

# Time for Action

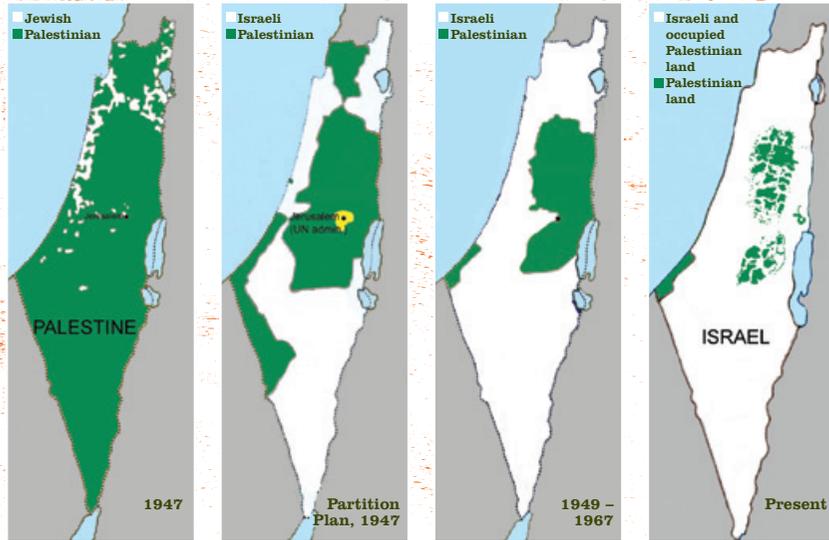


A British Christian response to  
***A Moment of Truth***, the  
Kairos Palestine document

[www.kairosbritain.org.uk](http://www.kairosbritain.org.uk)



**PALESTINIAN LOSS OF LAND 1947 TO PRESENT**



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**Preface**

**Time for Action**

This document has been incubating for twelve months and been through several drafts before reaching this final stage. Many people have contributed to its making.

There were those 60 participants at Pentecost 2012 on the Hebridean island of Iona who had the audacious courage to sign a statement calling on the churches of these islands to respond to the challenge of *Kairos Palestine*; those who formed a steering group to carry the process forward; the theologians and activists who willingly worked to produce a first draft; those who answered our invitation to spend 24 hours at Hawkstone Hall, Shropshire – representing a wide range of denominational loyalties and theological perspectives – and who with insight and imagination interacted with each other and with the drafts, leading to the intensive work which eventually brought to birth ‘A Time for Action’.

We are indebted to insights shared by Jewish and Muslim readers who commented on inter-faith issues and to the copyreader for his careful work. We express heartfelt gratitude to all who have been involved in this process.

We commend the document with humility and confidence to the Churches of Britain, to all who long for a just peace in Israel/Palestine, praying that it will be a means of re-awakening in us the urgency of this *kairos* moment and spur us to action in response to the ‘call from the heart of Palestinian suffering’.

Signed

- |                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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# 1 Introduction



This publication is a call to British Christians to be aware of the present situation in Israel and Palestine, to reflect prayerfully on it, and to respond, faithfully and courageously.

In December 2009, leading Palestinian Christians launched a document called *A Moment of Truth; A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering*. This became known as the *Kairos Palestine* document. *Kairos* is a Greek word which means 'a critical moment in time'.

Two years later, 60 Christians from 15 countries, representing diverse traditions, gathered in Bethlehem to affirm the document with its urgent question: "Are you able to help us get our freedom back?" The resulting "Bethlehem Call" initiated a global movement for justice.<sup>2</sup>

At Pentecost 2012, a group of Christians from a variety of theological and church traditions met on the Hebridean island of Iona to engage with the *Kairos Palestine* document. They produced "The Iona Call", which concludes with the words:

***"Difficult though the journey may be, we seize this kairos moment with conviction and hope. We recognise our responsibility as followers of Jesus Christ to speak the prophetic word with courage."***<sup>3</sup>

"The Iona Call" has been the catalyst for this publication.

Jesus invoked the urgency of *kairos* at the beginning of his mission in Galilee, when he said, "The time has come."<sup>4</sup> It is a word that demands an urgent response, a change of mind and direction. Other *kairos* initiatives in recent history include the 1985 document by Christians in South Africa, challenging the Church to deeper involvement in the struggle against apartheid. The *Kairos Palestine* document stands in this prophetic tradition.

***"The mission of the church is prophetic; to speak the Word of God courageously, honestly and lovingly in the local context and in the midst of daily events."***<sup>5</sup>

This statement, taken from the *Kairos Palestine document*, identifies with "the reality on the ground" in the Holy Land.<sup>6</sup> Those of us in Britain who have witnessed the truth of life in the occupied Palestinian territories of the

West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza cannot fail to be moved by what we have seen and heard:

- Daily humiliation of women, men and children.
- Deaths of civilians.
- Demolished homes.
- The ethnic cleansing of East Jerusalem.
- The plight of thousands of refugees.
- The brutality of administrative detention.
- The relentless confiscation of land and natural resources, with thousands of olive trees destroyed.
- The continuing construction of illegal settlements.

All these make the creation of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state virtually impossible. Yet none of these injustices has brought the State of Israel the security it seeks.

***"The occupation must end, not only for the sake of the Palestinians but for our sake . . . for we Jewish Israelis. It is eating away our soul."***

Gila Svirsky, Jewish Israeli

We appreciate that for many the State of Israel has become central to how they understand their Jewish identity, to the point where any criticism of Israel can be perceived as anti-Semitic. However, we do not accept that criticising the actions and policies of the Israeli government or the behaviour of some West Bank settlers is automatically anti-Semitic. Our motivation is only to speak the truth. We want to signal not just our commitment to the rights of Palestinians, but our dedication to the humanity and security of Jews in Israel and worldwide.

We recognise, as Christians, our responsibility to our Palestinian sisters and brothers in the State of Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, the diaspora and in refugee camps in the occupied territory, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. We have failed them by our silence, and our failure to say, "Enough!" The 'peace process' has become no more than a means of perpetuating the colonisation of Palestinian land, and the intensification of the structures of dispossession and oppression.

Our responsibility now is to listen carefully to Palestinian voices, expressed in the *Kairos Palestine* document. We resolve to pay attention to:

- The growing Palestinian non-violent resistance movement.
- The emerging groundswell around the world calling for justice.
- The witness of ecumenical companions.
- Jewish voices in Israel and Britain calling for peace.
- Those returning from tours and pilgrimages which have heightened their awareness of realities on the ground.

1 Kairos Palestine document, para 6.1

2 <http://globalministries.org/news/mee/the-bethlehem-call-here-we.html>

3 [http://www.kairosbritain.org.uk/peace\\_the\\_iona\\_call\\_4580.aspx](http://www.kairosbritain.org.uk/peace_the_iona_call_4580.aspx)

4 Kairos Palestine document, para 3.4.1

5 Kairos Palestine document, para 3.4.1

6 Kairos Palestine document, section 1

In all this we must listen again to the voice of Jesus of Nazareth, who burned with anger at injustice, and see with his eyes.

The *kairos* moment is now. We invite you to read and study this publication, and use it as a spur to action. It is a call to anyone who embraces non-violent resistance to injustice. It is a call to listen to the same Spirit who inspired and shaped the US civil rights movement, and the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa. It is a call to compassion, justice and equality, issued in the strong faith that, even when the cause appears most hopeless, God's light shines in the darkness, and the darkness will not overcome it.

## 2 Our shame: Britain and the historical context



***“Our presence in this land, as Christian and Muslim Palestinians, is not accidental but rather deeply rooted in the history and geography of this land . . . It was an injustice when we were driven out.”***<sup>7</sup>

As British Christians, we must first acknowledge the historical role that ‘Christian’ anti-Semitism played in making many Jews feel that they needed a safe national homeland. But we must also recognise the unique historical responsibility of our nation for the present injustice visited on the Palestinian people. This tragedy, which has led to 11 million Palestinians living in exile, in refugee camps, or under Israeli occupation, has its roots in Britain’s colonial past, and Britain’s self-interested pursuit of power and influence in the world.

