

Churches in the USA and Europe for International Law and Human Rights in Palestine-Israel?

Documents in the Context of the WCC-Assembly in Karlsruhe in 2022

Brochure 3 of the series *Israel – An Apartheid System?*
Compiled by Ulrich Duchrow



Publication Series: Israel as an Apartheid System? Materials for the Ecumenical Process

The purpose of this series is to publish materials that will enable congregations, groups and the public to participate in an informed way in the ecumenical process on "Israel as an Apartheid System?" that was adopted by the 2022 World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany:

"Recently, numerous international, Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations and legal bodies have published studies and reports describing the policies and actions of Israel as amounting to "apartheid" under international law. Within this Assembly, some churches and delegates strongly support the utilization of this term as accurately describing the reality of the people in Palestine/Israel and the position under international law, while others find it inappropriate, unhelpful and painful. We are not of one mind on this matter. We must continue to struggle with this issue, while we continue working together on this journey of justice and peace."¹

This process continues the "process of study, reflection and confession" that the Palestinian "Cry for Hope" called for and to which many churches have already responded and are responding:

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. "²

Issue 3

Texts of a workshop on Ecumenical Movement and Churches in Europe and the USA for International Law and Human Rights in Palestine/Israel as part of the EKD-WCC Encounter Program at the WCC Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, September 6, 2022.³ Organizers: United Church of Christ and Presbyterian Church in the USA and Global Kairos for Justice groups in Europe in collaboration with the World Student Christian Federation Middle East.

¹ <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/seeking-justice-and-peace-for-all-in-the-middle-east>.

² <https://cryforhope.org/>.

³ Cf. <https://www.karlsruhe2022.de/begegnungsprogramm/gerechtigkeit-und-frieden/>.

Table of Content

Foreword

CRY FOR HOPE: A CALL TO DECISIVE ACTION

1. The current political situation in Palestine

By Rifat Kassis

2. The perspective of youth in the Middle East: Prophetic voice on apartheid

By Yasmine Rishmawi

3. Response of the United Church of Christ to the Cry for Hope

By Rev. Mark Pettis

4. Response of the Presbyterian Church in the USA

By Philip Woods

5. The Response of the British Churches to the *Cry for Hope* and the specific responsibility of the UK

By Valerie Hallard

6. The non-reaction of most German churches to the *Cry for Hope* and Germany's special responsibility

By Ulrich Duchrow

7. How the West supports Israeli apartheid, occupation and settler colonialism

By Shir Hever,

Anhänge

"Israel's greatest enemy is not Iran, Hezbollah or Hamas. Rather, the greatest danger rests within the Israeli society itself...over the past decades, violence has become part of our DNA...We need a different understanding of our past, our present, and our hope for the future. We must begin by accepting the painful realization that while this land is ours, it is not just ours. If we want to preserve security and our identity as a Jewish democracy, we must share this piece of land." *Ami Ajalon*, member of the Knesset for the Awoda Labor Party, 1996-2000 head of Israel's domestic intelligence agency, Shin Bet, in an interview.⁴

Foreword

The words of a former Israeli intelligence chief speak what many Jewish people, especially in the United States, are now saying. They fear for the future of Israel. The U.S. and German governments, on the other hand, are pumping money and political support into precisely this (self-)murderous system of violence. So when the ecumenical movement is engaged in overcoming this regime of violence in Palestine-Israel, it is not only about justice for the Palestinians, but, together with a growing number of Jewish brothers and sisters, it is about the people in Israel as well. For only together do the two peoples living there have a future. The German churches must finally tell this to the German government. The US churches are already doing it.

The following texts are in the context of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly in Karlsruhe 2022. The main content is the contributions of a workshop in the framework of the encounter program, organized by the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) in the New Apostolic Church on September 6, 2022, 2:00 - 4:00 pm.

It was entitled: *Ecumenical movement and churches in Europe and the USA for international law and human rights in Palestine/Israel*.

The UN and international human rights organizations have described the laws, policies and practices of the State of Israel as an apartheid system and settler colonialism.⁵ This workshop addressed the question of what this means for the churches and the ecumenical movement:

1. what does this mean for the integrity of the church and what kind of church response is appropriate?

2. to what extent does such a situation call for political action and what kind?

Can the State of Israel finance the oppression of the Palestinians only through the unconditional support of the majority Christian countries such as the USA, Europe (especially Germany and the UK)? What is the influence of the paradigm of Christian Zionism and how has the Bible been misused to justify injustice?

This workshop asked: How can churches in the West in particular, together with social movements, influence their governments to tie their relations with Israel to respect for international law and human rights?

European anti-Semitism and the crime of genocide against the Jewish people by the Nazi regime provided the impetus for the United Nations decision in 1947 to establish the State of Israel. This led to the Nakba (catastrophe) for the Palestinians. Germany and all of Europe therefore bear a special responsibility for both peoples. Many groups and churches in Europe and the USA are cooperating with partners in Palestine/Israel in the struggle for a common just and peaceful future for both peoples. A key perspective of this engagement is the implementation of international law and human rights in the spirit of Christ's love. The workshop provided an opportunity to share with participants from other regions how churches, together with social movements, can influence their governments to tie their cooperation with Israel to international law and human rights.

The workshop was facilitated by Luciano Kovacs, Presbyterian Church/USA.

⁴ Retranslated from the German: <https://www.ipg-journal.de/interviews/artikel/im-eigenen-feuer-6263/>.

⁵ Cf. https://kairoseuropa.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/KPS-Final-Dossier-on-Apartheid_.pdf

The Palestinian Cry for Hope, which has generated remarkable processes and resolutions in churches around the world as of 2020 and which also provided the framework for this workshop, was introduced by Dr. Munther Isaac (pastor of Christmas Lutheran Church and Dean of the Bethlehem Bible College). It is printed at the beginning of this booklet as a foundational text.

Also included in this booklet are appendices documenting other Palestine/Israel-related texts in the context of the Assembly:

1. open letter of protest from the Kairos Palestine Solidarity Network: *EKD distances itself from international law and pressures WCC to suppress Palestinian voice*. It documents EKD's attempts to prevent resolutions in the Assembly on Israel as an apartheid system and non-violent strategy of boycott against oppression (BDS).
2. the request of the Anglican Church in South Africa (AKSA) for an Assembly resolution on the Holy Land, which wanted to bring precisely these issues for discussion and vote, but this was not permitted by the Public Affairs Committee.
3. this Committee submitted for a vote an 11th Assembly statement on peace in the Middle East which, after little discussion, called on the WCC and member churches to work intensively on and respond to the controversial issue of apartheid presented by human rights organizations and the UN. In doing so, the EKD did not achieve its goal. Rather, the churches must now work on the issue of apartheid at all levels in Germany as well.
- 4 As a model for this can serve: The resolution of the 225th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the USA: Recognizing that Israel's laws, policies and practices constitute apartheid against the Palestinian people. In it, the careful justification of the resolution to recognize that the state of Israel is an apartheid system is particularly impressive.
5. on 21.9.2022, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied, Francesca Albanese, presented a new report. In it she raises a number of human rights issues, in particular with regard to the Palestinian people's right to self-determination in the context of the settler-colonialist features of the ongoing Israeli occupation – even beyond apartheid. Thus, this booklet can serve as study material for the "process of recognizing, reflection and confessing" now underway in congregations, groups, synods and church leaderships to respond to the Palestinian cry for hope and the resolutions of the WCC.

October 31, 2022

Ulrich Duchrow



CRY FOR HOPE: A CALL TO DECISIVE ACTION

WE CANNOT SERVE GOD AND THE OPPRESSION OF THE PALESTINIANS

1st July 2020

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. Fueled 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 honor 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 practiced Apartheid. In 1982 the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) declared Apartheid incompatible with Christian belief, and suspended the member churches practising 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

H.B. Michel Sabbah

Patriarch Emeritus: Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

President: Kairos Palestine

Rifat Kassis

Rifat Kassis

General Coordinator: Global Kairos for Justice

1. The current political situation in Palestine

By Rifat Kassis

There are some important developments happening in our area these days. I can mention some of them:

* Restructuring the middle East in a way fits the needs of Israel by showing Iran is the main threat to the middle east countries and the conflict between Shiite and Sunnie as the source of trouble in the region not the Israeli occupation as the main source and root cause of conflicts in the region and the main threat to the global and regional peace. Also to push for more normalization between some Arabs and Israel to the level of building a small Arab/ Israel NATO serving the hegemony of USA and Israel in the region.

