

# **The Palestinian Cry for Hope and the churches' response –**

**Brochure 1 of the series Israel – An Apartheid System?**

compiled by Ulrich Duchrow and translated into English by Rob van Drimmelen



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### **Recommendation on the topic:**

Written from direct experience and deep biblical-theological reflection:

#### **Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac,**

*The Other Side of the Wall. A Palestinian Christian Narrative of Lament and Hope.* Downers Grove, IL., USA: InterVarsity Press, 2020.

(Munther Isaac is pastor of the Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem, director of the Bible College Bethlehem as well as the International Conference "Christ at the Checkpoint")

#### **Prof. Dr. Mitri Raheb,**

*Decolonizing Palestine. The Land, the People, the Bible.* Maryknoll: Orbis, 2023.

(Mitri Raheb is Founder and President of Dar al-Kalima University in Bethlehem)

## PREFACE

On 1 July 2020, Kairos Palestine, together with its global network Kairos Global for Justice, released *Cry for Hope: Call to Decision and Action. We cannot serve God while remaining silent about the oppression of Palestinians!* This is about placing the question of Israel-Palestine on a new ecclesial, theological and political basis for action, following the struggle against apartheid in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s and the global "process of recognising, learning and confessing (processus confessionis) in the face of economic injustice and destruction of nature" in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Lutheran World Federation as well as the World Council of Churches (WCC) 1997-2013. Following Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the state's disenfranchisement of a population group (at that time the Jews) and the state's intervention in the affairs of faith and the church constitutes a confessional case for the Church of Christ and therefore demands a clear positioning (status confessionis) from the churches.<sup>1</sup> The *Cry for Hope* says that this is the case with the disenfranchisement of the Palestinians and the justification of this injustice by the misuse of the Bible (not only by the Christian Zionists but also by the State of Israel). It therefore calls on the churches to begin a process to take a decision on this issue in the individual churches and in the worldwide ecumenism. This is the theologically most radical question that can be raised in the church, because it is about true and false church and the credibility of the Gospel.

Now the first churches have understood the seriousness of the question and have taken synodal decisions: The United Church of Christ/UCC, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church/URC, as well as an Anglican synod in England. The Norwegian Bishops' Conference had already spoken out last year. It is important to make these voices heard in the German churches and the public: 1. because the majority of German church leaders did not respond to the call *Cry for Hope* – personally presented to them on 1 July 2020 with 22 vigils – with exceptions such as the response letter of the Bishop of the regional church in Baden printed below; 2. because world Christianity will come to Karlsruhe in 2022 for the WCC Assembly and this issue will play a central role.

We from the Kairos Palestine Solidarity Network in Germany therefore suggest (as does a Berlin ecumenical working group, whose appeal we include at the end) to send these collected texts again to all church leaders/synods and ask how their response compares with the US, English and Scandinavian churches. They also serve to engage congregations in this process of discerning, learning and confessing – hopefully in many, again possible, face-to-face meetings.

Since in Germany the fear is stoked that one could be defamed as an anti-Semite for statements such as some in the documents presented here, we attach the Jerusalem Declaration's new statement on anti-Semitism as Appendix 1. This is because it shows how in Germany the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism is used to defame criticism of the state of Israel based on human rights and international law as anti-Semitism. Appendix 2 is a list of links to previous statements on the subject. Reference is also made to the excellent manual of the World Communion of Reformed Churches: <http://wrcr.ch/justice/palestine>.

Heidelberg, 20 October 2021 i. A. *Ulrich Duchrow*

\* If further church responses are received, they will be published on <https://kairoseuropa.de/kairos-palaestina-solidaritaetsnetz/ueber-das-kairos-palaestina-solidaritaetsnetz/>.

<sup>1</sup> BONHOEFFER, Dietrich: Die Kirche vor der Judenfrage (1933). *DBW 12*. München : Kaiser, 1997, S. 349-58.



## I. THE PALESTINIAN CALL TO THE CHURCHES OF THE WORLD

**Cry for hope: call for decision and action.**

***We cannot serve God and at the same time remain silent on the oppression of the Palestinians!***

***Launch date 1 July 2020 (orig.: <https://www.cryforhope.org/>)***

We, Kairos Palestine and Global Kairos for Justice, a worldwide coalition born in response to the Kairos Palestine “Moment of Truth: a word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering,” issue this urgent call to Christians, churches and ecumenical institutions. We do this together with committed Christians in Palestine and around the world. This is a call for decisive action on a matter that we believe relates to the integrity of our Christian faith.

We have arrived at a critical point in the struggle to end the oppression of the Palestinian people. The State of Israel’s adoption of the Nation State Law in 2018 legalized institutional discrimination in Israel and the Palestinian territories, officially depriving Palestinians of their rights to life, livelihood, and a future in their homeland. Recent acts of the U.S. administration have supported Israel’s ongoing project of land taking and attaining control over the entire territory of Palestine. These include the 2018 move of its embassy to Jerusalem, its announcement in 2019 that the U.S. government no longer deems West Bank settlements to be “inconsistent with international law,” and the 2020 “Peace to Prosperity” plan. Fuelled by U.S. support and emboldened by the ineffectual response of the international community, Israel’s newly-formed coalition government has cleared the way for outright annexation of around one third of the occupied West Bank, including the Jordan Valley. These developments make it all the more clear that we have come to the end of the illusion that Israel and the world powers intend to honour and defend the rights of the Palestinian people to dignity, self-determination, and the fundamental human rights guaranteed under international law, including the right of return for Palestinian refugees. It is time for the international community, in light of these events, to recognize Israel as an apartheid state in terms of international law.

In affirming this reality, we realize that it is incumbent upon us as followers of Jesus to take decisive action. The very being of the church, the integrity of the Christian faith, and the credibility of the Gospel is at stake. We declare that support for the oppression of the Palestinian people, whether passive or active, through silence, word or deed, is a sin. We assert that Christian support for Zionism as a theology and an ideology that legitimize the right of one people to deny the human rights of another is incompatible with the Christian faith and a grave misuse of the Bible.

We call upon all Christians and on churches at congregational, denominational, national, and global ecumenical levels to engage in a process of study, reflection and confession concerning the historic and systemic deprivation of the rights of the Palestinian people, and the use of the Bible by many to justify and support this oppression. We call on churches to reflect on how their own traditions can express the sacred duty to uphold the integrity of the church and the Christian faith concerning this issue. We cannot serve God while remaining silent about the oppression of the Palestinians.

As we face this *kairos*, we are mindful of the legacy of faith and action of those who have come before us and have faced circumstances of urgency and crisis. In 1933 German pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer declared that the Nazi regime’s denial of the rights of Jews and the interference of the state into matters of religion placed the church in status confessionis. The Barmen Declaration

of 1934 reinforced the church's obligation to stand up to injustice and to unequivocally oppose ideologies of tyranny. In 1964 the first General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), Willem Visser 't Hooft, stated that racism, like apartheid, constitutes a status confessionis for the churches. The WCC followed this word with action in 1969 in implementing its courageous and far-reaching Program to Combat Racism. In 1977 the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) declared that "apartheid created a status confessionis for the church" and in 1984 suspended the white Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa who practice apartheid. In 1982 the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) declared apartheid incompatible with Christian belief, and suspended the member churches practicing racial separation. The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) in 2017 affirmed "that with respect to the situation of injustice and suffering that exists in Palestine, and the cry of the Palestinian Christian community, that the integrity of Christian faith and praxis is at stake" and directed the General Secretary to initiate six direct action steps. Since 2009, Kairos documents from ecumenical organizations from around the world have appeared in response to the Kairos "Moment of Truth" document of the Palestinian Christians, pledging action and providing theological affirmation of this prophetic call by the Palestinian churches.

The present times call for actions as bold, as faithful, and as resolute. The time for decision has arrived. "We call out as Christians and as Palestinians to our Christian brothers and sisters in the churches around the world" reads the 2009 Kairos Palestine document. Eight years later, in 2017, in the Open Letter to the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement, the National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine wrote: "Things are beyond urgent. We are on the verge of a catastrophic collapse. This is no time for shallow diplomacy, Christians!" Now, three years later, this is a cry for hope to our brothers and sisters throughout the world. We invite our fellow Christians, their local congregations, churches and international ecumenical organizations, to receive and respond to our common witness, to join the process of confessing, and to initiate processes to formally reject the oppression of the Palestinian people and any use of the Bible to justify this injustice by committing to the following actions:

- Initiate processes at local, denominational and ecumenical levels that recognize the present kairos and the urgent requirement for decisive action regarding the denial of Palestinian rights and the misuse of the Bible. These actions will express the unity of the church in its commitment to stand up to injustice wherever it is to be found.
- Engage in study and discernment with respect to theologies and understandings of the Bible that have been used to justify the oppression of the Palestinian people. Offer theologies that prophetically call for an inclusive vision of the land for Israelis and Palestinians, affirming that the creator God is a God of love, mercy and justice; not of discrimination and oppression.
- Affirm the Palestinians' right to resist the occupation, dispossession, and abrogation of their fundamental rights, and join the Palestinians in their creative and nonviolent resistance. The 2005 Palestinian call for Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) provides a framework for economic, cultural, and academic measures and for direct political advocacy as nonviolent means to end occupation and oppression. The purpose of BDS is not to punish or isolate Israel. It is rather to exert pressure on Israel to comply with international law, and to call upon its government and its people, in the spirit of the Word of God, to enter into the ways of justice and peace, thereby affirming its own rights as well as the rights of the Palestinian people.
- Demand also that governments and world bodies employ political, diplomatic and economic means to stop Israel's violations of human rights and international law.
- Oppose anti-Semitism by working for justice against anti-Judaism, racism and xenophobia; oppose the equating of criticism of Israel's unjust actions with anti-Semitism.
- Support initiatives between Israelis and Palestinians and interfaith partnerships that combat apartheid and occupation and create opportunities to work together for a common future of mutual respect and dignity.

- Come and see the reality in the Holy Land with compassionate eyes for the suffering of Palestinians, and stand in solidarity with grassroots initiatives on the part of all faiths and secular groups who challenge the occupation and who work for a just peace.

We make this call out of concern for the future of both peoples. In the words of Kairos Palestine, our call is rooted in the logic of love that seeks to liberate both the oppressor and oppressed in order to create a new society for all the people of the land. We continue to hold firm to the hope articulated in the Kairos document that Palestinians and Israelis have a common future -- that “we can organize our political life, with all its complexity, according to the logic of love and its power, after ending the occupation and establishing justice.” As followers of Jesus, our response to ideologies of exclusivity and apartheid is to uphold a vision of inclusivity and equality for all peoples of the land and to persistently struggle to bring this about.

We acknowledge that by our commitment as Christians to the liberation of the Palestinian people we stand against the theology of Empire, a global order of domination manifesting in racial, economic, cultural, and ecological oppression that threatens humanity and all of creation. In making this confession, we embrace our membership in the community of the broken bread, the church fulfilling its mission to bring the good news of God’s gift of love, mercy, compassion, and abundant life for all.

*H.B. Michel Sabbah*

*Rifat Kassis*

*H.B. Michel Sabbah*

Patriarch Emeritus: Latin Patriarchate  
of Jerusalem

President: Kairos Palestine

*Rifat Kassis*

General Coordinator: Global Kairos  
for Justice

## **Israel and Palestine - a question of humanity**

*Address by Patriarch Sabbah, President of Kairos Palestine*  
on the premiere of the film "The Patriarch of the People" with German subtitles<sup>2</sup>  
in a webinar led by Pax Christi on 24.9.21.

The question between Israel and Palestine, besides being a political question, is a human question, for the Israelis as well as for the Palestinians. On this human level, an interrogation is posed to the conscience of all who are concerned or are parts of this problem.

It is a question of two peoples, both having same human dignity, having same right to live in their independent state in freedom and security.

All Israelis, all Palestinians, are equally human beings, created by God, loved by God, and are children of God.

The problem is that one side, the Israelis, are strong. They have their freedom and their independent state. The other side, the Palestinians, are weak. Their freedom is denied, Israel does not allow the creation of the Palestinian independent state.

Why this difference? The only reason is strength, physical strength. The Israelis are strong, they have weapons, they impose their will on all the country, and keep the Palestinians under military occupation, or under visible discrimination.

The international community, the UN, has taken many resolutions, among which: they decided the two-state solution. But no one, until now, dares to execute the decisions taken.

And the Palestinians are continuing to live, their daily life, submitted to the Israeli soldier with his gun.

Israel must live, and survive.

But it has taken a wrong way and it is still on the wrong way, the way imposing oneself on another people.

The question is double: how to save Israel? How to save the Palestinians? The two questions are one. If one side is saved, the other will be saved. If one remains insecure, or under oppression, occupation and discrimination, the future remains insecure, and the situation of war goes on.

The salvation of Israel consists in peace with the Palestinians who live with them on the same land. Peace for the whole region is based on this peace with the Palestinians: and the Palestinians are not asking so much. Their position is as follows: we give up to Israel the 78% of our land, but we require the 22% for our independent state. Israel refuses the solution. And the relation of war and hostility continues.