The present suffering of the Palestinians has its origins in political Zionism – the belief that the Jewish people should reclaim Palestine as their national and ancestral homeland. The Zionist movement grew in the late 19th century, as the persecution of Jews, especially in Russia and Eastern Europe, escalated. It was natural that the movement’s founder, Theodor Herzl, should look to Britain for support. Our nation had a history of tolerance to Jewish immigration (compared to other European countries), and many British Christian evangelicals supported Zionism. In relation to the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, Herzl described England as “the Archimedean point where the lever could be applied.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Kairos Palestine document, para 2.3.2

<sup>8</sup> Albert Montefiore Hyamson, *Palestine under the mandate, 1920-1948* (Taylor & Francis, 1976), p16

The First World War gave Zionists an opportunity to influence Britain, at a moment when British imperial interests coincided with the Zionists’ aim to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine. By 1917, the British Zionist Federation, led by Chaim Weizmann, had willing allies in the British Cabinet: Prime Minister Lloyd George, Foreign Minister Balfour (both Christian Zionists), and Herbert Samuel (a non-religious Jewish Zionist). Their influence, and the imperatives of war (in particular the need to cultivate Jewish support in Russia, which at that time was in the midst of the Bolshevik revolution and was threatening to sue for peace with Germany) led to the historic Balfour declaration of 2 November 1917.

***“His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”***

The Balfour Declaration (2 November 1917)

The Oxford historian Elizabeth Monroe, (and former Middle East Correspondent for the Economist), described the Balfour Declaration as “one of the greatest mistakes in our imperial history.”<sup>9</sup> It expressed British support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.” It represented a betrayal of promises of independence made previously by Britain to the Arabs in the McMahon Correspondence with Sharif Hussein in Mecca (1916).

It is often overlooked that the Balfour Declaration also stated that: “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.” However, the declaration was silent on the political rights of the non-Jewish communities – in particular the Palestinian Arabs – who, by the start of the 1920s, made up almost 90% of the population in Palestine.<sup>10</sup>

Britain’s complicity in the plight of the Palestinians continued after the First World War, with its mishandling of its Mandate responsibilities for Palestine, from 1920 to 1948. The appointment of the Zionist Herbert Samuel as Britain’s first High Commissioner for Palestine (1920-25) was extremely controversial, prompting Field Marshal Allenby (who had conquered Palestine in 1917) to say that Samuel’s appointment would be seen by the Arabs as “handing [the] country over at once to a permanent Zionist Administration.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain’s Moment in the Middle East, 1914-71* (Chatto & Windus, 1981), p43

<sup>10</sup> The 1922 census indicated that 87.9% of the population was Palestinian Muslim or Christian, while 11.1% was Jewish and 1% was ‘other’ (eg Druze)

<sup>11</sup> Sahar Huneidi, *A Broken Trust: Sir Herbert Samuel, Zionism and the Palestinians* (IB Taurus, 1999), p44

When the USA closed its doors to European immigrants in 1924, what had become the main destination for Jewish refugees disappeared. Other countries, including Britain, also closed their doors. As a result, Jewish immigration into Palestine increased significantly under the British Mandate. The (British) Peel Commission of 1936-37 recommended the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states, which would have involved the forcible transfer of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes.

Not surprisingly, the Palestinian Arabs, whose leadership was at the same time being enfeebled by the British suppression of the Arab revolt of 1936-39, rejected the plan. But it was a foretaste of things to come – not least the 1947 UN Partition Plan (on which Britain abstained), which gave 56% of Mandate Palestine to the Jewish State, despite only a third of the population being Jewish.

In the years immediately following the end of World War II, Jewish immigration into Palestine rapidly increased. Many were survivors of the Holocaust. Given the horrors of the Nazi extermination, British people tended to be sympathetic to the immigration. But it was viewed with foreboding by Palestinians, as the conflict over territory became inevitable. Much of the immigration into Palestine was illegal under the quotas imposed by the British Mandate.

Bruised by six years of world war and, increasingly, the target of Jewish terrorist groups demanding withdrawal, the British were keen to exit Palestine. They finally asked the United Nations to resolve the situation, and abandoned the country in May 1948, when the Jewish State of Israel was declared. In so doing, Britain also abandoned its obligations to the indigenous Arabs, who were at risk from Zionist military forces. The forcible dispossession of 750,000 Palestinians in 1948-49, leading to the 65-year old Palestinian refugee problem of today, was partly due to Britain's abdication of its moral and legal responsibilities as the Mandate power.<sup>12</sup>

As Christians, we recognise that the State of Israel exists, and has been admitted into the community of nations. We acknowledge that the establishment of the State of Israel has given to the Jewish people a sense of security and empowerment, after years of anti-Semitic persecution. But, equally, many Christians feel, as we approach the centenary of the Balfour Declaration, that Britain should issue an apology for our broken promises: we effectively gave away another nation's land, and subsequently failed to respect the human and political rights of the indigenous non-Jewish peoples.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, Britain has compounded its errors. Our governments have offered almost unqualified support of Israeli actions, yet we have done nothing to stop Israel from building illegal settlements in the West Bank and

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed account of the dispossession of the 750,000 Palestinians in 1948-49, see Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oneworld Publications, 2006)

<sup>13</sup> See [www.balfourproject.org](http://www.balfourproject.org)

East Jerusalem, which make a viable Palestinian state virtually impossible to achieve. And, in November 2012, Britain declined to join other EU nations (including Ireland, France, Spain and Italy) in supporting Palestine's successful bid for "non-member observer" status at the UN.

As British Christians, we want to express our sadness and remorse. Firstly, to the Jews, for our historic role in allowing anti-Semitism to grow in our churches and more widely in society. Secondly, to the Palestinians, for the historic actions of successive British governments in frustrating their legitimate demands for dignity and justice. Our unique historic responsibility for the present injustice means that we have no choice but to act for change.

### 3 Equal dignity: examining the inter-faith issues



***“We address an appeal to the religious leaders, Jewish and Muslim, with whom we share the same vision that every human being is created by God and has been given equal dignity.”<sup>14</sup>***

At its heart, the situation in Israel and Palestine is a conflict between two peoples laying claim to the same piece of land. Therefore it should never be seen as primarily a religious conflict. Christian and Muslim Palestinians, together with those Jewish groups who identify with the Palestinian cause, are united in protesting against the continuing occupation. The conflict should never be reduced to a dispute between Muslims and Christians on one side, and Jews on the other.

It is also important to recognise that, since there are deep divisions among Christians worldwide over how they should respond to the conflict, these different responses have a significant impact on relations all over the world between Jews and Christians, and between Muslims and Christians.

<sup>14</sup> Kairos Palestine document, para 8

## Jewish-Christian relations

***“Our message to the Jews tells them: Even though we have fought one another in the recent past and still struggle today, we are able to love and live together.”<sup>15</sup>***

Those Christians who genuinely engage with this conflict very soon develop an acute sense of shame over the past attitudes and actions of Christians towards Jews and Judaism, which have contributed significantly to centuries of anti-Semitism. Particularly since the Holocaust, Christian theologians have worked hard to repudiate teaching that has contributed to negative attitudes, and to develop more positive attitudes towards Jews and Judaism. In recent years, Christians of all traditions have rejected ideas such as ‘Replacement Theology’ or ‘Supersessionism’ or the idea that the Church has displaced the Jewish people.

While developments like these have helped to improve relations between Christians and Jews, the question of Israel/Palestine has soured these improving relationships in recent decades. It also needs to be recognised that the Jewish community in the UK is divided over the issue of Israel. The majority either actively supports, or is largely sympathetic towards Israel and its governments – for reasons related to Jewish identity and security – and reluctant to criticise openly the policies of Israeli governments. Others, a small minority generally on the liberal wing of Judaism, are openly critical, while many fall somewhere between whole-hearted support and strong criticism.

We, as Christians, should acknowledge the reasons for such a strong Jewish identification with the State of Israel. The idea of ‘the Promised Land’ plays a central part in the foundational stories of the ancient Hebrews, the development of biblical Judaism, and the evolving understanding of the relationship between God and the Jewish people.

