



Sabeel-Kairos UK Annual Advocacy Report 2021-22

Foreward by Charlotte Marshall, Director.

We are delighted to offer our members and supporters this annual report, detailing the successes, challenges and work undertaken between September 2021 and 2022.

As the world emerges from a turbulent two years of the pandemic, we are pleased that despite challenges, our advocacy and campaigning work in the churches has gone from strength to strength. Successes this last year include the Carlisle Diocesan Synod Motion on Palestine that we worked hard on for over a year with the support of our partner Kairos Palestine, new memorials passed by the Methodist Conference concerning their continuing investment in HSBC, and calling for more action regarding BDS, a very successful Lent course on Cry for Hope which saw hundreds engaging online, and a significant theology conference which led to a statement that was picked up across the world.

This year has also been a landmark one for Palestine in many ways. After years of calling for the world to recognise Israel as an apartheid regime, others have finally joined this call, with the likes of B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International all launching significant reports outlining the legal and moral evidence that Israel is committing the crime of apartheid under international law. Our own partners Sabeel Jerusalem and Kairos Palestine have also released reports and articles about apartheid, focussing not just on the act of it, but challenging the theological justification for Israel's continuing repression by some Christians and churches around the world. In the Autumn we will be building on this work, launching another online series on the topic of apartheid with international speakers.

As we write this, the World Council of Churches is meeting in Karlsruhe, Germany, where amongst other significant topics of global concern, our partners have raised the question of the churches support for justice in Palestine. First and foremost, we exist to echo this call for solidarity and practical action in our churches across the UK, and to that end we have continued to engage at all levels to bring that voice to our church leaders. Regardless of the outcome of the meeting in Karlsruhe, our job continues to be to challenge the church to respond to the ongoing oppression of the Palestinian people and stand on the side of truth, justice and equality.

As we reflect on the successes and challenges of the last year, and look to building on these for the future, we extend our very great thanks to you - our members – for your continuing support in all areas of our work, and we look forward to partnering with you for a free, equal and just peace in Palestine and Israel in the coming year.



Campaigns: Investing for Peace

Our [Investing for Peace](#) campaign continues to be our campaign priority, with the support of our committed denominational groups. This year we are delighted to have extended our remit to include a group working within the Church of Scotland. More news will follow about their work in the next annual report!

In addition to promoting and campaigning for churches to effectively screen against investment in companies that profit from the occupation, several of our groups have extended their advocacy work into new areas, including promoting Cry for Hope, challenging Christian Zionism, raising the question of apartheid, and campaigning politically.

Here are some highlights of the work undertaken this last year by our denominational groups:

In our Church of England group, we have seen the first Diocesan Synod Motion on Palestine for many years successfully pass through Synod, and onto the list to be debated at General Synod in the current quinquennium. The Carlisle Diocese voted in favour (none opposed) for a [3-part motion on Palestine](#) proposed by the Solway Deanery, led by a member of our group. When the times comes, this will be the first time since 2014 that the question of Palestine has been raised in General Synod.

In order to support this significant event, at General Synod in July this year we began raising awareness of the Carlisle motion by putting on a joint event on Palestine with Christian Aid and Sabeel Jerusalem.

In other areas of the group's work, we have continued to engage with the EIAG¹ and the National Investing Bodies of the Church of England regularly, meeting with representatives to ask and challenge them on how the new Human Rights policy is being practically applied to their investment portfolio with regard to Israel/Palestine.

The group has also made links with Anglican churches in South Africa this year, and we sought to support their resolution on Palestine at both the Lambeth Conference and the World Council of Churches Assembly.

Our Methodist Church group have worked hard to help implement the 2021 memorials on Cry for Hope passed at Methodist Conference. Several members of the group were key in helping us plan and deliver a successful 5-part online [Lent course on Cry for Hope](#).

¹ Ethical Investment Advisory Group



As well as the lent course, this group continued to push Palestine at the National Methodist Conference, organising a fringe event on Palestine and submitting 3 new memorials². Two of these were accepted outright, one was raised at conference with some minor changes to the language and focus, and then approved.