The West in this question is also on the wrong way. The West wants to repair his old persecution of the Jewish people, by creating another injustice to another people, the Palestinian people. This is not the right way. Creating another injustice, it creates new enemies to the people you want to support and protect. The best way to save Israel, and support it, is to surround it with friends. The first friends to be made are the Palestinians.

The so called Abrahamic faith alliance, trying to create recognition of Israel by Arab governments, is not the right way. Because what is needed, is peace first, with the partner, the Palestinians, then with the neighbours in the region. Second, peace is needed with peoples first, then with regimes and governments. Peace treaties with regimes and governments did not and do not change the hearts of

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2 <sup>?</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuSuuuCHQPQ>.

Arab peoples, as we see in Jordan and Egypt. The hearts of Arab peoples will change when the Palestinians will say: we are friends with Israel. But until now, the Palestinians are reduced to be enemies. Reconciliation and justice with the two-state solution is required. Then peace will reign in the whole region. True peace starts in the hearts of the Palestinians, then in the hearts of Arab peoples, and finally in peace treaties with Arab regimes.

And the condition of peace is already decided by the UNO: the two-state solution. It is up to the International community to be courageous and execute its decisions.

Israel and the friends of Israel, in order to save Israel, in order to offer a true help to Israel, should rethink their way of dealing with Palestinians. The Palestinians are simply a people who live on their land. Their only fault is to exist on their land, to be in their homes. This is also the foundation of their rights.

True peace can only be based on the human vision that all peoples, all persons, have same dignity and same right to exist, free, independent, sovereign .

The West and Israel are building in the region a civilization of war. Since 70 years there is no more war in Europe, but in Israel and Palestine, there was always a permanent situation of war. Israel does not need war to exist and survive. Neither Palestinians.

All Europe is responsible, not to criticize Israel, but to find the right way for Israel to live in security, and survive, which is peace with the people of the land, the Palestinians.

The great of this world have power, money, weapons, but with all this, they can only make war, they can kill the body, but they cannot kill the soul, they cannot kill the desire of freedom and human dignity in the heart of a people, individuals or people. They should change their vision, and see that what is needed is not more weapons, or more war: Israel needs peace. Palestinians also.

And Jerusalem? Jerusalem is holy for the Jews, Christians and Muslims. As such, it must be dealt with. All equal. Any form of exclusive government, as it is the case today, is contrary to what Jerusalem is, therefore Jerusalem remains not a holy city, but a city of war, of hatred and death. Again here, nations and churches should help for reconciliation, for finding the solution. Both sides need help to be reconciled, not to have more space in the holy city. With a real peace, all internal questions will be solved. With the present situation, we will remain, with our 100 years conflict, in a situation of permanent war.

It is time to act. It is time to see that both sides, both peoples need to be saved. Israel is to have security and guaranteed future in the region, and Palestinians to have their independent state.

Again it is a human question, of a human equal dignity.

It is time for the international community, for the churches as well, to act, to execute decisions already taken by the UNO.

I hope the international community will renew itself and be able to replace war in this holy land, by peace based on justice for all.

Jerusalem, 24.9.2021

(Statement made at the launch of the film *The People's Patriarch* with German sub-titles:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuSuuaCHQPQ>)



## **II. RESPONSES FROM CHURCHES to the Palestinian CRY FOR HOPE**

### **1. *United Church of Christ in den USA (UCC)***



## **DECLARATION OF THE 33RD GENERAL SYNOD**

### **FOR A JUST PEACE BETWEEN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL**

[Adopted on 18/7/2021 with 83% of the vote (462 in favour, 78 against, 18 abstentions)]

presented by

Shalom United Church of Christ, New Haven, Connecticut

together with

First Church, United Church of Christ, Guilford, Connecticut

First Congregational Church, UCC, Old Lyme, Connecticut

Meriden Congregational Church, UCC, Meriden, New Hampshire

Union Congregational Church, UCC, Angels Camp, California

Pilgrim United Church of Christ, Carlsbad, California

(Orig.: <https://www.globalministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/General-Synod-2021-Resolution-I-P.pdf>)

### **SUMMARY**

The resolution calls on the General Synod to adopt a Declaration on the Requirements for a Just Peace Between Palestine and Israel articulating the principles that must be in place and honored in any future just and peaceful relationship between Israel and Palestine. The Declaration affirms that justice, understood both as adherence to the message of the Hebrew prophets and the life and teachings of Jesus, as well as to applicable international laws, is the fundamental and requisite principle which must guide a peaceful future for Israel and Palestine. It rejects a future imposed by military power, illegal occupation and dispossession, or unilateral annexation of land and the use of an imperialistic theology as justification. The Declaration pronounces Israel's continued oppression of the Palestinian people a sin, incompatible with the Gospel. It further calls upon Local Churches, Conferences, and Associations to adopt this Declaration as their plumbline to guide their support for the aspirations of our partners in the region and their advocacy with the United States' government for policies consistent with these principles.

The resolution draws on over fifty years of General Synod actions, statements by UCC officers, and actions by Global Ministries and its historic component bodies. It is informed by the witness of ecumenical partners, including the National Council of Churches, USA, and the World Council of Churches, and it responds to the witness of our Palestinian Christian partners, and in particular Kairos Palestine: A Word of Faith, Hope, and Love From the Heart of Palestinian Suffering (2009) and Kairos Palestine: Cry for Hope, A Call for Decisive Action (2020).

The Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ reminds us that “God calls the church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship. . . and resist the powers of evil.” The Declaration calls on the United Church of Christ to engage in a costly act of solidarity and accompaniment with the Palestinian people and to resist the oppressive dispossession, occupation, and economic and military oppression of Palestine.

#### BIBLICAL, HISTORICAL, THEOLOGICAL GROUNDING

In *Kairos Palestine: A Word of Faith, Hope, and Love From the Heart of Palestinian Suffering* (2009), Palestinian Christians assert

“that our land has a universal mission. In this universality, the meaning of the promises, of the land, of the election, of the people of God open up to include all of humanity, starting from all the peoples of this land. In light of the teachings of the Holy Bible, the promise of the land has never been a political programme, but rather the prelude to complete universal salvation. It was the initiation of the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God on earth” (Kairos Palestine par. 2.3).

The promise of God regarding land and blessing in Genesis was ultimately not about possession of land, but about the role of the people of Israel as a blessing that “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12.3).

United Church of Christ biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann writes that “the Torah and world it evokes are beyond a possessed land, and this notion links to ‘a true community of all’ that transcends any tribalism” (Chosen? Reading the Bible Amid the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” 2015, p. 37). He goes on to quote Jewish philosopher Martin Buber: “This entire history of the road from Ur of the Chaldees to Sinai is a consequence of choices and partings, events of history – tribal history and national history. But above them stands revelation [which] gives them their meaning, points out to them their goal. For the end of all these partings is a true community of all men.”

In 1987 the General Synod affirmed its recognition that God's covenant with the Jewish people has not been rescinded or abrogated by God, but remains in full force, inasmuch as “the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29) – a clear rejection of Christian supersessionist theology. Along with this, however, the General Synod in 2003 rejected the theological claims of Christian Zionism which seek to privilege Jews in the modern State of Israel over others who share the land, and instead, while recognizing “the diversity of biblical perspectives on the question of a Jewish homeland,” also “affirms that all such perspectives should be grounded in the message of justice and peace taught by Jesus and the biblical prophets.” That message is summarized in the passage from Isaiah that Jesus quotes in Nazareth to inaugurate his ministry: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor” (Isaiah 61.1-2; Luke 4.18-19). Isaiah reminds us that the mere accumulation of property at the expense of justice and righteousness offers only a barren future: “Ah, you who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one but you and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land” (Isaiah 5.8).

The United Church of Christ, through its mission agencies, has maintained a close relationship with the Palestinian Christian community, as well as the wider Arab population of Palestine. For decades it has supported churches and church-related agencies, as well as human rights, humanitarian, and social justice organizations in Palestine and Israel to the end

that God’s blessings might be shared by all in the land and that the violence and oppression that have afflicted the region for over seventy years may end.

Consistent with these understandings, the General Synod has repeatedly called for the implementation of a vision of the future for Israel and Palestine based on justice and security for all and the principle of self-determination. In 1973 the General Synod affirmed that “peace and security can be attained only through a just and stable political settlement that takes into account the legitimate aspirations of all the peoples in the area and, particularly, the right to existence of the State of Israel and the rights of the Palestinian Arabs.” In 1997 the General Synod called for a negotiated agreement on the status of Jerusalem “that respects the human and political rights of both Palestinians and Israelis, as well as the rights of the three religious communities.”

In 2005 the General Synod called upon United Church of Christ settings and members “to use economic leverage, including, but not limited to: advocating the reallocation of US foreign aid so that the militarization of the Middle East is constrained; making positive contributions to groups and partners committed to the non-violent resolution of the conflict; challenging the practices of corporations that gain from the continuation of the conflict; and divesting from those companies that refuse to change their practices of gain from the perpetuation of violence, including the Occupation.” Further, the same Synod in a resolution on Israel’s construction of the separation barrier, called upon the Israeli government “to cease the project to construct the barrier, tear down the segments that have already been constructed, and make reparations to those who have lost homes, fields, property, and/or lives and health due to the barrier and its effects.”

In 2015 the General Synod called on United Church of Christ settings “to divest any direct or substantive indirect holdings in companies profiting from or complicit in human rights violations arising from the occupation of the Palestinian Territories by the state of Israel” and to “boycott goods identified as produced in or using the facilities of illegal settlements located in the occupied Palestinian territories.” In 2017 the General Synod called on Israel to honor the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, calling attention to the practice of military detention for Palestinian children, denial of access to legal assistance, and the use of physical and emotional abuse. Most recently, in 2019 the General Synod called for advocacy for Palestinian refugees specifically as stipulated in UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (1948), and for continued US funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

### **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

**WHEREAS** for over seventy years Palestinian people have faced dispossession of their land, displacement from their homes, a harsh military occupation, severe restrictions on travel, the military detention of their children, home demolitions – over 120,000 to date and the constant threat of more – and vast inequities in access to natural, economic, and medical resources when compared to that enjoyed by Israeli citizens living in illegal West Bank settlements, and also on a daily basis face severe restrictions on access to their olive groves, farms, and holy sites; [1] and

**WHEREAS** there are more than 5.6 million Palestinian refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Administration representing a global displacement of Palestinian people dating back to 1948 whose future status remains unresolved; [2] and

**WHEREAS** the Israeli government has maintained an illegal military occupation of Palestinian territories since 1967 that includes the establishment of illegal Jewish-only settlements throughout the West Bank and more recently has enacted formal discrimination against its Arab citizens through the passage of the Nation State Law in 2018; [3] and

**WHEREAS** provocative actions under the Trump administration, including moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, the suspension of humanitarian aid to the United Nations Relief and Works Administration, and support for Israel's proposed illegal annexation of land in the 140 occupied West Bank have further injured the Palestinian community and imposed serious road blocks to peace; [4] and

**WHEREAS** the Trump Administration's Department of Education has issued a rule labeling any criticism of the State of Israel as an antisemitic act in order to suppress advocacy for Palestinian rights on university campuses, and has joined many state governments in further suppressing freedom of speech in support of Palestinian civil society's call for boycotts, divestment, and sanctions; [5] and

**WHEREAS** actions by Israel, with tacit and overt support from the United States government, have established conditions comparable to those in force under Jim Crow in the United States south between Reconstruction and the Civil Rights Movement, with segregation laws that enshrined systematic domination and oppression by whites over blacks. Israel's acts of domination and oppression include, but are not limited to adoption of the Nation State Law in 2018, the building of the separation barrier, implementation of a restrictive pass system for Palestinians, the creation of Israeli-only highways through the West Bank, and imposed military detention of Palestinian children accused of crimes; and

**WHEREAS** the General Synod of the United Church of Christ and its officers have for over fifty years advocated for a negotiated process leading to a just peace between Israel and Palestine marked by adherence to international law and international standards of human rights and honoring the principle of self-determination and the rights of Palestinian refugees; [6] and

**WHEREAS**, reminiscent of historical examples such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and Southern Africa, Israel exhibits a current-day form of settler colonialism [7], actively engaged in the removal and erasure of the indigenous Palestinian population, through a matrix of control that includes: the imposition of a harsh military occupation; the de facto annexation of Palestinian lands and threats of further annexation; the expansion of illegal Jewish only settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank; the contraction of Palestinian-controlled land; and the restriction of travel for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza;

**WHEREAS** Cry for Hope: A Call for Decisive Action issued by Palestinian Christian leaders and theologians in July, 2020 [8], states that "the very being of the church, the integrity of the Christian faith, and the credibility of the Gospel is at stake. We declare that support for the oppression of the Palestinian people, whether passive or active, through silence, word or deed, is a sin. We assert that Christian support for Zionism as a theology and an ideology that legitimize the right of one people to deny the human rights of another is incompatible with the Christian faith and a grave misuse of the Bible";

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Third General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopts the following Declaration:

1. We affirm that the continued oppression of the Palestinian people remains, after more than five decades of oppression of the Palestinian people, a matter of theological urgency and represents a sin in violation of the message of the biblical prophets and the Gospel, and that all efforts to defend or legitimate the oppression of the Palestinian people, whether passive or active, through silence, word, or deed by the Christian community, represent a fundamental denial of the Gospel.