Today, Jewish prayer and the observance of the annual cycle of Jewish festivals is still rooted in connections to the land. Since the Holocaust, the creation of the State of Israel has been seen as an essential bulwark against future persecution, a country where Jews will always be accepted. However, although we must be mindful of this, none of it should inhibit us from challenging the reality on the ground. We have to recognise that the condition in which non-Jews find themselves, both in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territory, is a consequence of the way the modern State of Israel has developed.

Differing attitudes among Christians inevitably affect Jewish-Christian relations. Some Christians feel inhibited from making any criticism of Israel in any way, out of sensitivity to Jewish feelings; the history of the Holocaust and the fear of being called anti-Semitic. This consequent silence is seen by many,

<sup>15</sup> Kairos Palestine document, para 5.4.2

including Palestinians, as endorsing the status quo – implying acceptance of the injustices under which Palestinians suffer.

On the other hand, the stronger the criticism by Christians of the policies of successive Israeli governments, the greater the strain that is placed on relationships between the two faith communities. However, when these criticisms are dismissed as being anti-Semitic, Christians can point to the almost identical objections expressed by a growing number of Jews within and outside Israel. These acute tensions call for a much more open and honest dialogue between Christians and Jews.

## Muslim-Christian relations

***“Our message to the Muslims is a message of love and living together and a call to reject fanaticism and extremism.”<sup>16</sup>***

Many Muslims are surprised and shocked at the way Christian Zionists have not only been enthusiastic about the creation of the State of Israel, but also supported its policies. They find it hard to understand how these Christians interpret the Bible in such a way as to justify what they see as profound injustices. They are therefore greatly encouraged when Christians dissociate themselves from Christian Zionism, and recognise the issues in the conflict that are related to international law and human rights.

Therefore many Christians and Muslims – both in Israel/Palestine and the rest of the world – feel that they can put their religious differences aside, and work shoulder to shoulder for a peaceful and just solution to the conflict.

When we, as Christians, express strong sympathy for the Palestinians, we are making judgements about the issue of justice. This does not mean we necessarily endorse all the means used to achieve justice.

We recognise that a uniquely Islamic form of anti-Semitism has developed in recent years – regularly expressed in the rhetoric of certain political and religious leaders in the Muslim world. We are as critical of anti-Semitism in Islamic contexts as we are in Christian and western ones.

Christians must also be aware that some extreme Islamic fundamentalist rhetoric in recent years has had a disturbingly anti-Christian tone. However, Palestinian Christians strongly repudiate the reports circulating in the West (occasionally promoted by Israel and its supporters), that they are emigrating “because of persecution by Muslims”. Those that feel compelled to leave their country say that it is largely for economic reasons – created by 46 years of occupation. It cannot be denied, however, that some have felt caught between extremist Zionists on the one hand and extremist Muslims on the other.

<sup>16</sup> Kairos Palestine document, para 5.4.1

As Christians wishing to identify with Palestinians in their struggle for justice, we do need to be aware of the Islamic dimensions of the conflict, which have become more pronounced in recent years. The continued failure of the rest of the world community to bring about a just solution has been a significant factor in the emergence of extreme Islamic fundamentalism, in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In identifying with the *Kairos Palestine* document, Christians embrace the struggle for justice and human rights, while distancing themselves from any form of violence.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict uniquely tests the relationships between Jews, Christians and Muslims. There can hardly be a more challenging context in which the disciples of Jesus are called to work out in practice what it is to “hunger and thirst after righteousness and justice”, and to be peacemakers.<sup>17</sup>

We encourage dialogue between faiths, based on true relationships of honesty, which disturb complacency and seek to understand the views and fears of all parties.

## 4 Delegitimising occupation: a theological response



***“We declare that any theology, seemingly based on the Bible or on faith or on history, that legitimises 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.”<sup>18</sup>***

We stand on the shoulders of the earlier *kairos* movements. We hear their repeated call for confession, repentance and speaking truth to power. We are inspired by their non-violent resistance to injustice. Like them, we recognise the difference between theological interpretations that justify oppression, and those that defend and speak up for the oppressed.

Consequently, we affirm the following:

We believe in God the Father who is loving and just, who created all people in his image, people who deserve dignity, justice and freedom.

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 5:6,9

<sup>18</sup> Kairos Palestine document, para 2.5

We believe in Jesus the Son, who at the beginning of his ministry proclaimed his, and our, calling: “The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”<sup>19</sup>

We believe in God’s Spirit, poured out at Pentecost, who unites us and breaks down all ethnic barriers. The Spirit leads us to search for truth, speak out prophetically, and will ultimately guide us through the process of justice, peace and reconciliation.

We affirm the biblical conviction that, if one part of the body of Christ suffers, the whole body suffers.<sup>20</sup> It is therefore the responsibility of the whole Christian Church to hear the cry of the Palestinian Christians, by responding to their call to do justice. We also confess that, by not speaking truth to power, we have failed to follow the call of Jesus to serve God with love and compassion for all people.

We call on the Church to repent for the centuries of injustice and persecution of Jewish people, and for continuing anti-Semitism. We lament the calamity of the Holocaust. We recognise the dehumanising and destructive power of doctrines that denigrate Judaism, perpetuate stereotypes and fuel prejudice. We also reject all forms of Islamophobia that caricature Muslims as terrorists, or as the enemy. Rather, we have learnt from Christians in Palestine that Muslims and Christians can live together peacefully.

We call for repentance for Britain’s historic, and current, complicity in the on-going Palestinian suffering, and for those times when churches have promoted theological interpretations that support discrimination, dispossession, segregation and occupation. Mindful of the *Kairos Palestine* document’s statement that occupation is “a sin against God and humanity”, we repent of the apathy that allows it to continue.<sup>21</sup>

We remember that Jesus was born under an imperialist Roman regime, yet called his followers to love their enemies. He introduced an alternative kingdom, resisted domination and challenged the abuse of power. In keeping with *Kairos Palestine* and *kairos* movements throughout the world, we call for non-violent resistance to injustice.<sup>22</sup>

We acknowledge that the State of Israel exists, as part of the community of nations, to be guaranteed security within its internationally recognised boundaries. In common with all nations, its existence is to be sanctioned by international law, not by seeking to equate the modern State of Israel with biblical Israel.

<sup>19</sup> Luke 4:18-23

<sup>20</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:26

<sup>21</sup> Kairos Palestine document, para 2.5

<sup>22</sup> Acts 5:29, Romans 13:4, Mathew 5:38-48. Also Kairos Palestine document, paras 4.2.2, 4.2.3 and 4.2.4.

We affirm that in the teachings of Jesus, possession of the land was not intrinsic to the coming of God's kingdom. We consequently reject Christian Zionism's theological endorsement of land cleansing, violent dispossession, and human rights abuses. We note its neglect of justice, peace and reconciliation. We also regret the disregard by Christian Zionists of the historical context in which Hebrew prophets called on Israel to live a life of righteousness, and challenge Christian Zionists' espousal of predictive prophecy foreseeing a vision of Israel being either converted, or annihilated.

We rejoice that Palestinian Christians offer a very different understanding, seeing all land as belonging to God.

***“Our land is God's land, as is the case with all countries in the world. It is holy in as much as God is present in it, for God alone is holy and sanctifier. It is the duty of those of us who live here, to respect the will of God for this land. It is our duty to liberate it from the evil of injustice and war. It is God's land and therefore it must be a land of reconciliation, peace and love. This is indeed possible. God has put us here as two peoples, and God gives us the capacity if we have the will, to live together and establish in it justice and peace, making it in reality God's land: 'The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it'.”***<sup>23</sup>

We affirm that the Scriptures repeatedly insist that, because the land belongs to God, residency in the land is conditional on obedience and faithfulness to God. Scripture stresses that the pursuit of justice, sharing the land, welcoming the stranger, protecting the rights of refugees and care for the poor, are conditions to dwelling in the land.<sup>24</sup>

At the heart of our theology is the inclusive gospel of Jesus, where membership of God's people is open to all, on the basis of grace.<sup>25</sup> This inclusiveness, embracing diverse nations and conditions of humanity, was exemplified in the message Jesus delivered in his home town of Nazareth.<sup>26</sup> The God of no favourites sees all people, and all nations, as equal before his love and justice. To suggest that any person or ethnic group is rejected, or excluded, is a repudiation of this universality.