To support the memorial regarding the World Council of Churches, members of the group have liaised with Methodist representatives to the WCC and one member is attending the assembly to lobby delegates on Palestine during the conference.

The Methodist group also continue to engage directly with JACEI³ and the Central Finance Board, and have focussed on HSBC this year (see joint memorial with the Zero Carbon group for more information).

The United Reformed Church group have focussed their time on assisting and pushing forward the implementation of the [10 resolutions passed by the URC on Palestine](#) at the 2021 General Assembly. This has included them organising two workshops for URC members on lobbying your MP, in which they provided excellent briefings on the issues of home demolitions and settlement expansion.

The group has also committed to writing several articles in the URC Reform magazine, linking to the resolutions to the current situation in Palestine, and highlighting the need for action. Separately we have also been advising the URC on the issue of ethical pilgrimage, positive investment in Palestinian businesses, and of course the screening out of companies profiting from the occupation. Members of the group have also been keeping pressure on their own churches and synods with regard to their investment policies, writing to ask how and when the URC resolution concerning this will be implemented.

In our **Catholic group**, we have continued to support the local and regional work each of the members does, including writing new investment policy proposals for dioceses/archdioceses, and raising awareness of the group's work in the national justice and peace newsletter. We have written to and attempted to engage with senior Catholic leaders in partnership with Pax Christi. We also continue to press forward and engage with the national investment committee for the [CCLA Catholic Fund](#) which we hope to meet/address directly soon.

More recently the group has researched how we might link into two national/international processes within the Catholic Church – the [Laudato Si' Action Platform](#) and the [Synodality Process](#). We have also begun the process of a new campaign targeting JCB owners Lord and Lady Bamford.

² M3, M8 and M9 in the following document: [conf-22-memorials-to-the-conference.pdf \(methodist.org.uk\)](#)

³ Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment



Other campaigns:

As well as our investing for peace campaign, we have also engaged with several other campaigns throughout this year. We continue to be a part of the BNC Europe group, and wherever possible promote the campaigns initiated by the [Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions national committee](#). This has included the call for the UN to Investigate Israeli Apartheid amongst other campaigns.

Our involvement in the [AXA campaign](#) has become a significant piece of work. Our target has been the UK Cooperative Bank, who offers worldwide travel insurance to its 1.4 million customers using AXA as the insuring partner. AXA are directly funding the occupation through their investment of \$7million in Israeli banks which operate in the illegal settlements. We have been calling on our members to write to the cooperative bank CEO (particularly if they are customers), and at the same time we have been writing and engaging directly with them, working in partnership with [Save our Bank](#). This work will continue in the coming year.

This year has also seen the proposal of a new form of legislation to ban public bodies from any form of boycott, divestment or sanctions not endorsed by the government. We have been working hard with others to lobby against this [BDS bill](#) and protect our freedom of speech. We have also encouraged our members and supporter to lobby their MPs, [providing letters and updates frequently](#).

Working with partners:

We continue to do everything we can to speak out, advocate and promote the voice and work of our two Palestinian partners, **Sabeel Jerusalem** and **Kairos Palestine**.

This has included continuing to support Sabeel's [Kumi Now](#) initiative and speaking about our Investing for Peace campaign during one of the sessions this year. In addition, we have promoted and sent out [Cornerstone magazine](#) twice in the last year and invited influential Sabeel staff and advisors to speak at our events. We hope to bring Sabeel's work and voice into even more of our communications in the coming year and spend time with Sabeel to identify the strengths of our partnership and build on these.

At the same time, we have also continued to promote the work of [Kairos Palestine](#), and the Global Kairos for Justice Network. This has involved the continuing promotion of [Cry for Hope](#), which has been central to our denominational work this year, and our Lent series, and also now the recently released [Apartheid Dossier](#). Much of our work with Kairos Palestine has focussed on the WCC Assembly in Karlsruhe, where we sent a representative from our Church of England campaign group to be part of a Palestinian-led workshop.