* Restructuring Palestine to make the occupation a permanent one instead of temporarily as Israel and its allies used to name it. We can see many signs of these changes among them the re-creation and development of the military, although they call it "civil" administration which runs the lives of the Palestinians in both West Bank and Gaza. All aspects of the Palestinians lives have to go through them "work permits, travel permits, exports, imports to name a few! Furthermore, the continues weakening of the Palestinian Authorities limiting its role to the security coordination, creating huge gaps between them and its people. Furthermore, the trail to containing Hamas in Gaza as a separate entity, recognizing it indirectly as the de-facto authority in Gaza strengthening the split between both parts of the occupied territory. In addition to the daily apartheid practices stealing more land, building more settlements and isolating Jerusalem from its surrounding and practicing ethnic cleansing against its people including Christians. In other words, Israel strengthening its grip on the land and people implementing, indirectly, the infamous Trump plan of economic peace instead of finding a political solution by ending its occupation and apartheid against the people of Palestine. We see today that Israel is offering more working permits for workers to work as cheap laborers inside Israel, allowing more people to travel via its airport. On other words, Israel it dealing with us as individuals with needs but not a nation with rights.

* Criminalisation of the Palestinian resistance including the none violent resistance like BDS, silencing any critics against its human rights violations. Recently, they had designated six reputed and well-known Palestinian human rights organizations branding them as terrorist organizations. Furthermore, the IHRA new definition of antisemitism labels any kind of critics to Israel as anti semetic. Unfortunately, the double standards of some European countries, USA and some other western countries issued legislations, adapting the ihra definition of anti semitism, criminalizing our resistance and any support for it!

* The blind loyalty of the USA and some European countries, mainly Germany, to Israel and its strong financial ties with it which had resulted in giving Israel a free hand and impunity to continue challenging the international law and maintain its hegemony and violations against the Palestinians.

* Today it is becoming crystal clear that Israel is an Apartheid regime with clear manifestations! More suppressive laws including the nation state law, laws to ethnic cleansing Jerusalem and many areas in the Jordan valleys and Hebron. Many international human rights organizations and lawyers reached this conclusion as well and had issued reports proving this fact!

* Internationally speaking, mainly European and USA, had retreated on the so called "two state solution" and the original peace barometers including the complete Israel withdrawal to the borders of 1967. We see that they are accepting and adaptating completely the Israeli narrative, blaming the Palestinians for violence. While recognizing the Israeli "right to self defense" they fail to provide protection for the oppressed Palestinians according to Geneva conventions.

* On the Palestine context, today there is legitimacy crisis; no elections, no legitimate institutions including the president and the legislative council. The split between Fatah and Hamas and Gaza and West Bank became a reality and fact on the ground, corruption is increasing and wide spread, political failures to achieve any of the Palestinian aspirations. On the other side, the people are still hopeful and in the for front resisting its occupation with demonstrations and confrontation with the army and the settlers which is one of the worst in history. We also see today, new waves of young men resisting the occupation rejecting the current Palestinian system and new wave of fighters who don't relate to the PA and all political factions. New generation which doesn't adhere to the current reality full of determination and will to continue the struggle until freedom!

I would also like to speak about our hopeful signs today:

* One of the most important signs is the continuous struggle on the ground rejecting the normalization with the occupation. We still have faith in our people and in the unity of the Palestinian people everywhere!

* Despite the official normalization between Some Arab regimes and Israel, the Arab people reject this normalization before solving the Palestinian quest! Peace starts with solving the Palestine cause not with the normalization with the occupiers!

* Despite the shameful positions of some countries, today we see more and more strong and bold national and international civil society including churches who rejects injustices and work on ending the Israeli oppressions and apartheid against the Palestinians.

* The exposed double standards as it was shown in the war between Russia and Ukraine will definitely change the public opinion and will lead to questioning the racism within the countries who supported blindly Ukraine hesitating to give a more balanced opportunity to the Palestinians.

* Finally, today we are witnessing the end of the US monopoly of power and hegemony over the world. Today there are other camps and axis emerging which will change the power structures worldwide. Although it is too early to judge but for sure the world is changing!

2. The perspective of youth in the Middle East: Prophetic voice on apartheid

by *Yasmine Rishmawi*⁶

My name is Yasmine Rishmawi, and I am from Palestine, and just like Jesus I was born in Bethlehem.

As Palestinian Christian youth, we witnessed, growing up, the calls from many politicians, theologians and lay people affirming that our land; Historical Palestine does not belong to us, the original inhabitants of the land. We witnessed and are still witnessing the utilization of our Bible – through certain interpretations – as a weapon to our very existence and as a tool to legitimize and support political options that are dehumanizing us and perpetrating injustices on our people.

We also witnessed our land being confiscated, our family members being incarcerated, our rights being liquidated, our water, forests, olive trees, culture, language, traditional food all being either stolen or destroyed before our own eyes, and we were required to keep silent, because otherwise we will be breaching “God’s Promise”, and we will be going against God’s will, we won’t be “good Christians”.

This has raised the question for me and for Palestinian Christian youth, does God, good and just God, require us to give up our rights to be “good Christians”? Does God ask us to surrender our dignity, our independence and existence in our own land? Is God a real estate agent? Or are these “beliefs” imposed on us by a colonial theology? A theology that weaponizes the bible and justifies our oppression? These interpretations of the bible are creating a threat to us, a threat to our existence in our homeland.

They have turned our Bible into an enemy against us as Palestinians and as Palestinian Christians. It made us think and rethink, Is God against us? Does God not love us?

I remember vividly the first time I had this feeling, it was during the war on Gaza on 2008/2009. During that war, Israel massacred over 1400 Palestinians, wounded thousands more, and made thousands homeless. I remember vividly during that war, I was following the news online, and each time I refresh the page, I would see the number of people being killed increasing. With each refresh, thousands died. At that moment I felt that our souls are too cheap, felt that maybe God does not love us, and then you have these thoughts confirmed by the voices of Christian Zionists who iterate again and again that we do not belong in our homeland..

And so, our Bible – the Good News – was transformed into an active participant in our persecution. Such translations and interpretations of the Bible are molding Christianity to match the colonial, imperial, and hegemonic ideologies.

It is a colonial theology, as it reinforces and maintains the unjust status quo. A Colonial theology because of its hegemonic power to strip us as Palestinians from our right to exist in our ancestors’ land, and our right to live in peace and dignity. A colonial theology because the interpretation of the Bible in those terms and in this frame acts actively as a colonizing tool that is subjugating and oppressing us. It is disturbing and modifying our perception of ourselves, it is distorting our image of God, as it stresses that we, as Palestinians and Palestinian Christians are not loved by God, and our existence is an afterthought to the Almighty, and that we should also alienate ourselves from our land, as we do not belong there.

Thus this caused many of us to separate ourselves either from our Christianity or our identity as Palestinians.

⁶ WSCF-ME (World Student Christian Federation-Middle East): Member of the Executive Committee and PYEM (Palestine Youth Ecumenical Movement). She was the one who was to appear at the Middle East plenary of the Assembly, who first had her description of the reality in Palestine censored and, when she refused to read a text defused by the WCC, was not allowed to appear at all (cf. Appendix 1).

Therefore, this colonial theology, that justifies occupation, apartheid, and domination of one people over the other is further alienating us from ourselves and inciting our clash of identities.

A reconciliation between both of our identities as Palestinians and Christians is only possible through a Christianity and a theology that recognizes our humanity, dignity, and right to exist in our own homeland. A theology that recognizes the injustices befalling on our people and aims for working together to make peace and justice prevail.

So now what? What can you do?

Today we need to tap on our prophetic voice as Christians and as churches.