<sup>23</sup> Kairos Palestine document, para 2.3.1

<sup>24</sup> Deuteronomy 16:20, Ezekiel 47:13-21, Leviticus 25:23

<sup>25</sup> Isaiah 56:1-8

<sup>26</sup> Luke 4:25-30

## 5 The daily humiliation of occupation: injustice exposed

***“They say: Peace, peace when there is no peace’.<sup>27</sup> These days, everyone is speaking about peace in the Middle East and the peace process. So far, however, the reality is one of Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territories, deprivation of our freedom and all that results from this situation.”***<sup>28</sup>

An increasing number of British Christians bear witness to significant injustice against Palestinians, whether under occupation in the West Bank; isolated in Gaza; citizens of Israel or among the majority of Palestinians who are outside Palestine/Israel and prevented from returning. Visitors to the region can easily see some signs of this injustice, other aspects are concealed.

### The Barrier

The most striking symbol of the prolonged occupation of the West Bank is the Barrier also known as the Separation Wall. Israel began building the Separation Wall/Barrier in 2002. In many places it is an eight-metre high concrete structure with military watchtowers and occasional checkpoints. Elsewhere, it is an equally prohibitive touch-sensitive fence system, under high surveillance, and flanked with razor wire and Israeli military roads.

***“The separation wall erected on Palestinian territory, a large part of which has been confiscated for this purpose, has turned our towns and villages into prisons, separating them from one another, making them dispersed and divided cantons.”***<sup>29</sup>

What Israelis describe as security, Palestinians experience as an oppressive control, a limitation of freedom and a pretext to seize land. The route of the Barrier frequently diverges from the internationally recognised boundary between the State of Israel and the West Bank, effectively annexing 9.5% of the West Bank.<sup>30</sup> The Wall “and its associated regime” were ruled as illegal under international law by the International Court of Justice in 2004.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Jeremiah 6:14

<sup>28</sup> Kairos Palestine document, para 1.1

<sup>29</sup> Kairos Palestine document, para 1.1.1

<sup>30</sup> The Separation Barrier B'Tselem [http://www.btselem.org/separation\\_barrier](http://www.btselem.org/separation_barrier) (Accessed 20th June 2013)

<sup>31</sup> Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, International Court of Justice <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?pr=71&code=mwp&p1=3&p2=4&p3=6> (Accessed 20th June 2013) 09/07/2004 – 2004/28 Advisory Opinion- The Court finds that the construction by Israel of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and its associated regime are contrary to international law; it states the legal consequences arising from that illegality

Palestinians must apply for a permit (with very limited hope of success), if they wish to pass through the checkpoints in the Barrier and then travel to Israel. Thousands queue each day to pass through them. At the huge checkpoint 'terminal' between Bethlehem and Jerusalem people arrive early in the morning in the hope of getting to work on time but there are invariably delays and even with a valid permit the possibility exists of being turned back by the soldiers or security firms on duty.

***“Reality is the daily humiliation to which we are subjected at the military checkpoints, as we make our way to job, schools or hospitals.”<sup>32</sup>***

## Oslo Accords and the division of the West Bank

The Oslo negotiations in 1995, between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) called for the phased transfer of power from the Israeli military and its civil administration to Palestinian authority, to be achieved by 1999.<sup>33</sup> Approaching twenty years later these accords are still in place and as a result the West Bank is divided into three non contiguous administrative 'areas'.

**Area A** Palestinian security and civil control

**Area B** Palestinian civil control, Israeli security control

**Area C** Israeli security and civil control <sup>34</sup>

Area A covers the Palestinian cities and large towns including Bethlehem, Ramallah, Nablus and Jericho and contains the vast majority of the Palestinian population.

Area B is a belt of land that surrounds most of the cities and the neighbouring Palestinian villages.

Area C makes up 61% of the West Bank and includes 87% of the highly fertile Jordan Valley.<sup>35</sup> Area C is all Palestinian land, but Palestinians are not able to build on it. They are denied access to large parts of it and more and more of it is being appropriated from its owners by the Barrier and by Israeli settlers.

## Settlements

***“Israeli settlements ravage our land in the name of God and in the name of force, controlling our natural resources, including water and agricultural land, thus depriving hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, and constituting an obstacle to any political solution.”<sup>36</sup>***

<sup>32</sup> Kairos Palestine document, para 1.1.3

<sup>33</sup> [http://archive.ochaopt.org/documents/special\\_focus\\_area\\_c\\_demolitions\\_december\\_2009.pdf](http://archive.ochaopt.org/documents/special_focus_area_c_demolitions_december_2009.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_area\\_c\\_map\\_2011\\_02\\_22.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_area_c_map_2011_02_22.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> OCHA Humanitarian Fact Sheet on the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea Area February 2012 [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_jordan\\_valley\\_factSheet\\_february\\_2012\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_jordan_valley_factSheet_february_2012_english.pdf) (Accessed 20th June 2013)

<sup>36</sup> Kairos Palestine document, para 1.1.2

Israeli settlements are illegal under international law. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilian persons in time of war states: “The occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own population into the territories it occupies.” Since 1967, Israel has established around 150 illegal settlements in the Occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, with dozens more unofficial ‘outposts’. There are now over 350,000 Israelis in West Bank settlements,<sup>37</sup> with approximately 200,000 Jewish Israelis living in occupied East Jerusalem.<sup>38</sup>

Palestinian communities suffer attacks against themselves and/or their property by Israeli settlers, others face increasing settlement expansion on their land.

***“Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land. The Lord Almighty has declared in my hearing: ‘Surely the great houses will become desolate, the fine mansions left without occupants.’”<sup>39</sup>***

### “We refuse to be enemies”

At the entrance to a farm on a hill west of Bethlehem, surrounded by settlements, the owners of the land Daoud and Daher Nassar, have expressed their Christian commitment in the words, “We refuse to be enemies.”

“My family land, bought by my grandfather nearly 100 years ago, is under threat of confiscation. We have lived and farmed under four occupiers, three kings – and now Israel. Only this last regime has tried to take our land from us.” Daoud Nassar

They have set out to encourage a new generation of people who will work and bring life to this land, and protect them from settler encroachment. They have created a place at their family farm where young people are encouraged to imagine a better future. Here they can learn to love their country without hating the other, build bridges of understanding, reconciliation and peace. Palestinian, Israeli and international visitors can meet and stand together in solidarity for peace, justice and human dignity. It is called “The Tent of Nations”.

<sup>37</sup> Guardian report, 26 July 2012

<sup>38</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, report to the General Assembly 19 September 2012, <http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/5ba47a5c6cef541b802563e000493b8c/4b2de5243ebce35685257aa200487927> (Accessed, 20th June 2013), also “UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Occupied Palestinian The humanitarian impact of Israeli Settlement policies” [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_settlements\\_FactSheet\\_January\\_2012\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_settlements_FactSheet_January_2012_english.pdf) (Accessed 20th June 2013)

<sup>39</sup> Isaiah 5:8-9

## Legal Discrimination

Palestinians on the West Bank are subject to Israeli military law while Israeli settlers living there are subject to Israeli civilian criminal law. The Israeli organisation B'Tselem – which monitors the impact of the occupation – has said that this difference in legal status has led to a double standard, in which Israelis are given more legal rights, and are punished more lightly than the Palestinians.<sup>40</sup> This system violates the principles of equality before the law. For example, Palestinian children as young as 12 years old can be detained without the legal right to have parents present during questioning, and can be held without charge for 188 days. For Israeli children, the equivalent age is 14 years; parents are generally allowed to be present during questioning; and they can only be held for 40 days without charge.<sup>41</sup>

***“The thousands of prisoners languishing in Israeli prisons are part of our reality. The Israelis move heaven and earth to gain the release of one prisoner, and those thousands of Palestinian prisoners, when will they have their freedom?”<sup>42</sup>***

In May 2013, there were 4,979 Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails. The Palestinian prisoner support and human rights organisation, Addameer, says that 156 of these are classified as “administrative detainees”, which means they can be held indefinitely, without charge. There were also 236 child prisoners. Every year, says Defence for Children International (DCI)-Palestine, around 500-700 Palestinian children “are detained and prosecuted in the Israeli military court system”.