Therefore, we reject the notion that Israel's occupation of Palestine is a purely political problem outside the concern of the church or that the oppression of the

Palestinian people is an inevitable consequence of global or regional geopolitical interests.

2. We affirm that the biblical narrative beginning with creation and extending through the calling of the Israelites, the corrective admonitions of the prophets, the incarnation and ministry of Jesus and the witness of the apostles to the “ends of the earth” . . . speaks of God's blessing extending to “all the families of the earth.” (Genesis 12.3)

Therefore, we reject any theology or ideology including Christian Zionism, Supercessionism, antisemitism or anti-Islam bias that would privilege or exclude y of grace.

3. We affirm that all people living in Palestine and Israel are created in the image of God and that this bestows ultimate dignity and sacredness to all;

Therefore, we reject any laws and legal procedures which are used by one race or religion or political entity to enshrine one people in a privileged legal position at the expense of another, including Israel's apartheid system of laws and legal procedures.

4. We affirm that all peoples have the right to self-determination and to their aspirations for sovereignty and statehood in the shaping of their corporate religious, cultural, and political life, free from manipulation or pressure from outside powers, and that a just resolution of conflicting claims is only achieved through the equal protection of civil rights, the fair and just sharing of land and resources, and peaceful negotiation based on international law and UN resolutions.

Therefore, we reject the use of Scripture to claim a divine right to the land as the rationale for Israel's illegal seizure and annexation of Palestinian land as well as the imposition of so-called peace agreements by Israel or the United States through the exercise of political and military domination that leaves Palestinians without equal rights, full citizenship, and the opportunity to thrive religiously, culturally, politically, and economically.

5. We affirm the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes if they so choose or to be compensated for their loss of property, consistent with UN General Assembly resolution 194 (1948).

Therefore, we reject the denial of this right, just as we reject efforts to manipulate internationally-agreed upon definitions of refugees to attempt to erase this right which extends across generations.

6. We affirm the First Amendment constitutional right to freedom of speech and assembly to protest the actions of the State of Israel and to uphold the rights of Palestinians, including the use of economic measures to support justice as a First Amendment right and joining the international Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement by individuals, institutions, corporations, and religious bodies that advocate peace with justice or participate in any aspect of the use of economic measures to support justice

Therefore, we reject the idea that any criticism of policies of the State of Israel is inherently antisemitic, in confession that some criticism is antisemitic in intent or impact, and we oppose the efforts of U.S. federal and state governments to limit free speech on university campuses and to restrict or ban support of the international Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that national setting of the United Church of Christ send the text of this Declaration to Local Churches, Associations and Conferences; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that all settings of the United Church of Christ be encouraged to receive this Declaration as a prophetic call for renewed and continued advocacy for a just peace in Palestine and Israel and use it as a plumbline for taking action, including, for example:

a. Committing to hearing the voices of Palestinians regarding their situation, including the voices of Palestinian Christians through the study of Palestine Liberation Theology, attention to statements and appeals such as *Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth* (2009) and *a Cry for Hope* (2020), participation in travel seminars that expose visitors to the Palestinian community, and use of resources from Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

b. Implementing the calls of prior General Synod resolutions, including the 2015 Resolution, “A Call for the United Church of Christ to Take Actions Toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” and the 2017 Resolution, “A Call for the United Church of Christ to Advocate for the Rights of Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation.”

c. Examining critically our use and interpretations of Scripture as well as liturgies and hymns that equate ancient Biblical Israel with the modern state in ways that promote settler colonialism and the dispossession of Palestinian land, rights, and cultural expressions.

d. Offering support and encouragement to college students and faculty members as well as the human rights groups (including Students for Justice in Palestine, Jewish Voice for Peace, American Muslims for Palestine, and many other allied groups), whose freedom to speak, witness and advocate on university campuses is threatened in any way by state or local governments, or by college administrators.

e. Advocating for the cessation of U.S. military aid to Israel until such time that Palestinian human rights, civil rights, and self-determination are fully realized and protected in compliance with international law, US laws on foreign military assistance, and the principles of human rights.

f. Supporting the full restoration of US funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency which carries out critical services by and for Palestinian refugees, and encouraging continued support for UCC partners which serve Palestinian refugees.

g. Demanding that the plight of Palestinian refugees be addressed by Israel and the international community based on United Nations Resolution 194 guaranteeing that “refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.”

**FUNDING:** The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

**IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

## Footnotes

- (1) Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions: <https://icahd.org/>
- (2) United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East: <https://www.unrwa.org/>
- (3) <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/7/31/17623978/israel-jewish-nation-state-law-bill-explained-apartheid-netanyahu-democracy276>
- (4) [https://www.globalministries.org/ecumenical\\_statement\\_on\\_current\\_u\\_s\\_policy\\_and\\_israel\\_palestine](https://www.globalministries.org/ecumenical_statement_on_current_u_s_policy_and_israel_palestine)  
[https://www.globalministries.org/ucc\\_disciples\\_leaders\\_issue\\_joint\\_statement\\_in\\_response\\_to\\_the\\_peace\\_and\\_prosperity\\_proposal](https://www.globalministries.org/ucc_disciples_leaders_issue_joint_statement_in_response_to_the_peace_and_prosperity_proposal)  
[https://www.globalministries.org/not\\_peace\\_but\\_apartheid\\_b\\_tselem\\_s\\_brief\\_response\\_to\\_the\\_trump\\_plan](https://www.globalministries.org/not_peace_but_apartheid_b_tselem_s_brief_response_to_the_trump_plan)  
[https://www.globalministries.org/ucc\\_disciples\\_leaders\\_issue\\_statement\\_on\\_israeli\\_settlements](https://www.globalministries.org/ucc_disciples_leaders_issue_statement_on_israeli_settlements)
- (5) <https://forward.com/fast-forward/410044/trump-education-dept-adopts-controversial-new-definition-of-anti-semitism/>  
<https://palestinelegal.org/news/2018/9/11/kenneth-marcus-adopts-controversial-antisemitism-definition-at-doe-with-no-public-notice-reopens-dismissed-rutgers-case-from-2014?rq=anti-semitism%20department%20of%20education>
- (6) [https://www.globalministries.org/mee\\_resolutions](https://www.globalministries.org/mee_resolutions)
- (7) <https://www.wrmea.org/israel/palestine/how-settler-colonialism-can-help-us-understand-israel-and-the-us.html>  
[https://www.globalministries.org/ameu\\_s\\_the\\_link\\_the\\_decolonizing\\_of\\_palestine\\_towards\\_a\\_one\\_state\\_solution\\_by\\_jeff\\_h\\_alper](https://www.globalministries.org/ameu_s_the_link_the_decolonizing_of_palestine_towards_a_one_state_solution_by_jeff_h_alper)
- (8) Kairos Palestine and Global Kairos for Justice: <https://www.cryforhope.org>

**2. On Recognition That Israel's Laws, Policies, and Practices Constitute Apartheid Against the Palestinian People<sup>3</sup>**

**Decision of the 225th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA) (8.7.2022)**

**Source:** Presbytery

**Committee:** [INT] International Engagement

**Profile #:** [OVT-005]

**IOB Link:** <https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000773>

**Event:** 225th General Assembly (2022)

**Sponsor:** Grace Presbytery

**Type:** General Assembly Full Consideration

**1. Assembly Action**

*On this Item, the General Assembly acted as follows:*

**Approve as Amended**

Electronic Vote - Plenary
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Affirmative: 266

Negative: 116

Abstaining:

**Final text:**

**The Presbytery of Grace overtures the 225th General Assembly (2022) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to do the following:**

1. Recognize that the government of Israel's laws, policies, and practices regarding the Palestinian people fulfill the international legal definition of apartheid. Apartheid is legally defined as inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them. This occurs in Israel/Palestine through:
  - a. Establishing two sets of laws, one for Israelis and one for Palestinians, which give preferential treatment to Israeli Jews and oppressive treatment to Palestinians,
  - b. Expropriating Palestinian land and water for Jewish-only settlements.
  - c. Denying the right to freedom of residence to Palestinians.
  - d. Dividing the population along racial lines by the creation of separate reserves and ghettos for the Palestinians.
  - e. Denying Palestinians the right to a nationality.

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3 <https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search/3000773>.



2. Urge members, congregations, presbyteries, and national staff units, including the Office of Interfaith Relations, to seek appropriate ways to bring an end to Israeli apartheid.
3. Direct the Stated Clerk to communicate this action to all other PC(USA) councils.

## 2. Recommendation before the Assembly

Approve as Amended

### Text for Assembly Consideration

1. Recognize that the government of Israel's laws, policies, and practices regarding the Palestinian people fulfill the international legal definition of apartheid. Apartheid is legally defined as inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them This occurs in Israel/Palestine through:
  - a. Establishing two sets of laws, one for Israelis and one for Palestinians, which give preferential treatment to Israeli Jews and oppressive treatment to Palestinians,
  - b. Expropriating Palestinian land and water for Jewish-only settlements.
  - c. Denying the right to freedom of residence to Palestinians.
  - d. Dividing the population along racial lines by the creation of separate reserves and ghettos for the Palestinians.
  - e. Denying Palestinians the right to a nationality.
2. Urge members, congregations, presbyteries, and national staff units, including the Office of Interfaith Relations, to seek appropriate ways to bring an end to Israeli apartheid.
3. Direct the Stated Clerk to communicate this action to all other PC(USA) councils.

## 3. Committee Recommendation

*On this Item, the International Engagement Committee acted as follows:*

**Approve as Amended**

Counted Vote - Committee
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Affirmative: 28

Negative: 3

Abstaining:

**Final text:** Show Amended Text

Text for Assembly Consideration

1. Recognize that the government of Israel's laws, policies, and practices regarding the Palestinian people fulfill the international legal definition of apartheid. Apartheid is legally defined as inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them This occurs in Israel/Palestine through:
  - a. Establishing two sets of laws, one for Israelis and one for Palestinians, which give preferential treatment to Israeli Jews and oppressive treatment to Palestinians,
  - b. Expropriating Palestinian land and water for Jewish-only settlements.

- c. Denying the right to freedom of residence to Palestinians.
  - d. Dividing the population along racial lines by the creation of separate reserves and ghettos for the Palestinians.
  - e. Denying Palestinians the right to a nationality.
2. Urge members, congregations, presbyteries, and national staff units, including the Office of Interfaith Relations, to seek appropriate ways to bring an end to Israeli apartheid.
  3. Direct the Stated Clerk to communicate this action to all other PC(USA) councils.

#### 4. Recommendation

*This item was referred from the 224th General Assembly (2020) for consideration during the 225th General Assembly (2022).*

The Presbytery of Grace overtures the 225th General Assembly (2022) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to do the following:

1. Recognize that Israel's laws, policies, and practices regarding the Palestinian people fulfill the international legal definition of apartheid. Apartheid is legally defined as inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them This occurs in Israel/Palestine through:
  - a. Establishing two sets of laws, one for Israelis and one for Palestinians, which give preferential treatment to Israeli Jews and oppressive treatment to Palestinians,
  - b. Expropriating Palestinian land and water for Jewish-only settlements.
  - c. Denying the right to freedom of residence to Palestinians.
  - d. Dividing the population along racial lines by the creation of separate reserves and ghettos for the Palestinians.
  - e. Denying Palestinians the right to a nationality.
2. Urge members, congregations, presbyteries, and national staff units, including the Office of Interfaith Relations, to seek appropriate ways to bring an end to Israeli apartheid.
3. Direct the Stated Clerk to communicate this action to all other PC(USA) councils.

#### 5. Rationale

##### **Purpose**

This overture is pursued with the hope it will lead to a peaceful reconciliation for the people of Israel and Palestine similar to that which occurred in South Africa when apartheid was internationally acknowledged.

Just thirty years ago there was serious injustice, widespread suffering, and major human rights abuses in South Africa because of apartheid laws, practices, and policies that established a preferential legal status and material privileges to one group of people based on their identity while discriminating against another group based on their inferior status. The favored group received preferential access to land, water, other resources, and to government benefits and services while the disfavored group was confined to ever shrinking non-contiguous territorial enclaves. The peaceful

reconciliation of the peoples in South Africa and the creation of a stable political state were accomplished only after the churches and the nations of the world recognized that South Africa's laws, practices, and policies constituted a crime against humanity. In the 1960s South African soccer teams were banned from international soccer competition because of the government's apartheid policies. A few decades later South Africa hosted the 1995 Rugby World Cup, a remarkable demonstration of the political transformation that can take place when the world recognizes apartheid and a government responds by granting human rights for all people. It is hoped that the Israeli government policies toward the Palestinian people will undergo a similar transformation if Israeli apartheid is internationally acknowledged.

