Dear Archbishop,

We were encouraged to see that you had retweeted the statement made by the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches of Jerusalem concerning the recent violence in the Holy Land, and the statement issued by the Most Revd Hosam Naoum. In the latter statement, Archbishop Naoum stated;

“Finally, we call upon the United Nations and the international community to work with all parties to seriously address the underlying injustices and grievances that have led to this latest unrest in a recurring cycle of violence, working for a just and lasting peace between Palestinians and Israelis that incorporates a viable Two-State Solution.”

We assume that by retweeting these statements, you are in agreement with Archbishop Naoum’s analysis, yet we find it extremely disappointing that the Church of England has not issued its own statement regarding the violence in the Holy Land, and are specifically concerned about your silence on the following issues:

1. The disproportionate use of violence against civilians in Gaza, which has led to over 200 deaths (including 63 children at the time of writing), the displacement of over 75,000 people and the complete or partial destruction of 44 schools and 6 hospitals[[1]](#footnote-1), or the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah and the Israeli violation of the sacred Haram al-Sharif and al-Aqsa mosque during Ramadan, all of which are severe violations of international law and potential crimes against humanity.
2. Solidarity with the Christian Palestinian population in both Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank, who have lived under a brutal Israeli military rule for 54 years and are denied their basic human rights every day.
3. Your support for a full investigation into alleged war crimes in Israel d Palestine by the International Criminal Court, which would bring the first measures of accountability and justice to the situation for many years.
4. Your lack of support for alternative Jewish voices in the UK that have routinely rejected the actions of the state of Israel, and do not feel that the Board of Deputies of British Jews represents them at all.[[2]](#footnote-2)

We noted your request for prayer “for peace with justice for all”, and would ask you to elaborate on your understanding of what ‘peace with justice for all’ means for Palestinian Christians and Muslims. On the 14th May Kairos Palestine issued a Call to Church Leaders Worldwide for Solidarity and Action. You can read that call here: [*https://www.kairospalestine.ps/images/kairos-palestine-call-for-world-solidarity.pdf*](https://www.kairospalestine.ps/images/kairos-palestine-call-for-world-solidarity.pdf)

We respectfully ask when you might show ‘solidarity’ and what specific ‘actions’ you will lead the Church of England in taking – such as to endorse the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement (the largest non-violent movement for justice, peace, accountability and equal rights in Israel/Palestine) and work of organisations like EAPPI to bring about justice, peace and reconciliation for Jews, Christians and Muslims in Israel-Palestine.

We therefore ask when you will respond with a statement or call to action similar to those issued by many other Churches in the UK, including the Catholic Bishop’s Conference, the Methodist Church, The Church of Scotland, the United Reformed Church and the Quakers

The Catholic Bishops Conference statement clearly calls for an end to the occupation and discrimination that Palestinians face, addressing directly the ‘underlying injustices and grievances’ referred to by Bishop Naoum.

“As people of peace, we pray for an end to the airstrikes, shooting, missile attacks, and communal violence engulfing the Holy Land.

Pope Francis reminds us that: “Every act of violence committed against a human being is a wound in humanity’s flesh; every violent death diminishes us as people.”

The local churches have clearly stated that peace requires justice. We echo their calls for an end to the occupation, discrimination and human rights violations that propagate violent attacks on civilians, standing in the way of a stable and peaceful future for Palestinians and Israelis.

We reaffirm our commitment to the internationally recognised status of Jerusalem, the Status Quo of its holy sites, and the equal rights of Jews, Christians and Muslims in the city.

At this critical time let us also offer our support to those humanitarian organisations working tirelessly to save lives and alleviate suffering.” <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/end-the-violence-engulfing-the-holy-land>

We call on you as the leader of the Church of England not to remain silent in the face of such injustice, but instead to boldly proclaim the truth, standing in solidarity with the Church in Palestine, and using your substantial influence to help seek a just, viable and lasting peace in the Holy Land for all that call it home.

We eagerly await your reply,

With best wishes,

Karen Fairfax-Cholmeley, Chair, Sabeel-Kairos UK.

(On behalf of the Board of Trustees, Sabeel-Kairos UK)

1. https://www.ochaopt.org/content/escalation-gaza-strip-west-bank-and-israel-flash-update-9-covering-1200-18-may-1200-19-may [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Na’Amod, British Jews Against the Occupation challenge the Board of Deputies on the occupation: https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=2222859144489317&ref=watch\_permalink [↑](#footnote-ref-2)