So we ask you to

1. To use the right terminology. Start calling things with their actual names. It is not a conflict. It is ethnic cleansing. Israel is a settler colonial regime that enforces a structure of apartheid from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.
2. To drop both sides narrative. This narrative disregards the power dynamics by portraying the image of equal parts. Those are not equal parts, unarmed occupied protestors vs. heavily weaponized settlers colonialists and soldiers, oppressors and oppressed, occupiers and occupied.
4. To stop funding companies and corporations that are complicit and profiting from the apartheid and human rights violations. Actively support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign. If you stand against colonization, apartheid, occupation and ethnic cleansing, then stop funding it.
5. To actively advocate for Decolonizing Palestine. Our fight for justice is international. No one is free until we are all free.
6. To self-reflect on positions and affiliations. Revisit, challenge and defy theologies that justify injustice, colonialism, apartheid, and oppression. Being silent renders you complicit in the oppression, colonialism, apartheid, and ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

We need to stop offering theological cover up for settler colonial apartheid structures. We need to revisit and to respond to the theologies that are causing our alienation and allowing for the domination of one people over the other. We demand action in order to stop this ideology of exclusivity and apartheid so we can also reclaim the Bible as good news again and build a better common future for all of us.

3. Response to the Cry for Hope by the United Church of Christ

by Rev. Mark Pettis⁷

The United Church of Christ in the United States has a deep and abiding concern for the state of affairs in the Middle East. Further, we have offered a demonstrable and consistent witness, calling for peace in the region, as well as the assurance of the human rights for all of those who call this region their home. This record traces back as far as 1967, expressed through the actions of our General Synod and declarations from our elected leaders.

Among these actions have been:

- Repeated calls to the United States government to work for the assurance just treatment and sovereignty for Palestinians...in 1967, 1987, 1989, 1991, and 2001.
- An affirmation of the right for the State of Israel to exist within secure and internationally recognized borders...in 1987 and affirmed on several occasions in denominational pronouncements.
- Support for a shared Jerusalem, open to people of all faiths...in 1997.
- Affirmation and reaffirmation of the United Church of Christ's relationship with the Jewish community, and a rejection of anti-Semitism in all its forms...in 1987 and 2001.
- A call for divestment from direct and 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...in 2015.
- Repeated calls for a just peace in the region, and appealing to the United States government to support such efforts for peace through economic pathways, as well as a ceasing of military support for the ongoing violence...in 2001, 2005, 2012, 2016, and 2017.

More recently, the focus of our denominational pronouncements and synod actions, continuing a commitment to human rights for all residents of the region, have found harmony in the proclamations of KairosPalestine – first in the 2009 study, “A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering,” and again in response to “A Cry for Hope” this past summer of 2021.

This has been, as you are hearing, a significant concern for the United Church of Christ. We have not, as a denomination, taken a narrow view on the matters in the region, as the totality of our witness as the United Church of Christ, demonstrates a faith-motivated concern for the lives of all people of the Middle East. We remain committed to leveraging our privilege as a mainline Protestant denomination in the United States to the paths of peace and justice, and simultaneously to the assurance that the human rights of the people of the Middle East are not violated, but rather, that the right to sovereign determination and a violence-free existence is sought for all. Yet, we also recognize that, at this moment in history, the policies of the State of Israel, serve to threaten the human rights of Palestinians.

In recent years, we have shifted away from advocating for a particular solution (i.e., a two-state solution), and instead choose to focus our advocacy around a rights-based approach.

To this end, at the United Church of Christ General Synod in 2021, the delegates adopted a resolution entitled, “Declaration for a Just Peace Between Palestine and Israel.”

⁷ Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Manager.

Drawing on more than 50 years of resolutions from prior Synods, statements by UCC Officers, and actions by our Global missions bodies (current and past), this resolution served as a response the witness contained in the Kairos Palestine publications, “A Word of Faith, Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering,” and the more recent “Cry for Hope, A Call for Decisive Action.” The primary motivating statement in the declaration “calling 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.”

In addition, the declaration goes on to name:

- the illegal military occupation of Palestinian territories by the Israeli government since 1967,
- The global displacement of Palestinian people dating back to 1948,
- The labeling, by the Trump Administration in the United States, of any criticism of the State of Israel as anti-Semitic (a claim we wholly reject),
- 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,
- The naming of the practices and policies of the State of Israel, in relation to the Palestinian people and territory as sin, settler colonialism, and apartheid.

This resolution, was originally proposed by several congregations with our denomination, demonstrating the groundswell within the denomination around this issue. It was, as I previously indicated, approved by the delegates to the 33rd General Synod of the United Church of Christ, held, for the first time ever as a virtual Synod, in the summer of 2021.

It is a statement that has since been shared with our conferences throughout the United States, as well as our denominational partners. Further, it informs our ongoing witness and relationships with our partners. In addition, it represents a commitment to continuing our witness with our federal government along the lines of this resolution, in an effort to encourage a change in policy direction for our administration in relation to the State of Israel.

4. Response of the Presbyterian Church in the USA

By Philiop Woods

The Presbyterian Church (USA) has a long history of engagement with human rights in Palestine and Israel and it hasn't always been an easy journey for us. Until recent years support for our Palestinian siblings has been hotly contested, but over time and incrementally we have constructed a solid platform of engagement and advocacy affirming the human rights of the Palestinian people. There are several distinct elements to this:

- The first, and possibly most critical, was the formation of our Israel Palestine Mission Network by action of our General Assembly in 2004. Out of the 38 geographically defined mission networks we have, this is the only one established by and with a mandate from our Assembly. Called to advocate for Palestinian rights, the Network seeks to demonstrate solidarity, educate about the facts on the ground, and change the conditions that erode the humanity of both Israelis and Palestinians, especially those who are living under occupation in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza. Producing solidly researched, easy to read and well-illustrated publications the IPMN has opened many people's eyes to the situation and laid the foundations that have enabled the PCUSA to address ever more aspects of the Occupation of Palestinian lands.
- Our actions on disinvestment from companies that support the military occupation of Palestinian territory, that came about following a long period of engagement with those companies that previously we were invested in whose operations continued to fall below the expectations set out by our Assembly for the denomination's investments. The policy was initiated in 2004 and required reporting back to successive Assemblies. In 2014 GA determined that we had reached the limit of dialogue with three companies and instructed the denomination to divest from them. This was a momentous decision, with considerable fallout, but we are still here, still advocating for Palestinian rights and the policy continues.
- Our commitment to and promotion of 'come and see' visits organized with our partners on the ground in Palestine and Israel. Nothing beats seeing the situation for oneself, and the multiplier effect that has as people share their experience back home. Many people visit the religious sites of the Holy Land and never spend time with Palestinians, learning about their experience of living there. We actively seek to address this, connecting visiting groups whenever we can with our partners on the ground. We also organize visits for our leaders, and an event we call 'Mosaic of Peace' where we offer an intensive exposure program. Through these visits hearts and minds are continually changed and more advocates born for Palestinian rights.

Just to be clear, none of this is one-sided engagement. We are also engaged with Israeli and Jewish organizations, and not just those advocating for Palestinian rights. Hearing all sides is actually helpful as it sharpens the contours of the issues here that are often in wider public discourse subtly fudged and obfuscated.

Over time this has led us to the place, where at our most recent Assembly, by an overwhelming majority, we 'Recognize(d) that the government of Israel's laws, policies, and practices regarding the Palestinian people fulfill the international legal definition of apartheid' and called upon 'members, congregations, presbyteries, and national staff units, including the Office of Interfaith Relations, to seek appropriate ways to bring an end to Israeli apartheid.'

Our Assembly also called upon us to advocate for the same recognition and action here at this WCC Assembly.

The same Assembly also adopted a study document on anti-Semitism recognizing that the term has become weaponized and is increasingly being used against anyone who speaks out against the actions and policies of the government of Israel. Defining anti-Semitism is critically important, because for many people it is the stumbling block for getting involved in supporting Palestinian rights.

I want to conclude by quoting from that document:

Presbyterians have repeatedly affirmed our conviction that the State of Israel has a right to exist ..., providing a safe haven for all Jewish people, as we also advocate for national self-determination and safety of the Palestinian people, including Palestinian refugees.

