

“Cry for Hope” - A Call to Decisive Action.

A Study Guide.

“*Cry for Hope: A Call to Decisive Action*” was issued in July 2020 by leaders of the Christian community in the Holy Land under the banner of Kairos Palestine. It was taken up by Global Kairos for Justice, a coalition of committed Christians from around the world.

“*Cry for Hope*” is a significant document both for those committed to justice and peace in Israel/Palestine and for the Church as a whole. (The text of “*Cry for Hope*” can be found at www.cryforhope.org)

- Its description of the current situation for Palestinian Christians, and indeed Palestinians as a whole, is a wake-up call amidst the challenges of the global pandemic and the environmental crisis. For many people the conflict in Israel/Palestine has been eclipsed by other global challenges. However once again the challenges of combating these global issues have been impeded by the injustice of the occupation. Justice for the land called Holy remains a moral imperative.

- The Church is challenged by “*Cry for Hope*” to recognise that a point has been reached where its integrity is being called into question by the fact that some parts of the Church support Israel’s occupation of lands conquered in 1967 and its ongoing aspirations to extend its control in the region. “*Cry for Hope*” argues the case that with the developments over recent years, support for the continuing occupation is now incompatible with the Gospel.

A number of churches in the UK have noted “*Cry for Hope*” and commended it for study; others have resolutions before them that call for such recognition. This short publication has therefore been prepared to give some background to the document for those undertaking these studies. It is hoped that the outcome of using this study guide might be that churches and individuals respond as suggested in the full title of the document “*Cry for Hope: A Call to Decisive Action*”.

Some reflections on the Document:

Issue 1.

The document begins by stating that “We cannot serve God and the oppression of the Palestinians.” This is a call from Christians to Christians - and it questions how the church in many places and denominations have stood by doing very little to challenge the occupation and the flouting of international law by Israel, as it seeks to keep the Palestinian population suppressed and oppressed. Why has the Church been so feeble? Contrast the Churches’ eventual stance on South Africa with that in relation to the State of Israel.

Issue 2.

The second subject area for the writers of “*Cry for Hope*” is that of international, and especially United States, support for Israel even though Israel acts in ways that are clearly in violation of international law. Security, dignity and self-determination should be the right of all the people between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea, not just Jewish Israelis. Why does the U.S. (and other states) affirm and uphold the rights of one people whilst supporting the oppression of the other?

Issue 3.

This leads on to the question “Is Israel an Apartheid Regime?” Some have suggested this for many years but there have been a number of recent developments and the document highlights some of these.

- The adoption of the “Nation State Law” by the Israeli Government in 2018, (claiming the right of Jews alone for the determination of the future of the State of Israel).
- The increasing presentation of the occupation as a permanent arrangement.
- The continuing use of military law to govern Palestinians in the West Bank, while settlers in the West Bank are under Israeli civil law.
- The ongoing displacement of Palestinians to make way for Jewish Israelis.

Palestine is a different context to South Africa and the form of Apartheid is different, however there are significant similarities. The Israeli Human Rights organisation B’Tselem, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International have all released reports saying Israel’s regime meets the internationally accepted definition of apartheid. You can read these reports using the links below.

- <https://www.btselem.org/apartheid>
- <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution#>
- [Israel’s apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel system of domination and crime against humanity - Amnesty International](#)

What do you think?

Issue 4

Over the years there have been a number of occasions in history when the Church has faced a fundamental question about its integrity. In the years leading up to the Second World War the Church largely failed to live up to the challenge of the time, though significant individual Christians - such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer - did. In the 1960s many more churches did respond to the challenge of confronting Apartheid in South Africa, though there were notable exceptions. “Cry for Hope” calls these moments in history “Kairos” moments: particular moments in time that present a unique challenge to the Church. The document suggests that today is such a moment in the context of Israel/Palestine. This raises the question - “How is the Church to react today?”

Issue 5

Flawed theology has plagued the Church throughout history and led it into heretical stances at times. “Cry for Hope” doesn’t use the term ‘Christian Zionism’ but is at least in part considering this flawed theology in the second bullet point towards the end of the document. How much do you know about Christian Zionism? (As distinct from “Zionism”). Identify the basis of its heresy. If you are unsure about what Christian Zionism is, use the resources list to discover more. How do we effectively oppose this flawed theology?