### **Why Presbyterians Must Act**

To solve a problem, one has to honestly recognize and acknowledge that the problem exists. The rationale section of this overture will demonstrate how Israel's practices towards Palestinians fit the United Nations and World Court definitions of apartheid. As Presbyterians we believe the prophetic mission of the church is to speak the Word of God courageously, honestly, and lovingly in the local context and in the midst of daily life; following the example of Jesus, the church is called to stand alongside the oppressed to help bring about justice, peace, and reconciliation. Christians spoke out in the 1950s against segregation in the United States and later against apartheid in South Africa. They must again raise their voices and condemn Israel's discrimination against Palestinians and give a name to the crime against humanity that this discrimination represents, the crime of apartheid.

The PC(USA) would not be the first to name Israel's practices as constituting apartheid. As Nobel Peace Prize laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu wrote to the 221st General Assembly (2014) delegates, "I know firsthand that Israel has created an apartheid reality within its borders and through its occupation."

The National Christian Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine (NCCOP), in a letter to the World Council of Churches that was formally received and recommended for study by the 223rd General Assembly (2018) of the PC(USA), called upon the church to urge "the ending of [Israel's] occupation, Apartheid and discriminations, and accept refugees to return to their home land and properties" (*Minutes*, 2018, Part I, p. 1129).

Many Jewish leaders, both Israeli and American, have similarly named Israel's practices as apartheid. former Israeli Minister of Education, said: (2008). former Israeli Minister of Education, said: " (2007). , former director of the American Jewish Congress & Synagogue Council of America, said, (2007). Indeed, a 2012 poll of Israeli Jews found that a majority recognize that Israel practices apartheid. <https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-israelis-say-no-vote-to-arabs-if-w-bank-annexed-1.5194145>.

Recent events have only made the situation clearer, most especially with Israel's Nation-State law, passed in 2018, that declares that "The right to exercise [national self-determination](#) in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people." The Palestinians who have lived there for centuries have no such right.

For too long, too many Americans and Presbyterians have seen the conflict between Israeli Jews and Palestinians through the frame of two peoples who can't get along. This frame is not accurate, and thus not helpful. The core of the conflict is not enmity between two peoples but an unjust structure of power that privileges one group of people over another, a structure that is reflected legally at all levels of society. Following our Palestinian Christian siblings, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, many Israeli Jewish leaders, and the majority of the Israeli Jewish populace, we must name this unjust structure by its most accurate name—apartheid.

## **2016 General Assembly Assessment of Israel-Palestine Facts on the Ground**

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) approved a report entitled “Israel-Palestine: For Human Values in the Absence of a Just Peace” that assessed the situation in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza. This report was prepared in response to a mandate from the 221st General Assembly (2014) to prepare a report assessing the viability of the two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Below are some of the conclusions of Section 1 of this report, which summarizes the facts on the ground in Israel/Palestine.

- Two different sets of laws apply to Jews and non-Jews in East Jerusalem  
East Jerusalem, which the Oslo Accords identified as the capital of a future Palestinian state, has been cut off from the rest of the West Bank by Israel’s erection of a fortified wall and security checkpoints, keeping out most Palestinians. The Israeli government has annexed all Jerusalem and expanded the city’s boundaries to include settlements, while depriving Palestinian residents of citizenship and public services, despite their full payment of taxes to Israel. This claim that Jerusalem is all part of Israel and its united capital, in violation of international law, made Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem stateless, with tenuous and frequently cancelled permission to continue living in their homes. Systematic land reconfiguration and large, strategic settlements in support of “an exclusionary Jewish Jerusalem” are “marginalizing the other national and religious equities in the city,” increasing interreligious tension and contributing to the loss of Christian presence.
- Two different sets of laws apply to Jews and non-Jews living in the West Bank  
Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, illegal under international law, have continued to expand in number, territory, and population—now including more than 650,000 settlers. Their location and the roads connecting them (for exclusive Israeli use) hem in Palestinian cities and towns and block time-honored transport connections with each other and with Jerusalem and the wider world. Jewish settlers in the occupied Palestinian territory receive treatment as Israeli citizens under a civil justice system, while Palestinians are under military occupation orders without full citizenship rights and legal protections.
- Two different sets of laws apply to building permits for Jews and non-Jews living in the West Bank  
The 650,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank are living in housing that received permits from Israeli government agencies. Israel issues almost no permits for Palestinian citizens living in the West Bank that is controlled by Israel. The Israeli government routinely destroys Palestinian homes, wells, businesses, and farms in East Jerusalem and most of the West Bank if they are built or repaired without Israeli permits, which are rarely granted. Palestinian property is expropriated for Israeli parks, heritage sites, security zones, and the enclosure wall.
- Two different sets of laws apply to Jewish and Palestinian refugees  
Refugees’ right of return to their former homes or agreed upon compensation is guaranteed on an individual basis under international law. This right is prohibited for Palestinian refugees. In contrast, Jews from around the world are granted immediate Israeli citizenship when they enter Israel.

- Two different sets of laws apply to the arrest of Jews and non-Jews living in the West Bank

The Israeli military arrests adolescent Palestinians in the night, coerces confessions by threats of indefinite imprisonment, and holds them without trial or access to a lawyer, a translator, or even a parent. Palestinians are often held in Israel where families cannot visit, which violates international law. Palestinians who allegedly pose a threat are often shot on sight. Despite some security cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, the Israeli military frequently conducts incursions into Palestinian areas and conducts constant drone surveillance of Gaza and other Palestinian areas.

- Two different sets of laws apply to access to water by Jews and non-Jews living in the West Bank

Israeli authorities tightly limit the access of Palestinians to water, while assuring that their own citizens and the settlers have full access 24-7. Per capita use of water in 2014 was 183 liters per day in Israel, compared to 73 for Palestinians in the West Bank and a minimum of 100 recommended by the World Health Organization. Palestinians must have permission to drill or deepen wells, which is rarely granted. Many Palestinian towns get water only a few times a week, while nearby Israeli settlements enjoy swimming pools and watered lawns and gardens. Some of the incursions of the wall into West Bank territory seize control of aquifers there. Israeli wells along Gaza's border substantially deplete the safely drinkable water available there.

- Two different sets of laws apply to economic development for Jews and non-Jews living in the West Bank

Economic development in West Bank settlements is encouraged through Israeli state incentives. Economic development for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza suffers from Israeli restrictions that hinder exports of their products, imports of raw material, construction of economic infrastructure, transportation within the West Bank and with other economies, access to internet and other communications, and access to financial services. In Jerusalem and elsewhere, Palestinians cannot enforce contracts and property rights vis a vis settlers. A World Bank study showed that removing such obvious restrictions would allow the West Bank GDP to expand by at least a third.

### **United Nations and World Court Definition of Apartheid**

The 2016 report to the General Assembly assessing the facts on the ground in Israel-Palestine described a situation where there are two different sets of laws that apply to different ethnic groups living in the same geographical area. This is defined as a system of apartheid under international law.

The classification of apartheid as a crime against humanity under international criminal law was made most strongly in the 1973 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (U. N. Apartheid Convention), and the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Rome Statute).

The U.N. Apartheid Convention states that the term "crime of apartheid" applies to acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group over any other racial group and systematically oppressing them. For the purpose of the Apartheid Convention, the term "the crime of apartheid" includes similar policies and practices of racial segregation and discrimination as practiced in southern Africa and applies to the following inhuman acts committed

for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them:

- Denying a member or members of a racial group or groups of the right to life and liberty by murder, serious bodily or mental harm, the infringement of their freedom or dignity, or by subjecting them to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.
- Arbitrary arrest and illegal imprisonment of the members of a racial group or groups.
- Imposition on a racial group or groups of living conditions calculated to cause its or their physical destruction in whole or in part.
- Denying basic human rights and freedoms, including the right to work, the right to form recognized trade unions, the right to education, the right to leave and to return to their country, the right to a nationality, the right to freedom of movement and residence, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
- Measures, including legislative measures, designed to divide the population along racial lines by the creation of separate reserves and ghettos for the members of a racial group or groups, the prohibition of mixed marriages among members of various racial groups, the expropriation of landed property belonging to a racial group or groups or to members thereof.
- Persecution of organizations and persons, by depriving them of fundamental rights and freedoms, because they oppose apartheid.

The U.N. defines “racial discrimination,” as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on [race](#), color, [descent](#), or national or [ethnic](#) origin that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise, on an equal footing, of [human rights](#) and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, or any other field of public life.” Israeli policies that establish and maintain Israeli domination over Palestinians meet this definition.

Government leaders can be accused of committing the crime of apartheid if they institute or administer laws, practices, and policies that establish apartheid conditions. It is up to the United Nations or the World Court to prosecute those guilty of apartheid. However, individuals, and churches can recognize apartheid and witness to that effect. This procedure is much like our criminal justice system. If a citizen witnesses a crime like a robbery or assault, they can recognize that a crime has been committed and witness to that effect even though only the court system can legally prosecute the crime.

### **How Israel’s Laws, Policies and Practices Constitute Apartheid Against the Palestinian People**

Israel has created a system where one ethnic group, Israeli Jewish nationals, have a superior status and another ethnic group, non-Jewish Arabs living in Israel/Palestine, have an inferior status. Israeli laws, policies, and practices systematically prevent Palestinians from participating in the political, social, economic, and cultural life of their country. The expropriation of Palestinian land, restrictions on the freedom of movement and residence, confining Palestinians to ghettos, arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of Palestinians, the restriction or denial of Palestinian rights to work, education, peaceful assembly, and religious practices are all part of Israeli measures calculated to prevent Palestinians from full participation in the economic, environmental, and social life of their country. This discriminatory system benefits Israeli Jews and causes irreparable harm to non-Jews both in Israel itself and in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The 2016 General Assembly assessment of Israel-Palestine describes the facts on the ground in Israel-Palestine that show a system of apartheid. Highlighted below is an elaboration of seven areas

in which the state of Israel's laws, policies, and practices violate the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid ratified by the United Nations.

### **Expropriating Palestinian Property for Jewish-Only Settlements and Infrastructure**

- In June 1967 East Jerusalem was occupied by the Israeli military. Twenty-seven square miles of East Jerusalem were annexed to Israel. More than 30 percent of the land in East Jerusalem has been expropriated to build new settlements where approximately 200,000 Israeli's reside in 47,000 units of housing.
- Between 1967 and 2019, vast areas of West Bank land have been expropriated to allow more than 121 settlements and 100 outposts for Jewish residents. Nearly 650,000 settlers now live in the occupied West Bank, including 190,000 in East Jerusalem.
- Separation walls/barriers are constructed on land in the West bank and expropriate an additional 11.9 percent of Palestinian land in the West Bank.
- The agricultural Jordan Valley area, about 30 percent of the West Bank, is now off limits to most Palestinians.
- Inside Israel—confiscation of so-called “absentee property” seized from Palestinians who were displaced from their homes in the 1948 war. Through Israel's passage of the Absentee Property law in 1950, Israel confiscated the land of Palestinians who had been expelled from or fled their homes, and transferred it to the state, thereby depriving Palestinians of their rights to their property.

Most recently, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu suggested he would annex further parts of the West Bank, continuing the long trajectory of Israeli confiscation of Palestinian lands. The net result is that the state of Israel systematically and continually expropriates the landed property of Palestinians in violation of the International conventions on apartheid.

### **Denying the Right to Freedom of Residence to Palestinians**

- Israeli laws, policies, and practices systematically prevent Palestinians from freedom of residence through denial of building permits for the construction of Palestinian housing and the demolition of Palestinian housing. In those areas of the West Bank and East Jerusalem where Palestinian housing is destroyed or denied, homes for Jewish settlers are permitted and constructed and only Jewish people can live in the settlement colonies.
- In 1967 the population of East Jerusalem was almost entirely Palestinian. Today there are approximately 190,000 Jewish settlers. Palestinians now constitute one-third of East Jerusalem's population.
- From 1967 to 2019, more than 24,000 Palestinian homes have been demolished in the occupied territories.
- Israel's 1950 Law of Return and its 1952 Citizenship, while conferring automatic citizenship to Jews who immigrate to Israel, denies return and citizenship to those residing outside of Israel between 1948 and 1952, including millions of Palestinians refugees and exiles. Israel thus manipulates the demographics in favor of Jews, while denying the right of return for indigenous Palestinian refugees and their descendants.
- The Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law, enacted in 2003 as a Temporary Order and renewed on an annual basis ever since, prohibits residency or citizenship status to Palestinian spouses from the occupied Palestinian Territories who are married to Palestinians with Israeli citizenship. This law thus prevents family unification and undermines the rights of

Palestinian citizens of Israel and of Palestinians from the occupied Palestinian Territories, including the right to family life, and the right to equality in marriage and choice of spouse. The net result is that the state of Israel systematically and continually denies the freedom of residence to Palestinians in violation of the International conventions on apartheid.