Presbyterians have spoken out repeatedly to condemn the actions of the government of Israel in the occupation of Palestinian land and the consistent abuse of the fundamental human rights of Palestinians. Palestinians have lost their land and their homes, the land and homes of their parents, their grandparents, and their ancestors. The Occupation and Israeli Settlement expansion into Palestinian territory increases Palestinian suffering. It is urgent to critique human rights abuses that are happening through the policies and practices of the government of Israel and it is possible to do so without questioning Israel's right to exist, and without using antisemitic language and stereotypes.

5. The Response of the British Churches to the *Cry for Hope* and the specific responsibility of the UK

By Valerie Hallard⁸

From the rise of Zionism leading to the Balfour Declaration, to the withdrawal from the post-war British Mandate in Palestine, the UK has effectively been the facilitator of the settler-colonial system of the State of Israel within the former borders of Palestine.

That the Oslo Accords provided a staged move towards a 'two-state solution' was accepted by Britain either out of naivete (if I'm being generous) or complicity (if I'm not). Either way, the policy of seeking a two-state solution has been maintained by whichever party has been in power, and, despite this solution clearly becoming less viable every day, that is likely to continue to be the policy for the foreseeable future.

Both contenders for the leadership of the Conservative party competed to express their support for Israel. Both support a Free Trade deal with Israel and wish to outlaw boycotts, with Sunak mentioning further intelligence cooperation and Truss referring to the valuable influence of the high proportion of MPs who are members of Conservative Friends of Israel. Any future Labour government under Kier Starmer would be likely to continue these policies to avoid further allegations of antisemitism.

So, are the churches in the UK challenging assumptions about Israel and Palestine in civil society, supporting Kairos Palestine and Cry for Hope, and influencing policymaking in government so that it aligns with International Law?

The intention of Israel to annex East Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley prompted condemnation from church leaders in the UK. Generally, though, one might say that the current leadership of our churches have not raised their heads above the parapet. That might be due to their structures of accountability in speaking for their whole church. This puts the onus on us to engage grass roots understanding and support so that our leaders have a mandate (whether they like it or not) to endorse Cry for Hope and make representations to government.

There will be members of the churches here who know more about their denominational work in this regard than I do, but I hope to provide a summary that might be fleshed out in our conversations later. I'll start with those denominations that in my view are furthest along this journey:

⁸ *Member of Sabeel-Kairos UK, Carlisle Diocesan Synod & General Synod of the Church of England.*

The Quakers have Justice and Peace as core values and are active in grass roots lobbying. The WCC Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme (EAPPI) is coordinated in the UK and Ireland by the Quakers on behalf of 16 churches and NGO [partners](#).

The Methodist Church is a partner of EAPPI. Their Council issued a report in 2020 which advised stronger screening of investments. This led to a revised policy, issued in 2021 and in the last 3 years they have divested from Heidelberg Cement and Caterpillar. The Birmingham District Synod presented a Memorial (their word for a Motion) at their Conference this year, seeking to forward the Sabeel-Kairos Theological Consultation on Israel Palestine as a 'Call to Karlsruhe'. Since there had not been enough time to debate the Statement, this was amended, but it still encourages their representatives to this Assembly to promote the importance of the WCC monitoring the situation in Israel Palestine, similar to the role of the former Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum, so that Palestinian Christian voices may be heard. The WCC could then engage its member Churches in specific actions in relation to the ongoing crisis.

The United Reformed Church is a partner of EAPPI. At their General Assembly two weeks ago, the URC took significant steps forward in their support of justice and peace for Palestinians. They passed 10 action-focused resolutions representing solidarity with the Palestinian people, and support towards ending the occupation. Their new investment policy will screen out international companies that benefit from the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. Other resolutions cover encouraging informed pilgrimage, education, asking URC members and Churches to refrain from buying settlement products and to support Palestinian producers by buying Palestinian goods; and political campaigning to MPs and government.

I have nothing specific to report on the RC church in the UK, apart from the work of Pax Christi internationally, and their Diocesan grass roots Justice and Peace groups and national network.

The General Synod of the Church of England has not debated issues related to Palestine for years. There is now a motion to endorse Cry for Hope from Carlisle Diocese which is ninth in the queue of Diocesan Synod motions awaiting debate. Our Sabeel Kairos denominational group is working on building support, including asking other Diocesan Synods to endorse the motion, to move it up the agenda. This has been a long journey already, passing through Deanery and Diocesan Synod twice since the first motion was determined not to be in a format that could be taken to General Synod. Two specific requests address 'theologies that lead to the oppression of Palestinian's', and 'advice to CofE investment funds and Dioceses that enable the screening of investments.

In conclusion, we have a long way to go before UK churches' leadership speaks out consistently and clearly on government policy, but at grass roots level the number of churches and individual Christians who are becoming engaged in prayer and activism is growing steadily.

6. The non-reaction of most German churches to the cry for hope and Germany's special responsibility

By Ulrich Duchrow⁹

The German churches have not responded in substance to the Palestinian *cry for hope*. Only the Bishop of Baden has written a letter of thanks. However, the 5 churches on the Rhine and Ruhr have prepared a so-called *impulse paper* on the topic in order to defend the German position in front of the General Assembly. It is entitled: Israel-Palestine: guiding thoughts and explanatory theses. The Kairos Palestine Solidarity Network, which cooperates with Kairos Palestine in GJK, then sent critical questions about this German paper to the church leaders. I will present some of them together with the German position.

Critical questions about the position of the German churches on Palestine-Israel

It is to be recognized that the German churches, in view of the upcoming assembly of the WCC, put the issue on the agenda and in the *Impulse paper of the churches on the Rhine and Ruhr* at least address some of the problems of the Palestinians, also distinguish criticism of the state of Israel from anti-Semitism and reject Christian Zionism.

But given the reality in the Holy Land and the ecumenical conversation situation, there are critical queries to the impulse paper. The main points of criticism are:

1. The impulse paper presents the "conflict" between Israel and Palestine as symmetrical despite the extreme *asymmetry of power* ("on one side"-"on the other side" it says often). Its keyword is: double solidarity. That is why we recalled the words of Archbishop Tutu from a letter to the Kirchentag and the Council of the EKD (2015): "Neutrality must not be an option, because it always favors the oppressors. Always ..."
2. The paper excludes the concepts of *apartheid, ethnic cleansing and (settler) colonialism* from the outset as allegedly undifferentiated "labels". However, these very concepts are the clearly defined main terms used by the *UN, human rights organizations, the New Historians in Israel, all serious scholarship, and even the non-German churches* to analyze reality. Even the former Attorney General and Chief Justice in Israel, Michael Benyair, confirms the facts of apartheid for the State of Israel. So it is not about terms, but the reality under international law.
3. *Jewry is addressed as a homogeneous entity and is in fact identified with the violent form of Zionism*. Bi-national Zionist, non-Zionist and anti-Zionist Judaism are not even mentioned, although an increasing minority of Jews (the majority before the Holocaust), especially in the US and Israel, profess these forms of Judaism. I brought a booklet in which the Jewish liberation theologian Marc Ellis explains how the Christian-Jewish dialogue in Germany has become a deal. Only the part of the Jewish voices is included that demands that Germans remain silent about the injustice of the State of Israel to the Palestinian people. The original article by Ellis is in the book DUCHROW, Ulrich/ULRICH, Hans G.: *Religionen für Gerechtigkeit* in Palästina-Israel - Jenseits von Luthers Feindbildern (book table). In it, Shir Hever also writes about how the U.S. and Germany are helping to finance the occupation and oppression of the Palestinians (see his article below).
4. With the rejection of *Christian Zionism*, the impulse paper indirectly distances itself from the synod decision (1980) of the *Rhenish Church* that the state of Israel is "a sign of God's faithfulness", but does not explicitly address this in its theological problematic for the German churches. Many

⁹ Prof. of systematic theology, University of Heidelberg; Member of Kairos Palestine Solidarity Network Germany.

churches in Germany share this subtle Christian Zionism by identifying the state of Israel with the people of the Jews.

