year in which prisoners are released, a year in which land will revert to its original owners, a year that brings glad tidings of the return of the displaced. It should also be a year of liberation for Israel's liberation from a "Might Makes Right" ideology; liberation from hatred and demonization, a liberation from fear and suspicion.

As we approach nearly fifty years under occupation, we proclaim strongly that it is time for these chains to be broken! If not now, when? The Palestinian Christian Initiative, *A Moment of Truth*, calls upon Arab, Islamic and Western nations to seize the moment now. Before it is too late.

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Join the Movement!

- **Pray for justice in the region. Meditate on how each one of us can contribute to building a just peace.**
- **Raise awareness by seeking the truth about the root causes of the conflict, the rights of Palestinians, and the need to build a right-based political vision for peace based on International Law.** Study the Kairos Palestine document to launch a dialogue with us. Inform others; your friends, your church and your politicians about the voice of Palestinian Christians and share a Kairos vision of peace based upon justice and love.
- **See the reality and find the truth.** In order to understand our reality, we say to the Churches: Come and see. We will fulfil our role to make known to you the truth of our reality, receiving you as pilgrims coming to us to pray, carrying a message of peace, love and reconciliation. You will know the facts and the people of this land, Palestinians and Israelis alike.
- **Rethink theology.** Kairos Palestine is a call to repentance, to revisit fundamentalist theological positions that support certain unjust political options with regard to the Palestinian people. The word of God is a word of love for all His creation. We ask our sister Churches not to offer a theological cover-up for the injustice we suffer, but answer our question: Are you able to help us get our freedom back, for this is the only way you can help the two peoples attain justice, peace, security and love.
- **Encourage your community to engage in concrete measures of solidarity with the Palestinian people and in meaningful initiatives towards peace with justice.** Join Palestinian civil organizations in their nonviolent resistance against the Israeli occupation. Call others to join the global nonviolent movement of individuals, companies and churches to engage in divestment and in an economic and commercial boycott the occupation. This is understood within the Kairos logic of peaceful resistance, the objective is not revenge but rather to put an end to the existing evil, liberating both the perpetrators and the victims of injustice.



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A Moment of Truth

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



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