Issue 6

There has been considerable confusion caused by conflating antisemitism with support for Palestine. Much of this has been through the use of the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) definition of antisemitism and the examples suggested by it. In order to make clear the distinction between antisemitism and support for Palestinians under Israeli occupation, and to ensure that antisemitism could be identified effectively, a group of two hundred scholars formed and signed the statement in March 2021 now known as the Jerusalem Declaration. “Cry for Hope” affirms the need to oppose antisemitism and all forms of xenophobia. How do you personally recognise antisemitism and xenophobia? Where do you see behaviour triggered by such prejudice today? Is it difficult to maintain a clear distinction between support of the Palestinian cause and being antisemitic?

Issue 7

What do you understand as “the Theology of Empire?” Consider the closing paragraph of “Cry for Hope” and the extent to which Western Society sustains such a philosophy.

Some Suggested Actions

1. If you have not yet read Cry for Hope, do so now and commend it to at least two friends you think might be interested.
2. Consider making your own commitment to no longer buy products from Israel until the occupation is ended, and equality and justice prevail.
3. Plan to raise the issue at your next Synod, Circuit Meeting, or other appropriate Church Meeting, preferably with a resolution which will be forwarded to your national Conference, Assembly or Synod urging action (such as a call to participate in boycotting Israeli goods, disinvesting all church funds from companies profiting from the occupation and urging the U.K Government to apply sanctions on Israel as they have applied sanctions to other countries violating international law). This non-violent action is aimed to encourage Israel to comply with international law and end the occupation.
4. Join Sabeel-Kairos as a member, support them financially, sign up for their weekly Prayer Wave and newsletter and order their most appropriate resources. <https://www.sabeel-kairos.org.uk/>
5. Obtain the ‘Investing for Peace’ booklet from Sabeel-Kairos, visit the Who Profits? website (<https://whoprofits.org/>) and write to the body administering your Pension to ask what their policy regarding investment in companies operating in Israel/Palestine is, especially those profiting from the occupation.
6. Raise the issue of Israel/Palestine with your MP, if you have not already done so, or send a follow-up message quoting Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s call for economic sanctions as a non-violent method applying pressure on the Government of Israel until they comply with international law.
7. Consider joining the next national lobby of parliament led by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign or other days of action: <https://www.palestinecampaign.org/>

8. If you are a preacher, worship leader or house-group leader, remember to distinguish between 'Israel' in the bible and 'Israel' today and educate others that they are not one and the same.
9. Consider visiting Israel/Palestine and stay in a Palestinian owned Hotel or Guest House. Seek out opportunities to talk to Palestinians and learn more about the struggle to survive in the West Bank and Gaza today. You could also visit Israeli organisations that are working for justice and peace for all in Israel/Palestine, such as B'Tselem, The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Breaking the Silence and the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions.
10. Use the internet to learn more about some of the following organisations and consider how you might support them. Alrowwad Centre for Culture and the Arts, Alternative Tourism Group, Atfaluna Society for deaf children in Gaza, Bethlehem Bible College, Combatants for Peace, Eco Peace, Mar Elias Educational Institutions, Musalaha, Nusirat Woman's Help Centre Gaza, Rabbis for Human Rights, Roots, Sabeel Jerusalem, Kairos Palestine, Tent of Nations, Wi'am.

Resources

An Introduction:

A Song by Garth Hewitt: 'Songs from the Fifth Gospel' introduces the issues -

<http://www.garthhewitt.org/product/songs-from-the-fifth-gospel/>

Web Sites:

www.cryforhope.org Web site hosting the "Cry for Hope" document in several languages, the petition, signatories and endorsers, and further resources.

www.sabeel-kairos.org.uk

www.palestinecampaign.org

www.jerusalemdeclaration.org - the website dedicated to the Jerusalem Declaration on Anti-Semitism.

Sabeel Kairos have prepared a resource on Christian Zionism which can be found at

<https://www.sabeel-kairos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/S-K-Christian-Zionism-Briefing-Paper.pdf>

<https://www.palestineportal.org/> A website for the global church community providing a compendium of educational and training resources on the history of the conflict, issues in theology, and news on the global church movement for Palestinian rights.