5. The fact that Germany *is partly responsible for the Nakba* because of the Holocaust *is* completely ignored, insofar as only afterwards the violent form of Zionism came to rule and the West turned a blind eye to the military expulsion of the Palestinians in the course of the formation of the state, as the New Historians in Israel have proven on the basis of the military archives.

6. A *second complicity* is also not mentioned, namely that Israel can only implement the occupation and the oppression of the Palestinian people because the West, especially the *U.S., but also Germany, co-finances* and politically covers it, without binding the aid to Israel and especially the military cooperation to the observance of human and international law (cf. Shir Hever below).

7. Thus, the responsibility of the German churches to demand this coupling of cooperation and international law from the German government in its dealings with Israel is also not realized.

8. German churches do not want to participate in boycotts and sanctions. Palestinians now ask why the churches do not protest when sanctions are now applied against Russia because it is attacking and occupying another country in violation of international law. They recall that they have suffered this fate for 55 years without the West having reacted accordingly.

9. In this context, it is to be welcomed that the impulse paper basically considers boycotts legitimate. However, the refusal to participate in BDS itself is again justified with the demagogic reference to the Nazis' "*Don't buy from Jews*". Overall in Germany, the Israeli propaganda is believed that *BDS is anti-Semitic and questions the existence of the state of Israel*. The entire *German parliament except the Left party passed* the shameful resolution on May 17, 2019 – against imploring voices of Israeli and Jewish scholars and lawyers – that no public spaces and funds may be given to organizers and organizations that can be associated with BDS in whatever form. The only public institutions in Germany that still adhere to applicable law in this matter are *the courts*. This is because all the lawsuits brought by organizers against city administrations have been successful on the clear grounds that BDS falls under Article 5 of the Basic Law, which protects freedom of expression. *So the decision of the Bundestag to prevent non-violent resistance to the violence of the Israeli state is not only based on lies and insinuations, but it is unconstitutional*.

All criticism of the state of Israel in Germany is met with the accusation that it is *anti-Semitic*. Thus, the bad conscience of the Germans because of the Holocaust is abused to justify today's injustice – a mockery of the victims. In this respect, it is gratifying that the impulse paper allows criticism.

10. A major failure of the impulse paper, however, is that it does not even mention the Palestinian Cry for Hope. Thus, the German churches have so far refused to participate theologically in the required process of confession, decision and action. *Politically*, they would have to call on the government, among others, to bind all further cooperation with the State of Israel to the observance of international law and human rights. We hope that this workshop and the Assembly will challenge the German and Western churches to do this in the first place.

We from the ecumenical base in Germany thank the churches represented here, UCC and PCUSA as well as the churches from UK for leading us on this way.

7. How the West supports Israeli apartheid, occupation and settler colonialism

By Shir Hever,¹⁰

The State of Israel depends on Western economic support

The State of Israel is economically one of the most dependent on international trade, globalization and international assistance. Economics professors in Israeli universities, where I have studied, used to say that the biggest import to the State of Israel was capital – money, credit and machines.

Between 1948 and 1995, the State of Israel had a deficit in its trade balance, financed mostly by donations from the United States and Germany.

And yet, when the corona crisis struck and economies had to adapt, the same Israeli economists said that Israel was an “island state.” Actually, however, the State of Israel is not an island, but it considers itself to be part of Europe and ignores its neighbors out of a racist colonialist mentality. Because of this mentality, the Israeli government refused to meet its legal and ethical obligation to provide vaccines to the entire Palestinian population under its control, including Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory. Many in the Israeli establishment agree with former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak’s racist description of Israel as a “villa in the jungle.”

Western financial support was not used to improve the standard of living of Israelis. Instead, these resources were used to build a heavily-militarized fortress state, a security state, from which the majority of the Indigenous Palestinian population was expelled. A state which conquered territory by force, in violation of international law, and which currently exerts control over the entire area of historical Palestine, as well as part of Syria, more than twice the territory which the UN proposed for it in UNGA resolution 181 from 1947.

Western supported militarism

According to the Bonn Institute of Peace (BICC), Israeli society is the most militaristic society in the world. This is not just because of the obligatory military service but also because of hundreds of private security companies; surveillance cameras on every street and every shop; privately-owned guns by more than 100,000 Israeli civilians; enormous influence by retired generals in the business sector, academia and politics. Israeli nationalists call it a “nation in uniform” but critics call it a “barracks state.”

Of course, the colonizer must always be on guard against the native, because Palestinians have never given up their aspirations for freedom, justice and equality, and they continue to struggle for their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination. The vast majority of Palestinians have chosen non-violent means to achieve their freedom, through protests, strikes, boycotts and meaningful international solidarity, but Israel’s repression of the Palestinian struggle for freedom in all forms has been brutally violent.

Prominent Palestinian civil society organizations in the occupied West Bank face arrests of their staff, military raids on their offices, vandalism of their equipment and sealing their doors in an attempt, which has not succeeded, to prevent them from working and to silence them. The Israeli ministry of defense levied false accusations against these organizations and then threatened their lawyers with imprisonment if they dared to challenge those accusations in Israeli courts.

And what did the West do in the face of this brutality? It continues to support the Israeli government, the Israeli economy, the Israeli army, effectively empowering and whitewashing Israel’s system of settler-colonialism, military occupation and apartheid.

Although EU rules, specifically Article 2 of the Association Agreement with the State of Israel, state that trade conditions with non-EU states are dependent on respect of said states to human rights, the EU-Israel Association agreement grants Israel the best trade conditions with any country outside of

¹⁰ Military embargo coordinator for the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC).

the EU, without ever holding Israel accountable for its decades of grave human rights violations. So far no European official has been held accountable for this gross violation of EU principles and policies.

The European Commission has refused to discuss a policy to ban products from the illegal Israeli settlements, falsely claiming that this would be a “sanction” and not a trade policy. The Luxembourg-based General European Court overruled them and said that the Commission is mandated to set a trade policy that excludes occupied territories, but the European Commission chooses to ignore the court decision. Now the European Union is trying to buy natural gas from Israel, because of the gas shortage. They argue that purchasing natural gas from Russia would be immoral, because Russia is an occupying power in Ukraine since February 2022. Very good, but how is buying natural gas from the State of Israel which has imposed military occupation over millions of Palestinians for over 5 decades, not to mention its apartheid regime, acceptable then? When Russia invaded Ukraine in February, Israeli arms companies celebrated. They told investors that they expect to increase their arms sales to Europe and opened up new offices and signed new contracts in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden and Switzerland. Western powers which stand up for Ukraine’s right to sovereignty and security quickly bought weapons of war from the state which systematically violates Palestinian sovereignty and security and field-tests many of these weapons on millions of subjugated Palestinians.

As the meeting of the World Council of Churches is taking place in Germany this year, it is important to elaborate that Germany provides Israel with heavy naval *offensive* weapons, including submarines modified to be able to launch nuclear missiles. Germany buys the same armed drones from the Israeli company IAI which killed Alaa Qadoum, a five year old Palestinian girl, on August 7th. Alaa was the first victim of the unilateral and unprovoked Israeli bombing campaign in the Gaza Strip, which killed 48 Palestinians, 18 of them children, and devastated the civilian infrastructure yet again. And all this happens in the context of a 15-year-old siege that has denied the over 2 million Palestinians in Gaza basic needs, including adequate healthcare, housing, etc.--a brutal form of collective punishment, funded, defended and armed by the West, including Germany.

Global oppression makes use of the State of Israel

It has to be made very clear, without international support Israeli apartheid would not have been possible and could not continue. Unlike South Africa, which was able to maintain apartheid for decades in the face of international sanctions and boycotts by plundering the rich natural resources of the land, the State of Israel has a differently-structured economy which is dependent upon alliances with and support from western powers.

The Israeli government has always understood this, from the days of first prime minister David Ben-Gurion. In 1956, the Israeli army joined France and Britain in a war of aggression against Egypt, to punish Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser’s decision to nationalize the Suez Canal. It was a classical colonial war, and after the war the Israeli government, even more so than the South Africa’s apartheid government at the time, understood that Israel cannot count on sustainable western support simply by promoting European colonialism in the Middle East.