### **Denying Palestinians the Right to Freedom of Movement**

- Israeli laws, policies, and practices systematically deny Palestinians the right to movement. Israel uses a number of means to restrict Palestinian movement in the West Bank, which include: permanent and temporary checkpoints, physical obstructions, the Separation Wall, roads on which only Israelis can drive, and the movement-permit regime.
  - *Checkpoints*: In 2019 more than 600 checkpoints and roadblocks in the occupied West Bank restrict Palestinians' freedom of movement to their homes, businesses, schools, jobs, hospitals, and farms. Palestinians routinely suffer indeterminate waiting, humiliating treatment, uncertainty, and denial of access at checkpoints.
  - *Segregated roads*: Segregated roads, which Israel euphemistically calls "bypass roads," link settlement colonies with one another and with Israel. The 493 miles of bypass roads provide unrestricted access to Israeli vehicles but restrict or prohibit Palestinian travel. These roads cut off Palestinians from their agricultural land, schools, hospitals, markets, and extended families, and carve up the West Bank into isolated enclaves.
  - *Separation Wall*: In the West Bank much of the Separation Wall extends well beyond the internationally recognized border and separates Palestinian homes from their farmland, businesses, schools, hospitals, and the homes of family and friends. In East Jerusalem the Separation Wall is constructed through the middle of a once contiguous city, much like the Berlin Wall. The wall's main purpose is not security, but rather to separate Palestinians from Israeli settlement colonies on expropriated Palestinian land. The Separation Wall cuts deeply into the West Bank in several locations. There is creeping confiscation of land in the areas between the Green Line and the Wall, where severe movement restrictions continue to result in the inability of Palestinian landowners to farm their land. Along this zone between the Green Line and the Wall thousands of Palestinians on both sides of the barrier are being driven into poverty by restrictions on residency, lack of access to farm lands, inability to market their crops, and confiscation of land.
- By implementing these means, Israel has split the West Bank into six geographical areas: North, Center, South, the Jordan Valley, and northern Dead Sea. Movement between the sections and within each section has become, in recent years, hard, slow, and sometimes impossible. Israel almost completely forbids the movement of Palestinians between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and impedes Palestinians from entering Israel and going abroad.
- These restrictions significantly affect the daily lives of Palestinians in commerce, in access to medical treatment and educational institutions, and in conducting social activities. Simple actions such as going to work in a nearby town, marketing farm produce, obtaining medical treatment, and visiting relatives entail bureaucratic procedures and great uncertainty.
- Israel's restriction on freedom of movement for non-Jewish Palestinians is discrimination based on ethnic origin since these restrictions apply only to Palestinians. Jewish residents are permitted to enter and leave settlements without restriction.



The net result is that the state of Israel systematically and continually denies the freedom of movement to Palestinians in violation of the International conventions on apartheid.

### **Dividing the Population Along Racial Lines**

Sections a, b, and c and maps 1, 2, and 3 show how Israeli laws, policies, and practices in the West Bank combined with the infrastructure of illegal settlements, bypass roads, checkpoints, and the separation wall/ barrier systematically create separate reserves or ghettos for Palestinians in the West Bank. Palestinians are forced to live in isolated enclaves, which in turn eviscerates the Palestinian economy, and prevent the creation of a viable, contiguous, sovereign, and independent Palestinian state.

Inside the Green Line, Israel has formalized sub-national divisions of the Palestinian people into sometimes overlapping categories such as Christians, Druze, Arabs, Muslims, and Bedouin, as if each were distinct from the Palestinian people. In addition, other sub-groups of Palestinians are variously categorized for special status and treatment, including “absentees,” “present absentees,” Arameans, Jerusalem residents (annexed, but rendered stateless) and “unrecognized village” residents. All these Israeli-constructed categories of the Palestinian people remain perpetually inferior in status and rights to “Jewish nationals” as a matter of law in Israel and are effectively accorded second-class citizenship.

The net result is that the state of Israel systematically and continually divides the population along racial lines in violation of the international conventions on apartheid.

### **Denying Palestinians the Right to a Nationality**

- On November 29, 1947, the United Nations endorsed a Partition Plan for Palestine that divided the League of Nations’ British Mandate of Palestine. In this partition plan 44 percent of the land was allocated for an Arab state and 56 percent was allocated for the Jewish state. While Israel did become an independent state in 1948, the independent Arab state did not come into existence because the land designated as an independent Arab state was militarily occupied by Israel, Jordan, and Egypt.
- From 1948 to date the state of Israel has systematically occupied and/or annexed all of the land that had been designated by the United Nations for an independent Palestinian state.
- In 1967 Israel annexed East Jerusalem in violation of international law.
- From 1967 to date, Israel has controlled Area C in the Oslo Peace agreement. Through the construction of settlement colonies, bypass roads, the separation wall/barrier, buffer zones, and the creation of land reserves, Israel has left Palestinians in control less than 10 percent of the land area of the British mandate of Palestine.
- Israel has failed to implement the November 22, 1967, United Nations Resolution 242 requiring Israel to withdraw its forces from the West Bank and Gaza.
- As noted earlier, the recent (2018) passage by Israel of the Jewish Nation-State Law stated that “the exercise of the right to national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people.” This law thus codifies the Jewish character of the state and further cements institutionalized racial discrimination against the Palestinian people, relegating them to a lower status within their own homeland.

The policy of the most recent Israeli governments has been to explicitly obstruct the creation of a Palestinian state. In the words of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, “A Palestinian state will not be created, not like the one people are talking about. It won’t happen.” The plan, rather, in Netanyahu’s words “is to apply Israeli law to the communities in Judea and Samaria [the West

Bank], which we will do in the next term. I want to do it gradually. I want to do it if possible with American support” <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Netanyahu-A-Palestinian-state-wont-be-created-586017>.

The net result is that the state of Israel systematically and continually denies Palestinians the right to a nationality in violation of the International conventions on apartheid.

### **Why Christians Cannot Be Silent about the Israeli System of Apartheid**

The PC(USA) strongly supports Israel’s right to exist as a sovereign nation within secure and internationally recognized borders in accordance with United Nations resolutions. We hope that Israel will live up to its potential to be a democracy with equal rights for all people living in security and prosperity. It is therefore with pain and sorrow that friends of Israel witness Israel’s oppressive policies and actions in the West Bank. It is with great sadness and disappointment that we watch as the promise of human rights for all peoples in the Holy Land for which we hoped has been unrealized, and replaced instead by Israeli laws, practices, and policies that promote the interests and human rights of Israeli Jewish citizens while denying human rights and a nationality to Palestinians, both Christian and Muslim.

The Israeli policies in the West Bank and the infrastructure of the illegal Israeli settlements, bypass roads, checkpoints, and separation wall/barrier that constitute an apartheid regime are in plain view for all to see and have been denounced by PC(USA) at the last two General Assemblies. However, it is difficult for many Americans and Christians to recognize these Israeli actions as apartheid. One reason may be fear of disturbing our relationships with some of our Jewish or Christian brothers and sisters. It is difficult for many Christians to publicly criticize the policies of Israel’s government for fear that even legitimate criticism may be seen as anti-Israel or anti-Semitic or characterized as “picking on Israel” among many countries in the Middle East with human rights violations. Some Christians believe they must silence their criticism of Israel’s policies because of the history of the Nazi Holocaust and the failure of many Christians to speak out at the time. Some believe that using the word “apartheid” has a harsh or jarring effect that can hamper constructive dialog.

Our call as Christians means we must sometimes get out of our comfort zone and risk controversy and criticism from people or organizations with whom we are in relationship. It is because of this call that we must recognize what we witness in Israel/Palestine, which is that Israel’s laws, practices, and policies constitute apartheid against the Palestinian people. The 2016 report approved by the General Assembly clearly described facts on the ground in Israel-Palestine that constitute a system of apartheid.

After World War II when the horror of the Nazi Holocaust was revealed, Jews around the world said “never again.” Many Christians around the world were shamed by their silence during the 1930s as Jews in Germany were given special cards identifying their religion, had their businesses shut down, had their land expropriated, and were forced to live in ghettos. Christians too vowed that never again would they be silent if a government passed laws establishing and maintaining the domination by one ethnic group over another ethnic group through systematic separation, oppression, and denial of basic human rights. Silence in the face of evil was wrong then, and it is wrong now.

Each year the ordeals and injustices suffered by the Palestinian people in the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel continue. Land is expropriated, homes are demolished, and freedom of movement is restricted. The combination of Israeli settlement colonies on Palestinian land, the bypass roads connecting these settlements, and the Separation Wall creates a network of barriers that confine Palestinians to live in separate reserves and ghettos. The rights to work, education, freedom from

arbitrary arrest, peaceful assembly, and freedom of expression granted under international law are restricted or denied.

### **Reference Maps**

In order to visualize how the expropriation of Palestinian land and construction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank , Israeli only bypass roads, and the separation wall/barrier combine to restrict Palestinians into isolated and ever shrinking enclaves it is necessary to refer to the four reference maps that are included in this overture. It is helpful to refer to these maps when reading the PC(USA) statements below.

- *Map 1: Bypass roads* linking settlement colonies in the West Bank with Israel to allow unrestricted settler movement but allow limited or no access to Palestinians.
- *Map 2: The separation wall* is not on the internationally recognized Israel and Palestine boundary. Large swaths of Palestinian territory are on the “Israel side” of the wall.
- *Map 3: Encircled enclaves* (reserves or ghettos) confine Palestinians into sixty-four isolated and totally surrounded canton-like reserves in the West Bank.
- *Map 4: Palestinian Loss of Land 1946–2010.*

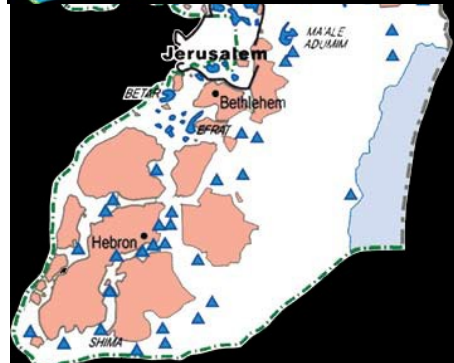


Map 1: Bypass roads  
 (the green area) None of the Palestinian West Bank is part of Israel under international law. However, the separation wall is not on the West Bank's border, but meanders deeply into Palestinian territory and puts large swaths on the "Israel side" of the wall. Triangles are major Israeli settlement colonies.



(reserves or ghettos) confine ed and totally surrounded canton-like : The triangles are major Israeli

the Study of International Affairs (SIA)



**Palestinian loss of land 1946 to 2000**

Palestinian and Jewish land 1946



UN Partition plan 1947



1949 - 1967



2000



*Map 4: Palestinian Loss of Land 1946-2010. The green area shows land under Palestinian control.*

*area shows land under Palestinian control.*

### 3. *The Methodist Church in England (United Kingdom)*

# The Methodist Church



<https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/21971/conf-2021-61-memorials-to-the-conference.pdf>

61. Memorials to the Conference, Conference Agenda 2021, p. 898  
Response to 4 Motions of regional Synods

#### **M8 Cry for Hope**

The **South Worcestershire** (5/16) Circuit Meeting (Present: 53; Voting: 48 for, 0 against),

being deeply concerned about the situation faced by the Palestinian people, draws the attention of Conference to the “Cry for Hope\*” published in July 2020 by leaders of the Christian community in Palestine. The Circuit Meeting is deeply disturbed by the plight of Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank, who have now lived under Occupation for over fifty years, for whom the last four years have been especially difficult and who have been disastrously affected economically by the pandemic, including through the demise of tourism.

We have been further dismayed at Israel’s self-promotion in being foremost in rolling out the COVID vaccine, while at the same time severely limiting its access for Palestinians. **We call upon the Conference to consider ways that British Methodism** can strengthen its support for ending the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians through promoting equal human rights for all who live between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. To this end **we ask the Conference:**

- To commend the “Cry for Hope’ to the Methodist people, encouraging them to endorse it and act on its recommendations, including through divestment and sanctions in relation to companies supporting the Occupation in any way;
- To strongly urge the Central Finance Board to act immediately on the decisions of the Methodist Council in January 2021 to update their investment policy, and divest from any company profiting from the Occupation;
- To call upon the British Government to end support for military contracts with Israel whilst that country remains in violation of international law.

The text of “Cry for Hope” can be found at [www.cryforhope.org](http://www.cryforhope.org)

#### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the South Worcestershire Circuit for drawing attention to the appeal from Kairos Palestine, ‘Cry for Hope’.

The Conference remains aware of the desperate situation in the West Bank and Gaza brought about through occupation and blockade and also of the increased reporting of anti-Semitism in the UK context. The Conference offers prayers for all people in the region affected in a variety of ways by the ongoing conflict and strained relations as a consequence of ongoing injustices and distrust. The Conference **calls to mind its previous resolutions** appealing for solidarity with all and for constructive dialogue is



alert to presence of racism and anti-Semitism in the UK and beyond. The Conference commends the EDI toolkit particularly module 6, to support and enrich study and action.

The Conference continues to commend for study the list of resources on the Methodist Church website (<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/edi-toolkit/>)

As described in the report 'Justice for Palestine and Israel' received by the Conference in 2009, the physical barriers in the West Bank, restrictions on movement, longstanding practice of arbitrary arrest through administrative detention, house demolitions and Palestinian's lack of recourse to justice, impose not only severe physical hardships and injury, but also a 'deep humiliation' that has psychological impact on the Palestinian people.