Over 700 complaints of abuse of Palestinian prisoners, including torture during interrogations, have been filed since 2001. Not one has been investigated.<sup>43</sup>

## Home demolitions

Palestinian homes and outbuildings are routinely destroyed by the Israeli authorities, who declare them to be “unauthorised” structures. This is a way of clearing land for settlement expansion, or a means of collective punishment.

More than 27,000 homes have been demolished since 1967.<sup>44</sup> In 2012, 599 Palestinian structures were demolished, displacing 886 people, including 474 children.<sup>45</sup> It is difficult to imagine the impact of just one demolished home, let alone such widespread destruction, some of which involve the demolition

40 ‘Children in Military Custody’: report of British lawyers to the FCO, (2012) page 10

41 ‘Children in Military Custody’: report of British lawyers to the FCO, (2012) page 10

42 Kairos Palestine document, para 1.1.7

43 Bound, Blindfolded and Convicted: Children held in military detention, report by Defence for Children International Palestine [http://www.dci-palestine.org/sites/default/files/report\\_0.pdf](http://www.dci-palestine.org/sites/default/files/report_0.pdf) (Accessed 20th June 2013)

44 Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions <http://www.icahd.org/faq> (Accessed 20th June 2013)

45 <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=1287>

of entire villages. There is never compensation. On the contrary, those who have had their property demolished are often billed with demolition costs, on top of the expense of moving or rebuilding. Thousands of Palestinians live under the shadow of “demolition orders”. These might mean that their home is never demolished, or that it could be demolished without further notice. This threat of demolition hangs over entire communities.

## Access to water

There are many other restrictions on Palestinian life. One of these is a severe disparity in access to water. The 550,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem consume six times as much water as the 2,600,000 Palestinians. Israel has effective control over Palestine’s water resources. This is not simply unjust, but also illegal under international law.<sup>46</sup>

### ‘We have the right to hope’

In the village of Jayyous, farming families have been cut off from 75% of land that they had worked for generations. Access is controlled by a complex system of permits, imposed at limited openings of a checkpoint. Crops are often unharvested or are hard to sell because of the movement restrictions. The village wells are under Israeli control and water is freely used by the neighbouring Israeli settlement while villagers have water restrictions and have to purchase their water back. There is increasing poverty and the villagers’ rights are ignored and violated. Yet the villagers refuse to despair.

“We must hope, we have the right to hope.” A community leader

## Jerusalem

***“Jerusalem is the heart of our reality. . . Jerusalem, city of reconciliation, has become a city of discrimination and exclusion, a source of struggle rather than peace.”<sup>47</sup>***

As a result of Israeli restrictions, visiting Jerusalem is a rare exception for many Christians and Muslims who live in the occupied Palestinian territory. Many Palestinians never have access to some of their most holy sites, which are constantly available to international visitors, even though they may be just a few miles from their homes.

Following the 1967 war, Israel illegally annexed East Jerusalem and sixty four square kilometres of surrounding land, adding it to the municipal boundaries

46 <http://www.alhaq.org/publications/Water-For-One-People-Only.pdf>

47 Kairos Palestine document, para 1.1.8

of West Jerusalem, and imposed Israeli civil law. This land is still recognised as Palestinian territory under international law.<sup>48</sup>

The 260,000<sup>49</sup> Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem are in a particularly complex situation. Most are not Israeli citizens, and none are officially residents of the West Bank.<sup>50</sup> They are ‘residents’ of East Jerusalem and have residency permits (known as Jerusalem ID). This is a particularly vulnerable status and since 1967 over 14,000 Palestinians have had their right to reside there revoked.<sup>51</sup>

## Gaza Strip

***“Gaza, especially after the cruel war Israel launched against it during December 2008 and January 2009, continues to live in inhuman conditions, under permanent blockade and cut off from the other Palestinian territories.”<sup>52</sup>***

The Gaza Strip, still subject to Israeli policies of blockade and military brutality, is home to around 1.7 million Palestinians – a majority of whom are refugees, living just a few miles away from their former homes inside Israel. Despite a recent slight easing of restrictions, Israel still enforces ‘no go’ zones near the border fence,<sup>53</sup> and at sea.<sup>54</sup> Israel blocks almost all exports from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank, as part of an explicit ‘separation’ policy.<sup>55</sup> It is virtually impossible for people living in Gaza to visit the West Bank, and vice versa. Rockets fired from within Gaza have killed 27 people in Israel over the last decade.<sup>56</sup> This violence is generally seen by Palestinians as a response to the blockade, and the violence of dispossession exercised by the Israeli government. Israeli violence against Gaza has been disproportionately severe, resulting in 4,852 fatalities since 2000.<sup>57</sup>

48 <http://www.diakonia.se/sa/node.asp?node=841>.

49 Palestine Liberation Organisation Negotiations Affairs Department <http://www.nad-plo.org/print.php?id=115> (Accessed 20th June 2013)

50 Legal Status of East Jerusalem and its Residents B’Tselem [http://www.btselem.org/jerusalem/legal\\_status](http://www.btselem.org/jerusalem/legal_status) (Accessed 20th June 2013)

51 OCHA, East Jerusalem, Key Humanitarian Concerns <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/0D90191FBC1DDBC8525785C004DF7A5> (Accessed 20th June 2013)

52 Kairos Palestine document, para 1.1.1

53 Fact Sheet, Gaza Buffer Zone, Save the Children Fund 2009 [http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/English\\_Gaza\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_and\\_Citations.pdf](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/English_Gaza_Fact_Sheet_and_Citations.pdf) (Accessed 20th June 2013) Gaza’s Children, Falling Behind, The Effect of the Blockade on Child Health in Gaza, Save the Children Fund, Medical Aid for Palestinians 2012

54 Israeli Attacks on Palestinian Fishermen in Gaza Sea, Palestinian Centre for Human Rights [http://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=9601:israeli-attacks-on-palestinian-fishermen-in-gaza-sea&catid=144:new-reports](http://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9601:israeli-attacks-on-palestinian-fishermen-in-gaza-sea&catid=144:new-reports) (Accessed 20th June 2013) also “Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict”, 2009

55 Gaza in 2020 – A liveable place? A report by the United Nations Country Team in the occupied Palestinian territory August 2012 [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009\\_2014/documents/wgme/dv/2012/2012091/20120912\\_3\\_unscogaza\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/wgme/dv/2012/2012091/20120912_3_unscogaza_en.pdf)

56 Rocket and mortar fire into Israel, B’Tselem [http://www.btselem.org/israeli\\_civilians/qassam\\_missiles](http://www.btselem.org/israeli_civilians/qassam_missiles) (Accessed 20th June 2013)

57 Statistics – Fatalities (B’Tselem) <http://www.btselem.org/statistics/fatalities/any/by-date-of-event> (Accessed 20th June 2013)

***“We recognise that all peoples must find a new way forward in relations with each other and in the resolution of their conflicts. The ways of force must give way to the ways of justice.”<sup>58</sup>***

## Palestinians within Israel

***“Palestinians within the State of Israel . . . are waiting to enjoy full rights and equality like all other citizens of the state.”<sup>59</sup>***

The 1,600,000 Palestinians who have lived in Israel since its formation in 1948,<sup>60</sup> while having Israeli citizenship, are subject to discrimination in many areas of everyday life.<sup>61</sup> Significantly less government money is spent on social welfare, health-care and schools in these Arab communities.<sup>62</sup> Family life for Palestinian citizens of Israel has recently been put under more stress by legal restrictions on their ability to live with a Palestinian spouse from the West Bank or Gaza Strip.<sup>63</sup> This amendment to Israel’s Citizenship Law, referred to as the “Family Separation” law, endorsed by the country’s Supreme Court in January 2012, is intended to stop Palestinians from the occupied territory gaining Israeli citizenship through marriage.