Books that are easily readable and introduce the subject:

Apeirogon (Described as a Novel but based upon the Parent's Circle and Combatants for Peace)
Colum McCann Bloomsbury ISBN 978-1-5266-0790-4

Blood Brothers Elias Chacour Chosen Books ISBN 0-8007-9060-0

Children of the Stone Sandy Tolan Bloomsbury Publishing ISBN 978-1-63286-341-6

Occupied Territories: the revolution of love from Bethlehem to the ends of the earth

Garth Hewitt - <http://www.garthhewitt.org/product/occupied-territories-the-revolution-of-love-from-bethlehem-to-the-ends-of-the-earth/>

I saw Ramallah Mourid Barghouti, Bloomsbury ISBN 978-0-7475 7470 5

The Blue between Sky and Water (A novel set in Gaza) Susan Abulhawa Bloomsbury ISBN 987-1-63286-22-1

The Lemon Tree Sandy Tolan Bloomsbury Publishing ISBN 9781596913431

We belong to the Land. Elias Chacour University of Notre Dame Press. ISBN0-268-01963-0

Books: Theology and the Israel Palestine Conflict:

The Other Side of the Wall: A Palestinian Christian Narrative of Lament and Hope. Munther Isaac. 2020, IVP. ISBN 0830831991

A Palestinian Theology of Liberation. Naim Ateek. Orbis Books, New York. ISBN 978-1-62698-260-4

Christian Zionism: A road map to Armageddon? Stephen Sizer. Wipf & Stock <https://wipfandstock.com/author/stephen-sizer/> ISBN 978-1-84474-050-5

Chosen? Reading the Bible amid the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Walter Brueggemann Westminster John Knox Press 2015 ISBN 978-0-664-26154-2

The Land of Christ. A Palestinian Cry. Yohanna Katanacho Bethlehem Bible College Publications ISBN 978-965-7582-00-8

Zion's Christian Soldiers Stephen Sizer. Wipf & Stock <https://wipfandstock.com/author/stephen-sizer/> ISBN 978-1-84474-214-1

A Wall in Jerusalem: Hope, Healing, and the Struggle for Justice in Israel and Palestine, Mark Braverman, Jericho Books 2013, ISBN-13: 9781455574209

Books: Going Deeper into the issues:

A Month by the Sea. Encounters in Gaza Dervla Murphy 2013 ISBN 978-1-78060-067-3 An Israeli in Palestine: resisting dispossession, redeeming Israel. Jeff Halper Pluto 978 0 7453 3071 6

Apartheid South Africa! Apartheid Israel? Brian Brown Church in the Market Place Publications. ISBN is 9781998990870. <https://apartheid-southafrica-israel.com/>

Balfour's Shadow David Cronin Pluto Press ISBN 978 0 7453 9943

BDS: Boycott, Disinvestment, Sanctions The Global Struggle for Palestinian Rights.
Omar Barghout 2011 Haymarket Books ISBN 978-1-60846-114-1

Between the River and the Sea Dervla Murphy 2015 ISBN 978-1-78060-070-3

"Hope in Israel Palestine." John Howard Church in the Market Place Publications.
ISBN 978-1-9989908-5-6

Hundred Years War on Palestine Rashid Khalidi Profile Books 978 1 78125 934 4

Israel's Occupation Neve Gordon University of California 978-0-520-25531-9

Israel's Palestinians – The conflict within. Ilan Peleg & Dov Waxman Cambridge University
Press. ISBN 978-0-521-15702-5

Khirbet Khizeh S Yizhar Translated from the Hebrew by Nicholas de Lange and Yaacob Dweck.
Granta Publications. ISBN 978-1-84708-394-4

Palestinian Memories. Alex Awad Bethlehem Bible College Publications
ISBN 0-978-7839-0-5

The Forgotten Palestinians – a history of the Palestinians in Israel. Ilan Pappé Yale University
Press. ISBN 978-0-300-13441-4

Through My Enemies Eyes. Salim Munayer & Lisa Loden Paternoster Press
ISBN 978 1 84227 748 5

Walking to Jerusalem. Justin Butcher Hodder & Stoughton ISBN 978-1-473-67369-4

Whose Promised Land? Colin Chapman Lion Publishing ISBN 978-0-7459-7025-7

Books: The Holocaust:

The Holocaust and the Christian World. Carol Ritter, Stephen D. Smith & Irena Seinfeld's.
Published by Yad Vashem International School for Holocaust Studies.

The Holocaust and the Nakba Ed. Bashir Bashir & Amos Goldberg Columbia Publishing ISBN
978-0-231-18297-3

Books: Settlers:

City on a Hill. Sara Yael Hirschhorn Harvard Press. ISBN 9780674975057