The Methodist Council report MC/21/18 noted that recent developments including the passing of the **Nation State law in 2018** and statements by the Prime Minister of Israel and other cabinet members suggest that the Government of Israel no longer has an intention to permit a viable Palestinian State in the region. The continued expansion illegal settlements increases the population of Jewish Israelis in the West Bank, while denying building permits to Palestinians, giving an impression of the permanence of occupation.

The report '**Cry for Hope**' argues that "we have come to the end of the illusion that Israel and the world powers intend to honour and defend the rights of the Palestinian people to dignity, self-determination, and the fundamental human rights guaranteed under international law, including the right of return for Palestinian refugees". It argues that, in the light of the denial of democratic rights of Palestinians in the West Bank, the continued oppressive measures and the moves towards outright annexation of around one third of the occupied West Bank, including the Jordan Valley. The Conference notes that the report argues it is time for the international community to **recognise Israel as an apartheid State** in the terms of international law.

The Conference has long maintained a position first outlined by the 2001 Conference, "recognising that peace and security can only be achieved when international judgements are respected and justice is done", and that "a return to the borders of 1967 and a status for Jerusalem as a place for two nations and three faiths, with parity of esteem, is the real basis upon which trust could be built up among the different communities. The desire for a lasting peace can only be based on trust, security and freedom from fear for all people in the area".

The Conference has stated on numerous occasions that the expansion of **settlement** infrastructure prevents the attainment of a two-state solution and undermines the basis on which trust between communities can be built. The unilateral **de facto annexation** of a large part of the West Bank **presents a very different situation** to that which guided the Conference in the past. The appeal of the supporters of Kairos Palestine offers an opportunity to consider how this long established position of the Conference with its reference to "parity of esteem" informs the current situation.

**The Conference commends for careful and prayerful study by the Methodist people the document "Cry for Hope"**. The Conference invites readers to use discernment with respect to the various aspects of the call. The Conference calls upon the British Government to **end support for military contracts with Israel** whilst that country remains in violation of international law. The Conference acknowledges that the complexity of this situation is not the lived experience of the majority of most British Methodists, and welcomes the opportunity to learn from sisters and brothers

across the region and across faiths.

Noting that the “**Cry for Hope**” **does not use the term ‘sanction’** specifically in relation to companies with operations in Israel or the occupied territories, the Conference supports the commitment made by the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment and the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church to dedicate time and resources to **review the Investment Policy** in relation to Israel and Palestine. The Council has considered Memorials M7-M9 (2020) and commends a reply to the Conference, in Agenda item 3, Section B. This reply requires transparent due diligence on the part of companies to ensure that their operations do not provide financial or other assistance to the occupation and it seeks exclusion from investment of companies operating in settlement areas in the occupied Palestinian territories.

### **M9 A Cry For Hope – Palestine**

The **Sheffield (25/1) Circuit Meeting** (Present: 72; Voting: 63 for, 1 against) notes with concern the deteriorating situation of the Christian community in Palestine expressed in the recently published document “Cry for Hope: A Call to Decisive Action”.

**We call upon the Conference to commend this document to the Methodist people for study and action.**

- The text of “Cry for Hope” can be found at [www.cryforhope.org](http://www.cryforhope.org)

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the Sheffield Circuit for its memorial and adopts the **same reply as to M8**.

### **M10 Israel/ Palestine – Cry for Hope**

The **Birmingham Synod** (Present: 141; Voting: 121 for, 7 against), being deeply concerned about the situation faced by the Palestinian people, draws the attention of Conference to the “Cry for Hope\*” published in July 2020 by leaders of the Christian community in Palestine. The Synod is deeply disturbed by the plight of Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank, who have now lived under Occupation for over fifty years, for whom the last four years have been especially difficult and who have been disastrously affected economically by the pandemic, including through the demise of tourism. We have been further dismayed at Israel’s self-promotion in being foremost in rolling out the COVID vaccine, while at the same time severely limiting its access for Palestinians. We call upon the Conference to consider ways that British Methodism can strengthen its support for ending the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians through promoting equal human rights for all who live between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. To this **we ask the Conference:**

- To **commend the “Cry for Hope’** to the Methodist people, encouraging them to endorse it and act on its recommendations, including through divestment and sanctions in relation to companies supporting the Occupation in any way;
- To **strongly urge the Central Finance Board** to act immediately on the decisions of the Methodist Council in January 2021 to update their investment policy, and divest from any company profiting from the Occupation particularly Caterpillar and Siemens;
- To call upon the British Government to **end their ongoing support for the government of Israel in the fields of security and the military** whilst that country remains in violation of international law.

\* The text of “Cry for Hope” can be found at [www.cryforhope.org](http://www.cryforhope.org)



**Reply**

The Conference is grateful to the Birmingham Synod for its memorial and adopts the same **reply as to M8**.

**M11 Cry for Hope**

The **Darlington Synod** (Present: 82; Voting: 80 for, 2 against) notes with concern the deteriorating situation of the indigenous Christian community in Palestine expressed in the recently published “Cry for Hope\*.” The Synod calls upon the Conference to **commend “Cry for Hope”** to our members encouraging them to read it and consider taking the actions it commends. “Cry for Hope” was written by Christian Leaders in Bethlehem and published in July 2020. The full text of “Cry for Hope” can be found at [www.cryforhope.org](http://www.cryforhope.org)

**Reply**

The Conference thanks the Darlington Synod for its memorial and adopts the same reply as to M8

#### 4. *United Reformed Church/URC*



#### *Decisions on Israel-Palestine at the Assembly 9-12 July 2021 Decisions based on the motion of the Mission Committee (see below)*

(see Press statement <https://www.sabeel-kairos.org.uk/united-reformed-church-adopts-10-resolutions-on-israel-palestine/#more-8797>)

Mission Committee

#### Basic information

Contact name and email address:

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Action required:                      Decision.

#### **Draft resolution(s):**

##### Resolution 26

1. General Assembly instructs the Mission Committee to raise awareness about Holy Land pilgrimage amongst synods, local churches, ecumenical partners and individuals, underlining the importance of taking time to engage with Christian Palestinian communities and members of the local Christian churches in Israel and Palestine.

##### Resolution 27

2. General Assembly affirms that Israel is a country which is recognised within the international community of States, with all the rights and responsibilities attendant on that status.

##### Resolution 28

3. General Assembly affirms the United Nations commitment to a State of Palestine which is recognised within the international community of States, with all the rights and responsibilities attendant on that status.

##### Resolution 29

4. General Assembly condemns all acts of violence in the region of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

##### Resolution 30

5. General Assembly expresses its deep concern over the worsening situation for the Palestinian people since Resolution 37 was passed in 2016, as evidenced by the subsequent work undertaken by the URC in response to that resolution. All Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, forced house demolitions and the acquisition of land by coercion, are breaches of international law.

General Assembly, therefore, urges the Israeli Government to abide by international law and reverse its de facto annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories.

#### Resolution 31

6. General Assembly requests local churches and members to contact their constituency MPs to express concerns about the actions of the Israeli Government with respect to settlement expansion and house demolitions, and to ask what the UK is doing in response.

#### Resolution 32

7. General Assembly recognises the ethical principles based approach of the URC Trusts and Pension Funds to investing and commends them in this long-established commitment, so that they can continue to avoid investing in any international company which facilitates the following activities in the occupied Palestinian territories:

- construction, production and services for the illegal settlements
- the economic exploitation of labour and the captive Palestinian market
- the illegal extraction and procurement of natural resources
- population control through private security and surveillance where it contravenes international law
- provision of specialised equipment for the forced demolition of Palestinian homes and structures
- building and servicing of the separation wall / barrier and its checkpoints on Palestinian land
- and any other breaches of international law.

#### Resolution 33

8. General Assembly affirms the ethical values of URC Synod Trusts and in this principled commitment requests them to ensure that they do not invest in any international company which facilitates the following activities in the occupied Palestinian territories:

- construction, production and services for the illegal settlements
- the economic exploitation of labour and the captive Palestinian market
- the illegal extraction and procurement of natural resources
- population control through private security and surveillance where it contravenes international law
- provision of specialised equipment for the forced demolition of Palestinian homes and structures
- building and servicing of the separation wall / barrier and its checkpoints on Palestinian land
- and any other breaches of international law as researched and listed by respected agencies such as the United Nations, the Who Profits Research Center (Israel), Investigate (The American Friends Service Committee).

#### Resolution 34

9. General Assembly requests local churches and members to be aware of EU guidelines on the labeling of products produced in Israeli settlements and to consider not purchasing these from UK retailers.

#### Resolution 35

10. General Assembly encourages local churches and members to actively play a part in supporting the Palestinian economy through the purchasing of Palestinian products available in the UK. These include but are not restricted to: Palestinian olive oil and food products, embroidery and olive wood carvings, cards, books, clothes and health / beauty products.

## Summary of content

**Subject and aim(s)** To stand in solidarity with Christian Palestinian communities and members of the local Christian churches in Israel and Palestine.

**Main points** Engagement with partners about pilgrimage; lobbying local MPs about the injustices of the occupation in Palestine; providing an ethical framework to avoid investments in companies which profit from the Palestinian occupation; encouraging URC members to support Palestinian enterprises.

### Previous relevant documents

Resolution 37, General Assembly 2016.

Mission Committee reports on Israel and Palestine to the 2018 and 2020 General Assemblies.

**Consultation has taken place with...** Central URC Trust and Pension Trust officers; Clerk to General Assembly; Synod Moderators and Treasurers; CCLA Charity Fund; Sabeel-Kairos; ecumenical partners.

**Summary of impact Financial** The actions and work proposed are covered by existing budgets.

### External (e.g. ecumenical)

The resolutions express commitments and policy positions which many of our ecumenical partners share.

## Introduction

1. Following on from the 2016 General Assembly resolution 37, the United Reformed Church has developed its work around the issues of the Israel /Palestine situation under the remit of the Mission Committee. The work has been extensive, and is recorded in reports to the 2018 and 2020 General Assemblies.

One major aspect was the educational visit to Israel and Palestine in September 2019, in which 22 people took part, representing all 13 synods, URC Youth, Global and Intercultural Ministries, [Reform Magazine](#), Commitment for Life and Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations. The ten-day visit was led by (then) General Assembly Moderator, Derek Estill. Participants saw at first hand many of the issues in the region. Close links were made with members of indigenous churches. and these have continued even during the extensive lockdowns of 2020 to 2021.

## What have we learned?

2. Since 2016, the URC has developed lines of contact with Palestinian Christians, all of whom testify to the deterioration of their living conditions, made worse by the pandemic and the lack of access to vaccinations, particularly when compared with their Israeli occupiers. In July 2020, Kairos Palestine and Global Kairos for Justice issued an appeal to churches worldwide in which they called on ecumenical partners to ‘take decisive action’ and expressing the desperate reality that ‘words are not enough’. Entitled ‘**Cry for hope**’, ([www.cryforhope.org/](http://www.cryforhope.org/)) the appeal brought together a global network of grassroots ministries, denominational mission committees, and ecumenical organisations representing the indigenous churches.

## The growth of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories

3. The resolutions to General Assembly have a particular focus on the settlements and enforced demolitions in the region. The illegal nature of the settlements is clear in international law. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states: ‘The Occupying Power

shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.’ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 of 2016 states that Israel's settlement activity constitutes a ‘flagrant violation’ of international law and has ‘no legal validity’.

4. The settlements represent a de facto annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories. The United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Human Affairs assimilated a series of factsheets looking at the humanitarian impact over the first 50 years of occupation (1947–2017).<sup>4</sup> The statistics highlighted how from 2009 to 2016, Israeli authorities demolished or seized over 4,800 Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, compared with an average rate of approval of applications for building permits for Palestinians in the same period of less than 3%. When the report was published, 611,000 Israeli settlers lived in 250 settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Illegal settlements remain on the increase. Only in May 2021, there was considerable unrest in East Jerusalem, as the Israeli authorities attempted to evict Palestinians from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, located just outside the Old City, to give their homes to settlers.

5. Participants from the URC’s 2019 educational visit witnessed the restricted access to water and electricity in the occupied territories. More than 70% of Palestinian communities are not connected to the water network. At least a third of Palestinians in East Jerusalem live in unlicensed homes, and face the risk of demolition and displacement.

6. In 2019 we visited Hebron City and saw the devastation and tension at first hand, as well as the disruption caused by the settlers. Nearly a third of the housing units in Hebron have been abandoned by their Palestinian residents.

7. We also saw the way in which settlers disrupt the olive tree farms. Writing in response to a letter written by a URC elder in January 2021, the UK Government’s Minister for the Middle East, James Cleverley reported that the UK Government has ‘repeatedly raised with the Israeli authorities our concerns about incidents of settler violence (including the destruction of olive trees) and intimidation’.