***“Reality is the separation between members of the same family, making family life impossible for thousands of Palestinians, especially where one of the spouses does not have an Israeli identity card.”<sup>64</sup>***

The Israeli government is currently threatening to end the traditional nomadic lifestyle of the tens of thousands of Bedouin citizens in the Negev. They are faced with expulsion from their ‘unrecognised’ villages and are to be concentrated in a cluster of poorly equipped ‘recognised’ towns, where unemployment and poverty are rife.<sup>65</sup>

## Refugees

***“Refugees are also part of our reality. Most of them are still living in camps under difficult circumstances. They have been waiting for their right of return, generation after generation. What will be their fate?”<sup>66</sup>***

58 Kairos Palestine document, para 4.2.2

59 Kairos Palestine document, para 1.2.1

60 The Inequality Report – The Palestinian Arab Minority in Israel, Adalah [http://adalah.org/upfiles/2011/Adalah\\_The\\_Inequality\\_Report\\_March\\_2011.pdf](http://adalah.org/upfiles/2011/Adalah_The_Inequality_Report_March_2011.pdf) (Accessed 20th June 2013)

61 The Inequality Report, Adalah the Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights

62 The Inequality Report – The Palestinian Arab Minority in Israel, Adalah [http://adalah.org/upfiles/2011/Adalah\\_The\\_Inequality\\_Report\\_March\\_2011.pdf](http://adalah.org/upfiles/2011/Adalah_The_Inequality_Report_March_2011.pdf) (Accessed 20th June 2013)

63 Israel: High Court Rulings Undermine Human Rights, Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/01/30/israel-high-court-rulings-undermine-human-rights> (Accessed 20th June 2013)

64 Kairos Palestine document, para 1.1.4

65 UN Human Rights Council, 2011, Report by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Chapter VI. Israel: Situation of unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev desert, James Anaya <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/indigenous/rapporteur/docs/A-HRC-18-35-Add-1.pdf> (Accessed 20th June 2013)

66 Kairos Palestine document, para 1.1.6

There are currently more than 5 million Palestinian refugees worldwide. The UN reports that approximately 1.4 million live in refugee camps.<sup>67</sup> Their right to return has been systematically denied since 1948.

This section cannot cover all the interconnected injustices faced by Palestinians. Not all of the instances mentioned are universal.

***“Yes, there is Palestinian resistance to the occupation. . . If there were no occupation there would be no resistance, no fear and no insecurity . . . therefore we call on Israelis to end the occupation. Then they will see a new world in which there is no fear, no threat, but rather security, justice and peace.”<sup>68</sup>***

The corrosive power of the occupation lies in the fact that normal life is constantly overshadowed by the possibility of serious disruption and the use of force. The effects of occupation may be felt through restriction of movement, fear for the future, unemployment and consequent poverty, and sometimes direct violence.

It is for us to bear witness to both the visible and the hidden dispossession in order to bring about peace with justice.

## 6 A call to action



***“Are you able to help us get our freedom back? This is the only way you can help the two peoples attain justice, peace, security and love.”<sup>69</sup>***

How do we respond to this “cry from the heart of Palestinian suffering”, the cry of hope in the absence of all hope?<sup>70</sup> The *Kairos Palestine* document is a call to decisive action in the spirit of love and non-violent resistance.

There are many responses open to us, but we support the actions called for in the *Kairos Palestine* document.

### Go and see

***“We say to the churches Come and see . . . you will know the facts and the people of this land.”<sup>71</sup>***

67 UNRWA <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=86> (Accessed 20th June 2013)

68 Kairos Palestine document, para 1.4

69 Kairos Palestine document, para 6.1

70 Kairos Palestine document, para 10

71 Kairos Palestine document, para 6.2

Many in the churches of Britain are unaware of the reality of the Palestinian struggle. Christians can visit the holy sites in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, without witnessing the injustices which have been documented here, and which are the daily experience of the Palestinian people, including their fellow Christians. It is imperative that congregations, and individuals, who plan pilgrimages to the region, ensure that bookings are made with tour companies that enable visitors to see and hear the reality for themselves.

There are travel companies and organisations, in Palestine and the UK, which enable groups and individuals to work alongside Palestinian and Israeli peacemakers for varying periods. Some NGOs, such as the Ecumenical Accompaniment programme in Israel and Palestine (EAPPI), recruit volunteers to work as human rights observers.

It is, of course, impossible for everyone to visit, but there is no substitute for first-hand experience. Many have been profoundly changed by their encounters, and have become witnesses to what they have seen and heard, and advocates for justice.

***“The communion of love says to every believer in spirit and truth; if my brother is a prisoner I am a prisoner: if his home is destroyed, my home is destroyed . . . we face the same challenges and share in all that has happened and will happen.”<sup>72</sup>***

### Take political action

***“Religion cannot favour or support any unjust political regime but rather must promote justice, truth and human dignity.”<sup>73</sup>***

As citizens it is our responsibility to inform our elected representatives of the effects of the occupation: the violations of international law and the denial of human rights to Palestinian women, men and children. We need to demand that our governments challenge all violations of international law and hold to account those responsible. We have a powerful voice, which needs to be heard.

***“We see Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions as non-violent tools for justice, peace and security for all.”<sup>74</sup>***

Political action can take a number of forms, but it is now imperative that we take seriously those Palestinians and Israelis who call for the boycott of, divestment from and economic sanctions against everything produced by the occupation.<sup>75</sup> The *Kairos Palestine* document endorses this call, asking churches and individual Christians to play their part.

72 Kairos Palestine document, para 5.2

73 Kairos Palestine document, para 3.4.3

74 Kairos Palestine document, section 6.3

75 Kairos Palestine document, para 4.2.6

Boycott is not without controversy, but it has an honourable history among British Christians. In the 19th century fight against slavery, churches backed the boycott of West Indian sugar, and there was support for the boycott of South African goods in the more recent struggle against apartheid. The UN, EU and UK government frequently condemn the growth of Israeli settlements, and violations of international law by Israel, to little or no avail. Words need to be backed up by actions, actions directed against the illegal, unjust and discriminatory policies of the Israeli government, not against the Israeli people themselves.

***Therefore, we call for a response to what the civil and religious institutions have proposed... the beginning of a system of economic sanctions and boycotts to be applied against Israel. We repeat once again that this is not revenge but rather a serious action in order to reach a just and definitive peace that will put an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories and will guarantee peace and security for all.***<sup>76</sup>

In practical terms, supporting a policy of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) means:

- Supporting the call from Palestinian civil society, NGOs, religious institutions and a growing number of Jewish voices both inside and outside Israel, that until the occupation ends, individuals, companies and states should engage in divestment from, and an economic and commercial boycott of, everything produced by the occupation.
- Putting pressure on governments to provide legal guidelines to retailers on the clear labelling of goods produced by illegal Israeli settlements and sold in our shops and supermarkets, so that the general public can make responsible choices.
- Supporting institutions and NGOs, both inside and outside Israel and in Palestine, in the boycott of cultural and academic institutions complicit in the occupation, which deny the freedom of Palestinian students and academic staff to pursue research and study. This is not a boycott of individual Israelis.
- Giving positive support to the Palestinian economy, by investing in and buying from Palestinian businesses.

Opposition to these proposals by some Jewish organisations, as well as from voices within the churches, has often been fierce and we are distressed that many have confused these actions with anti-semitism. We want to emphasise that BDS is directed against Israeli policy, not the state itself, or its citizens. It would end as soon as the occupation ends.

The same is true of morally responsible investment. Methods to exert economic pressure serve to increase awareness, promote open discussion, and create the grassroots support required to persuade governments to take

<sup>76</sup> Kairos Palestine document, para 7

effective actions and to change unjust policies. It is in this spirit, and for these reasons, that we urge congregations, clergy and church leaders to learn more about the BDS movement, and how to become involved on personal, local and national levels.