So instead, the Israeli government declared itself the bulwark of “Western defense” against the encroachment of communism. In the wars of 1967 and 1973, the Israeli military tested western weapons against Soviet weapons. Only when the Israeli military proved its ability to defeat the Arab armies and take over territory, to capture Soviet tanks and send them to NATO allies to examine them, the U.S. decided to finance the Israeli military with three billion dollars every year – more than any other country on the planet. Today, the number is 3.8 billion dollars every year. The conclusion from this is clear. Neither the U.S. nor European states were moved to assist a small and “defenseless” state “surrounded by enemies,” but started financing the Israeli war machine only after it was already victorious in battle.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, successive Israeli governments declared themselves part of the U.S.-led “War on Terror,” defending the West “against Islam,” in peddling grossly Islamophobic tropes that associate the religion of Islam with acts of terror committed by fanatic Islamist groups. The most racist, ultra-nationalist and violent governments in the world today, are highly Islamophobic: Brazil, Hungary, India, Poland. Also the governments of Trump and Boris Johnson which have thankfully come to an end. They all have something in common – they are pro-Israeli and anti-Palestinian. They are all customers of Israeli weapons and security systems, thus helping the Israeli government finance its system of oppression against Palestinians, using weapons which are sold to other oppressive regimes as “field-tested,” and the cycle continues.

The Israeli government maintains very good relationships with far-right governments, even if they are rabidly antisemitic as indeed they are in Hungary, Poland, India, the UK and US, because this is the source of international support. The EU fails to pass resolutions against Israeli apartheid or occupation and fails to ban settlement products partly because Hungary and Poland always cast their votes in favor of Israel, while the EU must take such decisions unanimously.

In Germany I was told a thousand times, that Europeans, and especially Germans, are following a pro-Israeli policy and support Israeli crimes against Palestinians out of feelings of guilt over the Holocaust. Sadly, this is not the case, it is an overestimation of the morality and ethical standards of the still deeply colonial European societies. One of Germany’s largest arms companies is called ThyssenKrupp, and its biggest customer is the State of Israel. When former chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel said that Israel’s security is Germany’s “raison d’etat,” she said it in the context of signing a deal to sell nine German submarines to Israel for an enormous profit. The profit is Germany’s “raison d’etat” and not the security of Israel.

Dozens of Jewish organizations from around the world are disgusted by the way that right-wing racist regimes are justifying their racism by stressing that they are pro-Israel. Supporting the State of Israel and its apartheid policies does not mean care for Jews, especially not the Jews living in their own countries. Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán visited the State of Israel regularly to sign deals and have a photo-opportunity in the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum, but this did not stop him from threatening and oppressing Hungarian Jews.

A concluding word

My last point is about the reason for me to speak here. As a Jew I do not particularly feel that I have a place here at the World Council of Churches meeting, but I am grateful that you have invited me nevertheless as I am here representing the largest Palestinian civil society coalition. It is my obligation to talk to you about the role of western churches in financing and supporting Israeli apartheid and colonialism against Palestinians.

Donations of hundreds of millions of dollars flow to the construction of illegal settlements. A lot of this money comes from churches, especially fundamentalist Evangelical Zionist churches in the U.S which consider the Zionist movement to be a necessary step towards Armageddon and the End-Times. Bolsonaro, Orbán and also the strongest supporters of Trump are devout Christians who are financing a crusade in the Holy Land by proxy. Instead of risking the lives of Christian soldiers, they have no problem to see Jews kill and die. They do not support the State of Israel despite the fact that it is an apartheid state, they support it **because** it is an apartheid state. Oppressive regimes import from Israel not only the weapons used to oppress Palestinians, but also legitimate and support the building of walls with checkpoints that segregate people according to their ethnicity, religion, the color of their skin, a system of separate rules for our tribe and for the “others.”

In Germany the churches do not directly finance violence against Palestinians, but they do so indirectly. Palestinians and supporters of freedom, justice and equality in Palestine have seen hundreds of their events banned, silenced and censored in Germany. Some were censored by cities, some by the state, some by universities but most of the events which were cancelled were cancelled by the Evangelical German church. If you want to organize an event, the church will send you

questions – what do you stand for? Do you support the BDS movement? It is like a new Inquisition, but it is Protestant, not Catholic.

With the path for non-violent protest blocked to them, the hope of Palestinians to be able to achieve their rights by peaceful means is under attack. The churches do not attack Palestinian bodies, they attack the Palestinian hope for peace, hope for justice and hope for freedom. Palestinians are not giving up hope, their sumud, and their popular struggle, also in Germany, despite the repressive role played by the church.

Appendices

1 Open Letter

Protest of the Kairos Palestine Solidarity Network

EKD distances itself from international law and pressures WCC to suppress Palestinian voice

September 12, 2022

The WCC assembly in Karlsruhe has just ended. A strong conflict there concerned the suppression of the voice of the Palestinians. The Kairos Palestine Solidarity Network in Germany, through this Open Letter, protests against the actions of the Protestant Church In Germany/EKD, which played an inglorious role in this suppression. We offer, below, a detailed report of the Palestine/Israel related events at the Assembly.

That the State of Israel – its laws, policies and practices – is now an apartheid system under international law has been thoroughly researched and made public by all serious human rights organizations in Israel ([B'Tselem](#)), Palestine ([Al-Haq](#)), USA ([Human Rights Watch](#)) and [Amnesty International](#). They were confirmed by the UN Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Michael Lynch.¹¹

When the issue of Israeli apartheid was increasingly discussed in public and in the worldwide ecumenical community in 2021, the EKD began to pressure the WCC General Secretary not to allow apartheid and BDS to come before the assembly under any circumstances. Otherwise, it was implied, grants and visas from Germany could be in jeopardy. At the time, a Scandinavian church member said, "The Germans have taken the WCC hostage." Also, in preparation for the Assembly, the EKD circulated a text strictly refusing to speak of apartheid in the case of Israel because, allegedly, it is not a racial problem.¹²

At the Assembly itself, one measure followed another. General Secretary Ioan Sauca implemented the pressure by devoting about 10 minutes of the 25 minutes of his Assembly report to the issue of Palestine-Israel. His strategy was as follows. He mentioned that there was a draft resolution from the South African churches that applied the term *apartheid* to Israel. But one should be very careful with that, he advised, for during his last trip with a WCC delegation to the Holy Land church leaders had warned against such language. In other words, the General Secretary, charged to present in his report the last nine years of the WCC's work and evaluate it with an eye to the future, used a large part of his time to censor a resolution from 17 member churches¹³ which the delegates were not yet aware because, according to the rules, a resolution must first be submitted to the Public Issue Committee (PIC), so only its members know the text. He also pitted church leaders against their church members without acknowledging the pressure the Israeli government is putting on church leaders in the Holy Land to behave diplomatically so as not to endanger their congregations.

Following his report, the South African delegation decided to come forward at the hoped-for debate and make its draft resolution known to the plenary. The Palestinian delegation decided that a church leader

¹¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/report-special-rapporteur-situation-human-rights-20>

¹² *Informationen zur Vollversammlung des ÖRK in Karlsruhe.*

¹³ Der Antrag, eingereicht vom anglikanischen Erzbischof von Cape Town Makgoba, wurde unterstützt von folgenden 16 Kirchen: United Church of Christ/USA, Disciples of Christ/USA, Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Moravian Church in South Africa, The Ev. Lutheran Church in Canada, Presbyterian Church USA, Presbyterian Church of Colombia, Presbyterian Church of Cuba, The United Church of Canada, The Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Disciples of Christ Argentina, The Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch, The Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Cuba, The Presbyterian Church of Brasil, Church of Norway, Church of Sweden.

would then also come forward to say just this one sentence, "Mr. Sauca, you were not authorized to speak on our behalf." No time had been originally allotted to discuss the General Secretary's report, but after protest a very limited opportunity for a few one-minute statements was conceded. The allotted time did not amount to debate and denied groups that had been referenced the right of reply to correct untruths.

Then followed the "German Welcoming Ceremony." In addition to support for Ukraine, President Steinmeier focused his speech on the fight against anti-Semitism. Later, delegates from the Global South and others commented, "So we have experienced again what colonialism means: We do not exist, they know everything."