### Theological understanding

8. The Revd Dr Munther Isaac is the minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem and the academic dean of the Bethlehem Bible College. He is an international ecumenical guest at this year’s General Assembly. His most recent book, [The Other Side of the Wall: A Palestinian Christian Narrative of Lament and Hope](#) was published in June 2020. He has written a paper, which can be seen on the CTBI website, entitled ‘Palestinian Christians and the Promised Land’.<sup>5</sup> Dr Isaac does not question the existence of the State of Israel. He calls for a shared land theology, recognising that the land itself belongs to God (Leviticus 25:23). Christianity’s link to the region is summed up by Dr Isaac’s reference to the land as ‘the fifth Gospel’. He writes, ‘The Palestinian Church takes its identity and theology from its natural and unbroken relationship with the biblical land. This is the land where Jesus was born, and where many of the biblical events took place.’

### Pilgrimage

9. The 2019 educational visit spent part of its time in Bethlehem, staying in a Palestinian hotel, in support of the Palestinian economy and to meet with the local people. Our tour operators informed us that only around 1% of pilgrimages take the time to engage with Palestinian communities or even with the leaders and members of the local Christian

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[www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/OCHAFACTSHEET-211217.pdf](http://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/OCHAFACTSHEET-211217.pdf)

5

<https://ctbi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Palestinian-Christians-and-the-Land-2017-England.pdf>

churches and centres in Israel and Palestine.

Given the volume of Christian pilgrimages each year to the region, we believe there is scope to promote further the good work embodied in a film about pilgrimage, part funded by the URC, called [Walking the tightrope](#). This is now accessible online.<sup>6</sup>

### Ecumenical partners

10. The **resolutions** which are offered to General Assembly represent very similar positions taken by Quakers in Britain, The Presbyterian Church USA, The United Church of Christ (USA) and The United Methodist Church (USA). The Central Finance Board of The Methodist Church in Britain has been asked to move from a policy of engagement with the type of companies defined in the URC General Assembly resolutions to one of not investing in them at all.

### Remaining committed to condemning antisemitism

11. The United Reformed Church remains committed to condemning all acts of antisemitism. As a denomination we have a proud history of speaking out against injustice, wherever it occurs. The resolutions proposed are not antisemitic.

The International *Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition* of antisemitism makes it clear that ‘criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic’.<sup>7</sup> In March 2021, the *Jerusalem Declaration on antisemitism* was published by a group of scholars of Jewish, Holocaust, Israel, Palestine, and Middle East Studies. The Jerusalem Declaration expands on the IHRA definition, making it clear that it is **not** antisemitic to support ‘the Palestinian demand for justice and the full grant of their political, national, civil, and human rights, as encapsulated in international law’.

In terms of investment policy, the Jerusalem Declaration states that ‘boycott, divestment, and sanctions are commonplace, non-violent forms of political protest against states. In the Israeli case they are not, in and of themselves, antisemitic’.<sup>8</sup>

### Investment guidance

12. In preparing the resolutions, the Mission Committee consulted with Central URC Trust and Pension Trust officers. We were heartened to learn that current ethical guidelines already mean that the URC is not invested in any of the areas outlined.

However, Trust officers agreed the importance of underlining the ongoing commitment in the resolutions offered. Similarly, many synod treasurers responded to say that Synod Trusts are also not invested in these types of companies. Several Trusts have their investments with the Charity Fund CCLA, who have confirmed to us that their ethical fund works to the United Nations guiding principles for businesses on human rights, which covers the bulk of the areas highlighted in the resolutions. CCLA are set to consult further with church investors, and so the close definition provided by the resolutions will help us to push the case for enhanced screening procedures. The research enabling investment screening of companies involved in the Palestinian occupation is increasingly sophisticated and accessible. For those synods who have concerns about screening, it is important to note that the resolutions come in the form of a request and an understanding that further support might be needed. We envisage this as a process whereby we work towards the commitment, expressed by all the synods and embodied in the resolutions, in speaking out against the injustices experienced by the Palestinian people under occupation.

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6 [www.fodip.org.uk/walkingthetightrope](http://www.fodip.org.uk/walkingthetightrope)

7 [www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/workingdefinition-antisemitism](http://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/workingdefinition-antisemitism)

8 [jerusalemdeclaration.org/](http://jerusalemdeclaration.org/)

## Summary

13. Resolution 37 from the 2016 General Assembly calls for ‘synods, local churches and individuals to respond with informed prayer, grace and solidarity’. As the situation has worsened for the Palestinian people since 2016, and against the backdrop of additional deprivation caused by Covid-19, the call to stand more resolutely in solidarity with Christian Palestinian communities and members of the local Christian churches in Israel and Palestine is more compelling than ever.

The resolutions for the 2021 General Assembly respond to their direct call for such solidarity. They build on the work which flowed from the 2016 resolution, as well as the fact that Palestine is a long-standing Commitment for Life partner.

The resolutions commit us to practical ways in which we can genuinely be prophetic as a denomination.

In this context, and equipped by much reflection and prayer, the **Mission Committee offers its resolutions to the 2021 General Assembly.**

## Resolution references

1. For Resolution 3: United Nations Security Council Resolution 1397.
2. For Resolution 9: European Commission, Interpretative Notice [eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/20151111\\_interpretative\\_notice\\_indication\\_of\\_origin\\_en.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/20151111_interpretative_notice_indication_of_origin_en.pdf)
3. For Resolution 10, please see: Fine foods from Palestine - Zaytoun; Fair Trade Palestinian Crafts - Hadeel - Fair Trade Palestinian Crafts. (Resolution 10) [zaytoun.uk/](http://zaytoun.uk/)

**5. *Proposed resolution of the Carlisle Diocesan Synod for the General Synod of the Church of England, 9th October 2021, 9th October 2021.***

The Carlisle Diocesan Synod of the Anglican Church in the UK decided Oct. 9, 2021

“That This Synod

- Endorses the “Cry for Hope” expressed by Palestinian Christians and the ‘Global Kairos for Justice’ coalition (GKfJ);
- Requests that the Faith and Order Commission produce a report which analyses and refutes any theological justifications, for example, those promoted by some Christian Zionists, for the oppression of Palestinians
- Instructs the Ethical Investment Advisory Group to provide guidance to the National Investing Bodies (NIBs) and Dioceses that will enable them to screen their investments and thereby make decisions regarding engagement with, and divestment from, companies which profit from the occupation. “



## 6. Church of Norway



### *Christian Zionism - Statement of the Bishops' Conference, 16 October 2020*

The situation in Israel and Palestine is deeply worrying. A just and sustainable peace solution that respects international law and safeguards the security and rights of both peoples, seems more unrealistic than for a long time. Church leaders in Jerusalem have called upon the churches of the world and the international community, to put pressure on both parts to negotiate a just peace solution and end the illegal occupation and discrimination of citizens.

"Zionism" is a broad term. There are some groups who are described as "Christian Zionists" because they support the state of Israel's expansionist policy based on peculiar interpretations of the Bible. Although they belong to Christian churches, they do not listen to appeals from the local churches in the Middle East. They have a special interpretation of history, with apocalyptic last days expectations, where they risk reducing the Jews to an instrument for attaining salvation according to their own theological scheme.

They practice a political theology that ignores international law and human rights. Directly or indirectly, they oppose attempts to create a just peace. These groups are particularly large in the United States, but are also found in Norway.

There is disagreement about how the land promises in the Bible should be interpreted. But we find it unacceptable to interpret the Bible without regard to the ethical consequences. It is problematic to read ancient prophecies so that all political events today are predetermined by God. In this way people are deprived of responsibility for the course of history at the same time as God is diminished. Not least, Christian Zionism complicates the situation for the churches in Palestine and Israel. This calls for solidarity from the Church of Norway.

The Bishops' Conference finds it unacceptable to use the Bible to legitimize oppression or human rights violations, or to differentiate human dignity according to group belonging. The promises of the Old Testament concerning the Jewish people and the land, cannot be used to legitimize the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes or their rights. They also have historic roots in the country and belong there. The Bishops' Conference in the Church of Norway therefore finds Christian Zionism theologically unacceptable and incompatible with human rights.

The Church has much to answer for when it comes to its history of anti-Judaism. In confrontation with ecclesiastical and European anti-Semitism, the church has wanted to develop a solidarity relationship with the Jewish people. This is not in opposition to committing to the rights of the Palestinians.

Several dioceses in the Church of Norway have friendship agreements with ELCJHL (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land). The Bishops' Conference wants the Church of Norway to actively support this work. The Church of Norway will continue to seek dialogue with Jews about how we, as believers, can contribute to just peace in the area.

*"Mercy and truth are met together;  
righteousness and peace have kissed each other."*

Psalm 85.11

Original: <https://kirken.no/nb-NO/om-kirken/slik-styres-kirken/bispemotet/nytt-fra-bispemotet/kristensionisme/>  
Press: <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/church-of-norway-christian-zionism-is-theologically-unacceptable>

## **7. Church of Sweden**

(<https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/kyrkomotet/ekumenikuskottetsbeslut>):

The Church of Sweden Synod decided today, November 23, 2021, "to commission the Central Board of Church of Sweden to raise the issue of scrutinizing the implementation of International Law in Israel and Palestine, also from the perspective of the United Nations convention on apartheid and the definitions of apartheid in the Rome Statute, in international and ecumenical organizations, especially the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation."

## 8. Bishop of the Protestant Regional Church in Baden

Der Landesbischof Postfach 2269 76010 Karlsruhe

Mr.

Rifat Kassis

General Coordinator

Global Kairos for Justice



Der Landesbischof

Prof. Dr. Jochen Cornelius-Bundschuh

Besucheranschrift:

Evangelischer Oberkirchenrat,

Blumenstraße 1-7, 76133 Karlsruhe

Telefon 0721 9175-101

Telefax 0721 9175-25-101

AZ:

Karlsruhe, 10. Juli 2020

Response to your letter of June 2020

Dear Mr Kassis, dear sisters and brothers,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

On 16 June 2020, your "Cry for Hope: Call to Decision and Action" was personally delivered to me. In doing so, you share with us the deplorable political circumstances that the Christian communities in Palestine have been facing for years, and which have worsened rather than improved. You rightly remind us of our responsibility as brothers and sisters in faith towards our Christian brothers and sisters in the Palestinian region.

As Protestant Christians in Germany, for biblical-theological reasons, against the background of our history and the catastrophic consequences of anti-Judaism, turning to Judaism is essential and permanently important to us. This may contribute to the fact that we have often not perceived the situation of our Palestinian brothers and sisters with the appropriate sharpness. But the effort for justice, dialogue and reconciliation is indivisible.

Therefore, in response to your letter, we wish to assure you that we hear your "cry" and sincerely share your great concern about the intolerable situation.

We support and strengthen the Palestinians' aspiration for state sovereignty: spiritually, morally, materially and advocacy-politically. Even if the perspective for coexistence under the formula of the two-state solution seems to be receding into the distant future, we currently see no other way to justice and peace in the Holy Land. We consciously hear the admonition from the biblical word that the gift of the land for all who dwell in it is linked to the demand for justice and mutual respect.

With you, we are convinced that no biblical quotation can legitimise disenfranchisement and discrimination or justify geopolitical claims to power at the expense of law and justice. We oppose any instrumentalisation of religion by political interests. We reject a biblical-apocalyptic exaggeration of the conditions in the Holy Land, such as in so-called "Christian Zionism", as hostile to dialogue and aggravating conflict.

Rather, we rally around the vision of a free and sovereign Palestine side by side with an unchallenged and recognised State of Israel in the midst of a Middle East where peace reigns. Those who strive

non-violently towards this goal have our undivided support; we vigorously oppose all those who rely on violence. Against this background, we also consider boycott measures to be fundamentally legitimate as a non-violent form of resistance, even if we do not want to join calls for a boycott ourselves.

We want to contribute to the growth of justice and peace in Israel and Palestine: We reaffirm our commitment to promote and strengthen actors and initiatives in the region which are willing to engage in dialogue and reconciliation whenever we can. We believe that the core of God's instruction is for justice and peace for all people. We call for an end to continued settlement construction and Israeli occupation policies. We reaffirm the statement of the Evangelical Middle East Commission of 28.5.2020, because any unilateral annexation cements injustice and fuels violence. We call for clear steps towards political autonomy for Palestine as well as a renunciation of terror and acts of violence against Israel. We urge all parties in the region to respect human rights and the provisions of international law of the global community of states.

It is now 10 years since the Kairos document was first published. On the basis of a petition, the Regional Synod will therefore deal with the "Cry of Hope" of the Palestinian Christians at its next session or the one after that, and thus turn its attention to the concerns behind it in greater depth. Your letter of 25 June with its seven proposals for action will be included in these discussions. We will inform you about the results of the discussion and decision-making processes.

So we conclude our response in the confidence of the 1st Letter of Peter:

But the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, he will raise you up, strengthen you, establish you, you who suffer a little while. To him be power forever and ever! Amen.

I wish you much strength and God's blessing,

warm greetings,

Yours

Prof. Dr. Jochen Cornelius-Bundschuh

**Regional Bishop**

Further documents have been published on:

<https://kairoseuropa.de/kairos-palaestina-solidaritaetsnetz/ueber-das-kairos-palaestina-solidaritaetsnetz/>.