## Challenge the misuse of the Bible

***“We declare that any theology seemingly based on the Bible... that legitimises the occupation is far from Christian teachings.”***<sup>77</sup>

A lack of awareness of the situation in Israel/Palestine, and a misreading of the Bible can often legitimise the infringement of Palestinian human rights.

There is a need for a sustained, imaginative campaign by the Church, at all levels, to ensure that the Word of God contained in Scripture is a source of life for all peoples and to deny any theologies that justify exclusion and support injustice.

We need to enable congregations and individuals to learn the truth of the current situation. To foster this we can:

- Make resources available for worship and study groups.
- Welcome Palestinian church leaders, peacemakers and community groups when they visit the UK so that we can learn from them.
- Join groups which raise awareness of and campaign for a just peace in Israel/Palestine.
- Make twinning links with Palestinian churches, communities, schools, universities, villages and towns.
- Take part in the World Week for Peace in Palestine/Israel.
- Become *Kairos Congregations*.

## Pray

Prayer is fundamental. It undergirds and permeates all our action as Christians. It is important that prayer must be informed, and not seen as an alternative to action.

The prophet Micah’s challenge “to act justly, and to love mercy”<sup>78</sup> rings down the centuries. It is a call to do justice not just talk about it. It is addressed to us, who have the power to change things. Nobody can do everything but everybody can do something.

<sup>77</sup> Kairos Palestine document, section 2.5

<sup>78</sup> Micah 6:8

## 7 Conclusion: a time to make choices



*“As [Jesus] approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, ‘If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes.’”<sup>79</sup>*

The charge that Jesus brought against the leaders of his day was that they did not know how to discern “the signs of the times” or to recognise “the way that leads to peace”.<sup>80</sup> As the experience of Israel/Palestine has shown, such failure can lead to disaster.

Responding to the *Kairos Palestine document* call involves difficult decisions and tough choices. However, the choice is not support for Palestine against Israel or vice versa. Rather:

- It is a choice for justice, against oppression; for human and political rights, against dispossession.
- It is a choice for freedom, against an occupation that denies freedom.
- It is a choice for equal human dignity, against racism and discrimination.
- It is a choice *for* non-violent resistance, *against* the violence that perpetuates a cycle of hatred and recrimination.

This response to the *Kairos Palestine document* is an urgent call to the churches of Britain to make these choices. They are fundamental to our discipleship.

**We can be silent no longer. It is time for prophetic faithfulness. It is time for action.**

<sup>79</sup> Luke 19:41-42

<sup>80</sup> Luke 12:56, Luke 19:42

## Appendix A

### *Kairos Palestine: The Iona Call 2012*

We, a group of Christians from many parts of the UK and beyond, gathered on the Isle of Iona in Pentecost week 2012. Under the guidance of Rev Dr Naim Ateek<sup>81</sup> and Dr Mark Braverman<sup>82</sup> we considered our response to the *Kairos Palestine* document: ‘*A Moment of Truth – a word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering*’ (2009).

This is our *kairos* moment – our moment of truth. We are called to respond boldly to the deepening suffering of our sisters and brothers in Palestine under occupation by Israel. We stand in faithfulness and solidarity with Palestinians and Israelis who are working tirelessly for a peace based on justice.

We believe it is necessary to challenge the deafening silence of most churches in the face of the continuing injustice of dispossession and denial of basic human and political rights. We agree with the *Kairos Palestine* document that the occupation by Israel is “an evil and a sin.”<sup>83</sup>

Therefore:

- We ask our churches and theological institutions to challenge how the Bible has been used to justify oppression and injustice. We encourage the development and use of educational resources to raise awareness, enrich worship and challenge misperceptions and apathy.
- Palestinian Christians have called us to “come and see”.<sup>84</sup> We urge Christians to participate only in those pilgrimages which give opportunity to listen to the experiences of Palestinians and engage with the harsh realities of occupation.
- We support Palestinians in their non-violent resistance to Israeli injustice and oppression. We endorse their call for boycott, disinvestment and sanctions (BDS) and other forms of non-violent direct action.
- We call on Christians to put pressure on governments and the European Union to demonstrate a commitment to justice for Palestinians and security for all people.

In pursuit of the above we intend to establish a UK *Kairos* network, linked to the *Kairos Palestine* global movement, to alert our churches to the urgent situation in Palestine. We challenge Christians and churches to engage in prayerful study of the *Kairos Palestine* document in openness to what the

<sup>81</sup> Palestinian Christian Theologian, Founder and Director of Sabeel in Jerusalem

<sup>82</sup> Mark Braverman *Fatal Embrace. Christians, Jews, and the search for peace in the Holy Land*, 2010, Synergy, USA

<sup>83</sup> *Kairos Palestine* document, para 4.2.1

<sup>84</sup> *Kairos Palestine* document, para 6.2

spirit is now saying to the churches.<sup>85</sup> We must read the signs of the times and act in obedience to God's will.<sup>86</sup>

Difficult though this journey may be, we seize this kairos moment with conviction and hope. We recognise our responsibility as followers of Jesus Christ to speak the prophetic word with courage.

We are called to respond to the question from Palestinian Christians: "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?"<sup>87</sup>

## Appendix B

### Palestinian human rights organisations

#### Addameer

Palestinian prisoners' support organisation. Encourages campaigning for an end to 'administrative detention' (detention without trial) and letters of support to those detained.

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

#### Al Haq

Independent Palestinian non-governmental human rights organisation.

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

#### Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem (ARIJ)

Promoting sustainable development in the occupied Palestinian territory.

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

#### Arab Education Institute (AEI)

Pax Christi partners in Bethlehem, working with Palestinian Christians and Muslims

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

#### Badil

Resource Centre for Palestinian residency & refugee rights

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

#### Defense for Children International - Palestine Section

Promoting and protecting the rights of Palestinian children in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child (UNCRC).

[www.dci-pal.org](http://www.dci-pal.org)

#### International Centre of Bethlehem

Lutheran-based, ecumenically-oriented institution empowering the local community.

[www.annadwa.org/Con\\_Speeches.htm](http://www.annadwa.org/Con_Speeches.htm)

#### International Middle East Media Centre

Independent media coverage of Israel-Palestine.

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

#### Joint Advocacy initiative (JAI) of the east Jerusalem YMCA and YWCA of Palestine

Working for peace with justice in Palestine, based on humanitarian and Christian values.

[www.jai-pal.org](http://www.jai-pal.org)

#### Kairos Palestine

Christian Palestinians' word to the world about what is happening in Palestine.

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

#### Palestine Centre for Human Rights

NGO based in Gaza dedicated to protecting human rights.

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

#### Palestinian Bible Society

Committed to making the Word of God available to Palestinians.

[www.pbs-web.com](http://www.pbs-web.com)

#### Sabeel

Palestinian ecumenical, liberation theology centre.

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

#### Stop the Wall

Grass roots group.

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

#### Week for Peace in Palestine/Israel

World Council of Churches week (September) resources at:

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

#### Wi'am

Palestinian conflict resolution & transformation centre. Grassroot organisation from Bethlehem. improving relationships and promoting peace & reconciliation.

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

<sup>85</sup> Revelation 2:7

<sup>86</sup> Matthew 16:3

<sup>87</sup> Kairos Palestine document, para 6.1

## Israeli human rights organisations

### Alternative Information Center (AIC)

Promoting the human and national rights of the Palestinian people.

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

### Breaking the Silence

Israeli soldiers document their time in the occupied Palestinian territories.

[www.breakingthesilence.org.il/](http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/)

### B'Tselem

The Israeli information centre for human rights in the occupied territories.

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

### Coalition of Women for Peace

[www.coalitionofwomen.org/?lang=en](http://www.coalitionofwomen.org/?lang=en)

### Free the Shministim – Israel's young conscientious objectors

The Shministim are Israeli high school students who have been imprisoned for refusing to serve in an army that occupies the Palestinian Territories.

[www.december18th.org](http://www.december18th.org)

### Gisha

Legal Center for freedom of movement.