This was followed by the speech of Prof. Barbara Traub, member of the Presidium of the Central Council of Jews. Of course, her main topic was anti-Semitism, but she also went directly to the attack against [Kairos Palestine](#), the Palestinian ecumenical network, and its [Kairos document](#). The moderator did not say a word in defense of the Palestinian brothers and sisters sitting in the room, nor were those under attack given an opportunity to speak. Other Jewish representatives were also given the right to offer greetings during the course of the Assembly: Rabbi David Sandmel of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC), and Liliane Apotheker of the International Council of Christians and Jews. Of course, these greetings are completely justified—but not if at the same time Palestinian voices are suppressed. Above all, this selection of speakers ignores the fact that there is a growing number of Jews who are very concerned about the future of Israel, because a state based on the violent oppression of a people in the form of apartheid has no future. This is now the opinion of 40% of young Jewish people in the United States.¹⁴

The suppression of a Palestinian voice in the literal sense of the word then occurred at the first Thematic Plenary Session, "The Meaning of God's Love in Christ for All Creation—Reconciliation and Unity." The session was divided into two phases: "Creation" and "Showing God's Merciful Love for a Broken World with Special Attention to the Middle East." The choreography of the plenary was such that each of the parts opened with an introductory talk. It was clear that no speaker from the Middle East was to speak at the opening of the second part; instead there was a speaker from Great Britain. The Moderator of the Central Committee, Agnes Aboum, was originally supposed to have asked three youth representatives on the podium for reactions to the topics. But only two youth were present, a Swedish woman and a young man from the Caribbean. What had happened? A Palestinian woman had been scheduled as the third, a delegate from the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF). The young people had to submit their texts beforehand. She had simply wanted to address her reality in Palestine in clear, simple words. She was told that this was not the language of the WCC, that she should please change parts of her response. She did, but even that was not enough. The staff presented her with a statement to recite. She refused to do so for reasons of conscience. So they took her down from the podium altogether. In the plenary on the Middle East, no Middle Easterners were allowed to speak.

There were two places where Palestinians were allowed to speak openly about the situation of their people: one, during one of the 23 "Ecumenical Conversations" (Ecumenical Conversation 13, Rev. Ashraf K. Tannous of the Lutheran Church). But only about 30-40 people were present to hear the discussion; a second, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land was allowed to hold a workshop in the "Brunnen"—a program (a kind of agora)—but it was held outside the Assembly area in a hotel. (Three other workshops requested on Palestine had been rejected by the WCC). In this workshop, Bishop Azar gave the floor to his pastor, Dr. Munther Isaac, to describe the situation of Palestinians under Israeli

¹⁴ Cf. a recent poll. See also the former Grnral Atorny of Israel, Michael Benyair (<https://www.fr.de/meinung/gastbeitraege/zwei-voelker-mit-ungleichen-rechten-91287316.html>) und zwei frühere Botschafter Israels in Südafrika (<https://www.msn.com/de-de/nachrichten/politik/israels-ex-botschafter-e2-80-9ewas-in-pal-c3-a4stina-geschieht-ist-apartheid-e2-80-9c/ar-AA11wjyV?fromMaestro=true>), die den Apartheidcharakter des Systems voll bestätigen.

Tyranny—using the term *apartheid*. What does this say about the General Secretary's statement on the attitude of church leaders in Palestine? If one did not know it in Germany before: *apartheid* is not a moral comparison with South Africa, but a now clearly-defined term under international law for one of the crimes against humanity.

With regard to the EKD, however, it must be mentioned that, in the "encounter program" for which the EKD was responsible, a workshop hosting two USA churches and the European branch of Global Kairos for Justice was allowed to take place on the fringes of the Assembly in the New Apostolic Church. The topic: Ecumenical movement and churches in Europe and the USA for international law and human rights in Palestine/Israel. The word *apartheid* even appeared in the application.

In the meantime, it had become known that a draft resolution had been sent from the WCC itself to the Public Issues Committee/PIC to avoid the word *apartheid*. In response, the South Africans joined with the supporting churches and the Palestinians, to take the WCC draft as a framework, to delete some of its wording, and to insert clear sentences from the South African draft resolution.¹⁵ In this way, they wanted to avoid the PIC failing to name their central concern when the various submissions were expected to be put together.

But when the first version of the PIC report was introduced, it presented the issue of apartheid as if it had been raised from outside by human rights organizations and now had to be addressed further by the WCC. The EKD, however, apparently wanted to have the word *apartheid* deleted from the document altogether. Bishop Bosse-Huber, the EKD bishop for foreign affairs, came forward with a fierce speech that ended, "We will not speak of Israel as an apartheid state."¹⁶ It had been earlier stated as a rule that at this stage of considering proposed resolutions any intervention should be limited to one minute to make a concrete proposal for wording. However, the bishop kept talking. After two minutes, delegates began waving the blue card (No) or crossed cards (Stop). After more than three minutes until nearly 4 minutes of her speech, at least half of the delegates waved or shouted, "Moderator, stop her." Delegates who had experienced many plenary assemblies testified to never having seen a bishop receive such a reaction.

Further, two delegates from the petitioning churches came forward and demanded that the text make clear that not only human rights organizations but 17 churches in this assembly had demanded that the Israeli apartheid system be addressed, and that not only the WCC but also the WCC member churches must engage in a process of intensive discussion of this issue ("The WCC and its member churches to study, discuss, and discern the implications of the recent reports on apartheid by BTselem, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International, and for its governing bodies to respond in line with the call from Palestinian Christians and Churches for justice for their people.").

The PIC then responded with the following wording of the disputed paragraph and the resulting call (without adapting this call to the proposed wording):

Recently, numerous international, Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations and legal bodies have published studies and reports describing the policies and actions of Israel as amounting to 'apartheid' under international law. Within this Assembly, some churches and delegates strongly support the utilization of this term as accurately describing the reality of the people in Palestine/Israel and the position under international law, while others find it inappropriate, unhelpful and painful. We are not of one mind on this matter. We must continue to struggle with this issue, while we continue working together on this journey of justice and peace. We pray that the WCC continues to provide a safe space for its member churches for conversation and collaboration in pursuing truth, and working for a just peace among all people of the

¹⁵ Beide Texte im Anhang.

¹⁶ Cf. <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/unity-among-members-of-the-world-council-of-churches-not-in-every-case-presbyterians-on-the-ground-report/>

region....

The 11th Assembly particularly calls on: ...The WCC to examine, discuss and discern the implications of the recent reports by B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International, and for its governing bodies to respond appropriately. "

This text was ultimately adopted.¹⁷ It means:

1. The term *apartheid* in international law has been included in the final report on the issue.
2. The WCC and member churches are invited to undertake a process to examine the appropriateness of the term *apartheid* and to draw appropriate conclusions for action. To this end, a document has already been prepared and offered by Kairos Palestine and Global Kairos for Justice (an international network whose members work with Kairos Palestine in their respective contexts): [A dossier on Israeli Apartheid: A Pressing Call to Churches Around the World](#).¹⁸
3. Here in Germany, in the process that lies ahead of us, it must be understood, first of all, that with the Holocaust, Germany has incurred more than one guilt. For without the unique crime against humanity of the murder of 6 million Jews, the *Nakba* (the catastrophe for the Palestinian people) would not have happened in this form. Secondly, the oppressive system and the violent military occupation by the State of Israel, which has now lasted 55 years in violation of international law, is only possible because the USA and Europe co-finance it (the USA, among other things, with 3.8 billion US \$ annually for the oppressive military) and support it politically—despite occasional rhetorical protests. The churches must therefore call on the governments to bind all further cooperation with the State of Israel to the observance of international law.

To do this, however, Christians, congregations and regional churches in Germany must convince the EKD that our biblical faith is linked to the observance of law, and that a church that despises international law distances itself not only from the ecumenical community but from its biblical roots. When Hitler deprived Jewish people in Germany of their civil and political rights in 1933 (it was not yet a matter of their extermination), Bonhoeffer wrote an essay concluding that when a state deprives a population group of its rights, it constitutes a *status confessionis* (a case of clear confession) for the church. Why does the EKD not apply this insight to the deprivation of the rights of Palestinians by the State of Israel and respond in the same way as many other churches to the Palestinian cry for hope?¹⁹

Representatives of churches from the Global South and also from the USA already fear that with the election of the German Bishop Bedford-Strohm as moderator of the Central Committee, the strategy of prevention in regard to the suffering of the Palestinians could be continued. But it is to be hoped that a former professor of social ethics will respect international law.