## Appendix 1

Jerusalem Declaration on Anti-Semitism: "Criticism of the State of Israel is not anti-Semitism".

Call by academics to global leaders at the "Malmö Forum on Combating Anti-Semitism".  
11 October 2021 <sup>9</sup>

We issue this call as scholars working in anti-Semitism studies and related fields.

On 13-14 October 2021, the leaders of the European Union and the United Nations and heads of state and government from many countries will meet at the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Anti-Semitism.

Swedish prime minister Stefan Löfven convenes this forum 21 years after the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, which resulted in the Stockholm Declaration, the founding document of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

We welcome and support the declared purpose of the Malmö Forum "to jointly take concrete steps forward in the work on Holocaust remembrance and the fight against anti-Semitism". Anti-Semitism and all other forms of racism and bigotry pose a growing threat that must be fought most forcefully. We commend governments' resolve and efforts in this regard. At the same time, we issue a stark warning against the political instrumentalisation of the fight against anti-Semitism. In the interest of the integrity, credibility and effectiveness of that fight, we urge the leaders at the Malmö Forum to reject and counter this instrumentalisation.

A particular concern in this context is the "working definition of anti-Semitism" that the IHRA adopted in May 2016, in the aftermath of the 2015 Global Forum for Combating Anti-Semitism organised by the Israeli government.

Eleven "contemporary examples of anti-Semitism" have been attached to this IHRA definition, seven of which relate to Israel. These examples are being weaponised against human rights organisations and solidarity activists who denounce Israel's occupation and human-rights violations.

They legitimise wrongful accusations of anti-Semitism, which serve as a warning for anyone voicing criticism of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. This has a chilling effect on free speech and academic freedom and compromises the fight against anti-Semitism.

Regrettably, this clear abuse of the IHRA definition and of the examples has so far not been acknowledged by governments and parliaments that have adopted it. More concerning, the European Union is working hard to implement the IHRA definition across multiple policy areas and to entrench it society-wide.

In January 2021, the European Commission published a "Handbook" for that purpose, which was harshly criticised by civil society stakeholders. Among other initiatives, the handbook

promotes giving legal effect to the IHRA definition and cultivates it as a criterion to allocate or deny funding to civil society organisations. We fear this is a prelude to discriminatory and repressive policies.

On 5 October 2021, the European Commission presented the EU's long-awaited "Strategy on Combating Anti-Semitism and Fostering Jewish Life".

Like the aforementioned handbook, this strategy ignores the growing concerns about the shortcomings and instrumentalisation of the IHRA definition, as also raised by various stakeholders in the context of a public consultation launched by the Commission; including this academic expert submission, with an annex illustrating the instrumentalisation of the IHRA definition and a joint letter by 10 European NGOs and networks. In fact, the EU's new strategy feeds these concerns.

With concern, we note that the political instrumentalisation of the fight against anti-Semitism and of the IHRA definition is being facilitated by coordinators and commissioners appointed by the European Commission and national governments.

In particular in Germany, this has created a toxic and intimidating atmosphere. We notice coordination with and reliance on lobby organisations shielding the Israeli government. This political entanglement has a divisive and polarising effect, which undermines broad support for the fight against anti-Semitism and distracts attention from acute sources of anti-Semitism. It also contradicts the universalist spirit of the Stockholm Declaration, which is missing from the IHRA definition.

By contrast, an alternative definition of anti-Semitism launched earlier this year does carry this spirit: the Jerusalem Declaration on Anti-Semitism (JDA).

The JDA was crafted by a group of scholars from the United States, Israel, Europe, and the UK, who have vast experience with the IHRA definition.

After more than one year of deliberations, the JDA was launched in March 2021. It has been endorsed by more than 300 scholars of anti-Semitism and related fields, including many heads of institutes in Europe and the US.

We encourage the leaders at the Malmö Forum to add the JDA to their policy toolbox and rely on it for guidance. Rooted in universal principles, the JDA is clearer and more coherent than the IHRA definition. Without any underlying political agenda, it offers guidance concerning political speech where the IHRA definition has created muddle and controversy. We recommend the JDA also in view of prime minister Löfven's statement, issued in anticipation of the Malmö Forum: "We must address Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism by protecting and promoting democratic values and respect for human rights". The JDA reflects and respects democratic values and human rights.

For the sake of a concrete outcome of the Malmö Forum, the Swedish government has invited all participating delegations to present "pledges".

We call on the leaders at the Malmö Forum to jointly pledge to reject and counter the escalating political instrumentalisation of the fight against anti-Semitism, which undermines democratic values and human rights and is causing grave harm to this fight.

Taner Akçam, Professor, Kaloosdian/Mugar Ordinarius of Armenian History and Genocide, Clark University

Jean-Christophe Attias, Professor of Medieval Judaism, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Université PSL Paris  
Leora Auslander, Arthur and Joann Rasmussen Professor of Western Civilisation, College and Department of History, University of Chicago  
Omer Bartov, John P. Birkel and Distinguished Professor of European History, Department of History, Brown University  
Moshe Behar, PhD, Director of Arabic & Middle Eastern Studies, School of Arts, Languages & Cultures, University of Manchester  
David Biale, Emanuel Ringelblum Distinguished Professor, University of California, Davis  
Donald Bloxham, Richard Pares Professor of History, University of Edinburgh  
Micha Brumlik, Professor Dr., Director of the Fritz Bauer Institute on the History and Impact of the Holocaust, Frankfurt am Main  
Jose Brunner, Professor Emeritus, Buchmann Faculty of Law and Cohn Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science, Tel Aviv University  
Naomi Chazan, Professor Emerita of Political Science, Hebrew University, Jerusalem  
Bryan Cheyette, Professor, Full Professor of Modern Literature and Culture, University of Reading  
Alon Confino, Pen Tishkach Full Professor of Holocaust Studies, Professor of History and Jewish Studies, Director: Institute for Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies, University of Massachusetts, Amherst  
Lila Corwin Berman, Murray Friedman, Full Professor of American Jewish History, Temple University  
Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, Professor Emerita of Comparative Literature, Hebrew University, Jerusalem  
Hasia R. Diner, Professor, New York University  
Chaim Gans, Professor Emeritus, The Buchmann Faculty of Law, Tel Aviv University  
Sander Gilman, Distinguished Professor of Liberal Arts and Sciences; Professor of Psychiatry, Emory University  
Shai Ginsburg, Associate Professor, Full Professor: Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Member of the Faculty of the Center for Jewish Studies, Duke University  
Carlo Ginzburg, Professor Emeritus, UCLA and Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa  
Amos Goldberg, Professor, The Jonah M. Machover Full Professor of Holocaust Studies, Director: Avraham Harman Research Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University, Jerusalem  
Leonard Grob, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Fairleigh Dickinson University  
Jeffrey Grossman, Associate Professor of German and Jewish Studies, Full Professor Department of German Studies, University of Virginia  
Atina Grossman, Professor of History, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Cooper Union, New York  
Wolf Gruner, Shapell-Guerin Full Professor of Jewish Studies; Founding Director: USC Shoah Foundation Center for Advanced Genocide Research; Professor of History, University of Southern California  
Anna Hájková, Associate Professor of Modern Continental European History, Warwick University  
Elizabeth Heineman, Professor of History and Gender, Women's and Sexuality Studies, University of Iowa  
Didi Herman, Professor: Law and Social Change, University of Kent  
Dagmar Herzog, Distinguished Professor of History and Daniel Rose Faculty, Scholar Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY)  
Jonathan Judaken, Professor, Spence L. Wilson Full Professor of Humanities, Rhodes College  
Marion Kaplan, Skirball Professor of Modern Jewish History, New York University  
Brian Klug, Emeritus Fellow in Philosophy, St. Benet's Hall, Oxford; Member of the Faculty of Philosophy, Oxford University  
Claudia Koonz, Professor Emeritus of History, Duke University  
Tony Kushner, Professor, Parkes Institute for the Study of Jewish/non-Jewish Relations, University of Southampton  
Dominick LaCapra, Professor Emeritus of History, Cornell University  
Ian S. Lustick, Bess W. Heyman Full Professor of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania  
Shaul Magid, Professor of Jewish Studies, Dartmouth College  
Samuel Moyn, Henry R. Luce Professor of Jurisprudence and History, Yale University  
Susan Neiman, Prof. Dr., Philosopher, Director of the Einstein Forum, Potsdam  
Derek Penslar, William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish History, Harvard University  
Andrea Pető, Professor, Central European University (CEU) Vienna; CEU Democracy Institute, Budapest  
Göran Rosenberg, writer, Sweden  
Michael Rothberg, professor of comparative literature and Holocaust studies, UCLA Victoria Sanford, Lehman Professor of Excellence 2021-2024, professor of anthropology, Lehman College, Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY)  
Raz Segal, Associate Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Stockton University  
Joshua Shanes, Associate Professor and Director: Arnold Center for Israel Studies, College of Charleston

David Shulman, Professor Emeritus, Department of Asian Studies, Hebrew University, Jerusalem  
Levi Spectre, Dr., University Lecturer, Departments of History, Philosophy and Jewish Studies, The Open University of Israel; Researcher, Faculty of Philosophy, Stockholm University  
Enzo Traverso, Professor of Humanities, Department of History, Cornell University, New York  
Peter Ullrich, Dr. Dr., Senior Researcher, Fellow at the Centre for Research on Anti-Semitism, Technical University of Berlin  
Dov Waxman, Professor, Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation Chair in Israel Studies, Director: UCLA Y&S Nazarian Center for Israel Studies, University of California (UCLA)  
Yael Zerubavel, Professor Emeritus of Jewish Studies and History, Founding Director: Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life, Rutgers University  
Moshe Zimmermann, Professor Emeritus, Richard Koebner Minerva Center for German History, Hebrew University, Jerusalem  
Steven J. Zipperstein, Daniel E. Koshland Professor in Jewish Culture and History, Stanford University  
Moshe Zuckermann, Professor Emeritus of History and Philosophy, Tel Aviv University



## Annex 2

### List of previous ecumenical decisions and statements on Palestine/Israel (selection)

- World Council of Churches (WCC), Conference "Churches together for Peace and Justice in the Middle East": Amman Call (6/2007) <sup>10</sup>
- The Bethlehem Call: Here we stand - Stand with us, (2011) <sup>11</sup>
- Kairos Palestine Netherlands/Friends of Sabeel Netherlands: "The Wall has broken down" - the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in the light of Christian Faith and International Law (12/2012) <sup>12</sup>
- Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu: Open Letter to the German Protestant Church Congress and the Council of the EKD (2015) <sup>13</sup>
- Pursuing Peace and Strengthening Presence: The Atlanta Summit of Churches in the USA and the Holy Land (April 2016) <sup>14</sup>
- PAX Christi International "Appeal for a New Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process: Time for Recommitment (12/2016) <sup>15</sup>
- Open letter from the National Coalition of Christian Organisations in Palestine (NCCOP) to the WCC and the ecumenical movement (6/2017) <sup>16</sup>
- An open letter to church leaders in Switzerland: "50 years of occupation are enough - we must no longer remain silent" (6/2017) <sup>17</sup>
- Ecumenical statement on the defamation of non-violent resistance against violations of international law and human rights in Palestine/Israel by the German Bundestag (6/2019) <sup>18</sup>
- Anglican Church South Africa: Provincial Synod votes on Israel sanctions, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia (9/2019) <sup>19</sup>

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10 ? <https://anglicanchurchsa.org/provincial-synod-votes-on-israel-sanctions-anti-semitism-islamophobia/>

11 ? <http://meet-junge-oekumene.de/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/kairos-palestine-bethlehem-call-dec-2011.pdf>

12 [http://www.henriveldhuis.nl/LocalFiles/Israel\\_Palestijnen/Muur\\_afgebroken/The\\_Wall\\_has\\_been\\_broken\\_down.pdf](http://www.henriveldhuis.nl/LocalFiles/Israel_Palestijnen/Muur_afgebroken/The_Wall_has_been_broken_down.pdf)

13 ? [https://kairoseuropa.de/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Tutu\\_Brief\\_Palaestina\\_30.04.2015\\_deutsch-21.pdf](https://kairoseuropa.de/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Tutu_Brief_Palaestina_30.04.2015_deutsch-21.pdf)

14 ? <https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/pursuing-peace-and-strengthening-presence/>

15 ? <http://bds-kampagne.de/2016/12/01/pax-christi-international-appell-fuer-einen-neuen-israelisch-palaestinensischen-friedensprozess-zeit-zur-neuverpflichtung>

16 ? <https://www.kairos-palestine.ps/index.php/resources/statements/nccop-open-letter-to-the-wcc>

17 ? [https://www.kairos-palaestina.ch/images/pdf/Kairos\\_Palastina\\_-\\_Offener\\_Brief\\_2017.pdf](https://www.kairos-palaestina.ch/images/pdf/Kairos_Palastina_-_Offener_Brief_2017.pdf)

18 ? <https://www.lebenshaus-alb.de/magazin/012347.html>

19 ? <https://anglicanchurchsa.org/provincial-synod-votes-on-israel-sanctions-anti-semitism-islamophobia/>



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