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

### Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions

Non-violent, direct-action organisation to resist Israeli demolition of Palestinian houses. Resources, maps, tours, updates.

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

[www.icahd.org](http://www.icahd.org) – UK supporters

### Kibbush

Articles and information on current issues concerning the conflict.

[www.kibbush.co.il](http://www.kibbush.co.il)

### New Profile

Movement for the demilitarisation of Israeli society.

[www.newprofile.org/english](http://www.newprofile.org/english)

### Physicians for Human Rights - Israel

[www.phr.org.il](http://www.phr.org.il)

### Rabbis for Human Rights

Seeks to prevent human rights violations in Israel and in areas for which Israel has taken responsibility.

<http://rhr.org.il/eng/>

### Who Profits?

Reports on the exports and businesses that profit from the settlements and the occupation.

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

### Yesh Gvul

A movement for soldiers of the Israeli Defence Force refusing to serve in the Occupied Territories.

[www.yeshgvul.org/en/about-2](http://www.yeshgvul.org/en/about-2)

### Zochrot

Israeli citizens working to raise awareness of the Nakba.

[www.zochrot.org/en](http://www.zochrot.org/en)

## International/ UK organisations

### Amos Trust

A Christian charity working with a network of network of community projects to raise awareness of, and provide support that address the root causes of injustice and poverty.

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

### Amnesty International

Information and reports and campaigns for those held in detention without trial.

[www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk)

### BDS Movement

Supports the Palestinian civil society call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel until it complies with international law and Palestinian human rights.

[www.bdsmovement.net](http://www.bdsmovement.net)

### Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT)

Information on arms trade to countries with dubious human rights records.

[www.caat.org.uk/resources/countries/israel](http://www.caat.org.uk/resources/countries/israel)

### Christian Aid

Supports communities affected by conflict and poverty and the causes of injustice. Reports, worship, educational and campaigning resources.

[www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk)

[www.christianaid.org.uk/whatwedo/middle-east/index.aspx](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/whatwedo/middle-east/index.aspx)

### Christian Peacemaker teams (CPT)

Faith-based non-violent support in situations of conflict.

[www.cpt.org/work/palestine](http://www.cpt.org/work/palestine)

### Church of Scotland

The inheritance of Abraham – a report on the 'promised land'.

[http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/14050/The\\_Inheritance\\_of\\_Abraham.pdf](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/14050/The_Inheritance_of_Abraham.pdf)

### World Mission Council Advent study booklet produced with Christian Aid.

[www.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk)

### Corporate Watch

An independent, not-for-profit journalism, research and publishing group that undertakes research on the social and environmental impact of corporations and corporate power.

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

### Drones Campaign Network

Campaigns against the manufacture and sales to and from Israel of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

<http://dronecampaignnetwork.wordpress.com>

### Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI)

Accompaniment and advocacy working towards ending the occupation (An initiative of the World Council of Churches).

Volunteers serve for three months in the West Bank.

[www.eappi.org](http://www.eappi.org)  
UK office: [www.quaker.org.uk/eappi](http://www.quaker.org.uk/eappi)

### Embrace (the Middle East)

Formerly Bible Lands – tackling poverty and injustice in the Middle East.

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

### FODIP (Forum for Discussion of Palestine and Israel)

Working for positive dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims in the UK on the Israeli/Palestinian situation.

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

### Friends of Sabeel UK

Seeks a just peace for Palestine and Israel; developing a spirituality based on justice, peace, non violence, liberation and reconciliation. Weekly prayer bulletin.

[www.friendsofsabeel.org.uk](http://www.friendsofsabeel.org.uk)

### ICAHN UK

Promotes and supports the work of ICAHD in Jerusalem, with a focus on education and information sharing.

[www.icahd.org](http://www.icahd.org) – UK supporters

**International Solidarity movement**

Non-violent resistance though international solidarity.

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

**Methodist Church**

Produced report in 2010, 'Justice in Palestine and Israel'. Recently opened an office near Bethlehem in collaboration with the American United Methodist Church. Supports work of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme.

<http://methodist.org.uk/mission/world-church/middle-east>

**Pax Christi UK**

Gospel-based lay-inspired, peacemaking movement. Supports peacemakers in Palestine and Israel; campaigns against arms trade and drones. Resources for peace education and worship.

[www.paxchristi.org.uk/wall1.php](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk/wall1.php)

**Trees for Life**

Sponsorship of olive tree planting.

<http://www.olivecoop.com/stage/category/treesforlife>

**Twining with Palestine**

Practical advice about setting up friendship links or twinning.

[www.twiningwithPalestine.net](http://www.twiningwithPalestine.net)

**Quakers**

Information on ending trade with illegal settlements

[www.quaker.org.uk/settlement-produce](http://www.quaker.org.uk/settlement-produce) and  
[www.quaker.org.uk/files/TradingAwayPeace.pdf](http://www.quaker.org.uk/files/TradingAwayPeace.pdf)

**UN office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**

Reports on the occupied Palestinian territory.

[www.ohchr.org/en/countries/menAregion/Pages/PSindex.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/menAregion/Pages/PSindex.aspx)

**UN office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs**

Regular updates and information on the current humanitarian situation in Occupied Territories.

[www.unocha.opt.org](http://www.unocha.opt.org)

**War on Want**

Reports, resources, campaigns to achieve justice for Palestinians including: stop arming Israel, BDS, Save Silwan.

[www.waronwant.org/campaigns/justice-for-palestine](http://www.waronwant.org/campaigns/justice-for-palestine)

**Write to Them**

Contact local representatives: MPs, MSPs, AMs and MEPs  
[www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com)

**Zaytoun**

A community interest to create and develop a market for Palestinian produce including olive oil, almonds, dates, Za'tar, soap.

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

**Tourism/pilgrimage**

All the listed agencies follow the code of conduct for tourism in the Holy Land and offer different kinds of opportunities to experience aspects of everyday life in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, and to meet people on both sides of the conflict.

**Alternative Tourism Group:**

Code of conduct for Tourism in the Holy Land.

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

**Amos Trust:**

Tours aim to give an understanding of what life is like in the Holy Land today; meet local people; visit the historic and biblical sites; see the "facts on the ground" and experience Palestinian hospitality.

[www.amostrust.org/travel](http://www.amostrust.org/travel)

**Come and See: A Call from Palestinian Christians**

A journey for peace with Justice.

Guidelines for Christians Contemplating a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

<http://www.atg.ps/resources/file/pages/Guidelines.pdf>

**EAPPI:**

Placements can be visited by contacting:

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

**Green Olive Tours:**

Social enterprise agency providing a wide range of tours that benefit the local community.

[www.toursinenglish.com](http://www.toursinenglish.com)

**Israeli Committee Against House Demolition (ICAHN)**

Offers range of half-day, day, longer tours and involvement in rebuilding Palestinian homes that have been demolished.

<http://www.icahd.org/tours>

**Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI) of the east Jerusalem YMCA and YWCA of Palestine**

Olive planting and picking tours.

[www.jai-pal.org](http://www.jai-pal.org)

**Olive Co-operative**

Tours, travel advice, Arabic courses, lists wide range of agencies offering tours.

[www.olivecoop.com](http://www.olivecoop.com)

**Travel Palestine**

The official website for tourism in Palestine.

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

**Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism**

A network of organisations advocating responsible tourism in the holy land.

See their updated list of resources and groups.

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

**Visit Palestine:**

Organises pilgrimages, business tours, cultural and alternative tours.

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

**Zaytoun:**

Olive harvest tours and olive picking trips in October/ November.

[www.zaytoun.org/harvest/about-the-harvest](http://www.zaytoun.org/harvest/about-the-harvest)

Please see [www.kairosbritain.org.uk](http://www.kairosbritain.org.uk) for an updated and expanded list of organisations

## Guide books

*Palestine and Palestinians* (Second edition 2008). Published by and available from Alternative Tourism Group: [www.atg.ps](http://www.atg.ps)

### Appendix C

### Israel/Palestine timeline and Britain's involvement

Events in Israel/Palestine



[www.kairosbritain.org.uk](http://www.kairosbritain.org.uk)