

New Hope for Palestine, the Middle East & the World

An Advent Plea from our Sisters & Brothers in the Land of Jesus' birth

[Excerpted from Kairos Palestine's *Christmas Alert*. For the full meditation: kairospalestine.ps/images/kairos-palestine-christmas-alert-2018.pdf.]

On behalf of all Palestinian Christians, Kairos Palestine sends you warm greetings and Christmas blessings from the birth city of Jesus Christ, Bethlehem.



Many of our Christian sisters and brothers around the world aren't aware of the existence of Palestinian Christians in this land. Many think that Palestinian Christians have been converted to Christianity due to mission work in our land decades back.

This is not true! Palestinian Christians have been here since the beginning of Christianity. Our ancestors walked with and were taught by Jesus Christ. The presence of Christians in our land has never been interrupted. Our forebears managed to survive during all dark times in the history of our area. But today, our presence as Christian and Muslim Palestinians is threatened due to the Israeli colonization of our land.

Together with your strength, solidarity, commitment and compassion—combined with the international community's refusing to accept any outcome other than an end to oppression—we can turn the tide. We can finally live in peace with justice, the peace that all peoples aspire to, and the kind of peace that was announced in Bethlehem.

Rifat Kassis, General Coordinator of Kairos Palestine, founded the first Palestinian independent Child Rights NGO, a national section of the Geneva-based global child rights movement, Defense for Children International (DCI).

Christmas Sunday

New Hope in a New Orient

When we celebrate Christmas in Bethlehem, we can say, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." (John 1:14) Here in Palestine we pray for Christmas to bring new hope for Palestine and peace on earth. The good tidings of the birth of Christ emanated from here to the whole world, and from here our plea is sent for peace in our country. Let us all pray: "O God, may your peace prevail in the country that you chose to be your own. You are the Lord of Peace; you are the peace we long for."

In the Orient, where people are suffering simply for being citizens who want to live in safety and security, we do not ask, "Where is God?" but "Where

are you, God?" Our cry turns into a prayer to the One who we believe does not forget us, who does not accept the suffering of humanity. God's reply to the prayers of the suffering was to send his son to become human like us, to share our life, pains, and hopes for a better life in which we plant the seeds of God's heaven in this land. God's response does not come from heaven to solve all the problems of humanity.

God wants men and women to take part in this work, the building of the kingdom of God. The mission of Christ becomes our mission. We join him to provide light in this world and to build bridges. If Christ is our peace, we should become tools of peace and justice among people.

"Our Church is a Church of people who pray and serve. This prayer and service is prophetic, bearing the voice of God in the present and future. Everything that happens in our land, everyone who lives here, all the pains and hopes, all the injustice and all the efforts to stop this injustice, are part and parcel of the prayer of our Church and the service of all her institutions. Thanks be to God that our Church raises her voice against injustice despite the fact that some desire her to remain silent, closed in her religious devotions.

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We go forth with the prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi,
Lord, make me an instrument of your peace...

Fr. Dr. Jamal Khader, Latin priest, professor of theology, and pastor of the Holy Family Church in Ramallah, is a co-writer of the Kairos Palestine Document.

Reflect: In a world dominated by oppression and violence, where do you see the light of Christ? In what ways can you more fully live into Christ's charge, "You are the light of the world"?

Pray: O Master, let me not seek as much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love,
for it is in giving that I will receive,
it is in self-forgetting that I will find,
it is in pardoning that I am pardoned,
it is in dying that I am raised to eternal life.
Come this Holy Season, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Act: Write or email a note to your Palestinian sisters and brothers: kairos@kairos-palestine.ps.