In addition to our Palestinian partners, we have also continued to work with partners and in coalitions here in the UK. This has included strengthening our partnership with [Christian Aid](#),



organising two joint events this year. The first of these was an event hosted at Christian Aid with Christian Aid partners B'Tselem and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (Gaza) where our denominational groups had the privilege to meet staff from these partners in person and hear about apartheid. The second event was the fringe event at General Synod, which we hope to build on and repeat in some form next year.

Our under 35s advocacy officer also formed a new partnership with the [Unreached Network](#), and we have been delighted to work with them on several projects this year. Omar Haramy, Director of Sabeel Jerusalem was invited to speak at a prayer event for the Middle East which forged some new connections, and we also worked with the Unreached Network to support [The Bethlehem Story](#) – a series of videos released in advent to challenge the usual perception of Bethlehem and tell the truth about the situation there. [These videos](#) reached several thousand people online.

We have also worked closely with a wider group of agencies to highlight significant events in Palestine/Israel and call on our political leaders to take action. This has included [condemning the Israeli Government's shocking decision to declare six Palestinian civil society groups as 'terrorist organisations'](#) and [calling for an immediate end to the blockade of Gaza after 15 years of collective punishment](#).

Regional groups, cultural events:

We have continued to support our Regional Groups and Kairos Communities this year as best we can, providing advice and resources wherever possible. This has included sending out regular e-newsletters to our members and groups, updating the [resources section](#) on our website, and promoting our group's events on facebook.

We have also continued to use our [Palestinian cook-alongs](#) as a way of helping our regional groups to put on events. Several of these have taken place in the last year and raised both funds and awareness of our campaigns amongst members and their friends. We are delighted that these cook-alongs will continue next year, and we encourage all of our groups to get one in the diary if they haven't done so already!

Under 35s:

Our work targeting the under 35s in our churches has continued in earnest. This year we set up a [Young Advocates Forum](#) which includes a monthly prayer meeting, and highlighted on social media all of the current campaigns relevant to this age group, especially focussing on the work of young Palestinians challenging the injustice they face, such as Mohammed and Muna El-Kurd in Sheikh Jarrah.

Our advocacy officer for the under 35s also produced some wonderful resources, including [3 prayer and action cards](#) which are available for youth groups/leaders. She promoted these



Sabeel-Kairos

Taking Action for Palestine



at several events including a large event for Methodist and URC youth church leaders in Sheffield.

We were very sad when Ruth had to step down from her role due to family commitments at the beginning of the summer. We are recruiting now for her successor and look forward to someone else continuing the excellent work she has started.

Theology:

One of the highlights of our last year was the Theology Residential that was organised by the convenors of our [Theology Group](#) in March this year. Taking place in the picturesque grounds of Gladstone Library in Chester, it was 3 days of theological challenge, debate and discussion with some of the world's leading experts on theology of the Holy Land. The result of the residential was a powerful statement titled ["A Response to 'Cry for Hope': A Call to the Churches and the WCC Assembly 2022"](#) which caused significant ripples as far as India and as close to home as the Methodist Conference a few months later.

Also of significance in our strive to equip our members with theological material was the production of a [briefing paper on Christian Zionism](#) by several experts in our theology group, designed to help people understand the basics, and be guided towards further reading and study.

Our Theology group continue to push us forwards and challenge us in every aspect of Christ's teachings and their relation to land we call Holy. We are very indebted to, and grateful for the humble leadership that Revd Brian Brown has provided as chair of our theology group. As he steps down now to 'slow down' (his words not ours!) we extend our great thanks to him publicly for his wisdom and gentle leadership and look forward to a new convenor taking their place soon.

We thank you for taking the time to read our annual report, much of which is a reflection of the hard work and dedication of many of our members and groups. We look forward to the coming year, striving to extend our reach and influence in the churches for a just peace in Palestine together.