September 12, 2022

Kairos Palestine Solidarity Network in Germany
 c./o.: Rev. Ernst-Ludwig Vatter
 Im Lutzen 5, 73773 Aichwald
welvatter@arcor.de, +49 (0) 711 7657996

¹⁷ <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/seeking-justice-and-peace-for-all-in-the-middle-east>

¹⁸ <https://www.kairospalestine.ps/index.php/resources/publication>.

¹⁹ See <https://www.cryforhope.org/> and the responses quoted above.

2. Resolution proposed by the Anglican Church of Southern Africa on the Holy Land at the 11th WCC Assembly 2022 in Karlsruhe



FROM THE ANGLICAN ARCHBISHOP OF CAPE TOWN

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Resolution proposed by the Anglican Church of Southern Africa on the Holy Land.

"He saw that there was no one, and was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm brought him victory, and his righteousness upheld him." Isaiah 59:16 (NRSV)

1. Whereas the Israel-Palestine territorial conflict has been universally as a flashpoint that has the potential for sparking an unmanageable global conflict, with potential for a broad Middle East conflict that would have a bearing on the global economy through the impact on oil supplies; and even the prospect of the deployment of nuclear missiles as Israel is believed to be the regional nuclear power.
2. Whereas successive United Nations resolutions have repeatedly championed a two-state solution guaranteeing security for all and a peaceful coexistence between Israel and Palestine side by side.
3. Whereas over the years, in defiance of UN resolutions and the precepts of international law, Israel has built settlements in occupied Palestinian territories on the West Bank and has increasingly assumed a greater spirit of occupation of Jerusalem, including the occupied Palestinian East Jerusalem. Specifically, Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits an occupying power from transferring its civilian population into territory under its occupation.
4. Whereas in 2020, the Israeli Knesset passed a law providing for the annexation into Israel, of parts of the occupied Palestinian West Bank, as they continue apace to build Jewish settlements in these occupied territories. This presumably to regularize in their Law, the breach of international law on the management of occupied territories.
5. Whereas in 2019, the Israeli Knesset has passed the Basic Law with constitutional status. that defines rights only for Jewish people as opposed to other people in Israel, whether they be Arab Israelis, Palestinians or any other nationalities that may include permanent attendants of Christian holy sites in Jerusalem – thus enacting a classic apartheid model of citizen determination. And this presumably to define the fate of Palestinians in the occupied and annexed Palestinian territories. This too may impact the international church representatives who have over centuries had rights as non-Jews presiding over Christian Holy sites in the Holy Land.
6. Whereas the State of Israel, through its laws and practices, now meets the "three decisive elements" that characterize an Apartheid State as laid out below:

- a. The implementation of a system of separation or segregation based on race, creed, or ethnicity designed with the intent to maintain domination by one racial group over another is the first element that makes up the crime of apartheid.
- b. The use of legislative measures to enforce separation and segregation, essentially legalizing separation from within its own legal system.
- c. The commission of inhumane acts, human rights violations, denial of freedoms, and forced ghettoization, i.e., the practices used to impose and enforce separation within its regime.

7. Whereas Heads of Churches and other Christian leaders in Jerusalem have issued numerous calls for justice and peace in the Middle East, and more recently brought attention to ongoing assaults on priests and clergy and attacks on church properties and holy sites which they decry as "a systematic attempt to drive the Christian community out of Jerusalem and other parts of the Holy Land."

8. Whereas in *Cry for Hope: A Call to Decisive Action*, Palestinian Christians and their global supporters issued an urgent call to Christians, churches and ecumenical institutions, stating, "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.

And,

9. Whereas heretofore, all efforts to resolve the Israel/Palestinian debacle, from 1948 on, have been led and left to politicians and governments that serve their own internal or foreign policy objectives, yet the Holy Land is primarily holy to the people of the three Abrahamic faiths – Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

Therefore, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa moves that this 11th Assembly of the WCC resolves:

- i. To seriously consider and pronounce on the danger that will come from ignoring the apartheid designs of the State of Israel, and the implications thereof in terms of international law. This to take seriously, reports from leading human rights and legal organizations like B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International.
- ii. To advocate strongly for a solution that guarantees dignity, peace, justice, and prosperity for all based primarily on the biblical principles of justice and peace that we are duty-bound to advance. This must be the life reality for all in the Holy Land, regardless of who and where they reside.
- iii. To seriously consider in the spirit of Galatians 3:28, a comprehensive solution where all citizens, Jewish, Arab or any other,

have equal rights before the law as opposed to the apartheid formulation of racial separation that is currently at play.

iv. To consider earnest, the responsibility of the global church to take concrete steps to:

- a. Work with other faiths with a stake in the Holy Land – and all concerned for lasting peace and security for all in a solution that respects and upholds human rights of all – Israelis, Palestinians and others in Israel/Palestine. This to include a comprehensive program like the Program to Combat Racism in the case of South Africa with a new and appropriate mandate for comprehensive peace.
- b. Aim at the comprehensive peace of the Holy Land, thus strengthening the Christian presence and the churches in the Holy Land;
- c. Work together with other faiths with a stake in the Holy Land to provide space for theological engagement, as in the case of the Palestine-Israel Ecumenical Forum, to create a comprehensive program to assess and follow up on previous resolutions of the World Council of Churches.

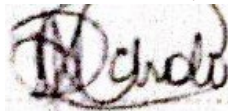
“For you shall go out in joy and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” Isaiah 55:12 (NRSV)

Signed by Mover:



Archbishop Thabo Makgoba. Metropolitan and Primate of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa and President of the South African ‘Council of Churches, a

And Seconder



Advocate Palesa Ncholo, Delegate, Anglican Church of Southern African-American

Date: 5. August , 2022

3. Seeking Justice and Peace for All in the Middle East

Statement of the World Council of Churches (WCC) 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany (08 September 2022)

“‘Peace, peace’, they say, when there is no peace”. Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11

“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” Matthew 14:27

The World Council of Churches (WCC) looks to the Middle East region as the place of the historical origins of our faith where Jesus Christ was born, crucified and resurrected. The worldwide ecumenical fellowship has always sought to be in active solidarity with the Christians of the Middle East, who are living in continuation of an unbroken line of faithful Christian witness in the multi-religious contexts of their countries, making vital contributions to the vibrant diversity and development of their societies.

Upheavals, violent extremism using religion as justification, ongoing military occupations, discrimination and systematic violations of human rights, economic crises and corruption, absence of the rule of law, and other factors have contributed to an existential crisis for all in the region. This is particularly affecting vulnerable communities, including Christians who are facing displacement and mass migration.

In this 11th Assembly of the WCC in Karlsruhe, Germany, we *recognize* the threat to the future of the indigenous Christians and of all the people of the Middle East. We *affirm* that the best means of averting this threat is equal rights, inclusive citizenship, justice and dignity for all, without religious or racial discrimination. We *commit* to the guiding principles of “God’s justice and love for all of creation, the fundamental rights of all people, respect for human dignity, solidarity with the needy and dialogue with people of other faith” (CC Feb 2011) that remain the foundation of our ecumenical response to the region.

Sadly, the reality on the ground in different countries of the Middle East challenges this vision.

In Palestine/Israel, there is another wave of forced displacement of Palestinian people from their homes - sometimes on multiple occasions since 1948 – as in Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan, the South Hebron Hills, as well as in the rest of Area C. The expanding Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially those encircling East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law and threaten fundamental demographic and political changes to the region. Moreover, they have so undermined any practical prospect of a two-state solution that this path towards a just peace now seems increasingly unviable.

The expansion of the settlements and the increased military presence that accompanies them have brought more suffering for Palestinian communities, with more encroachment on and seizure of Palestinian lands and properties, and increased systematic harassment and attacks by settlers (especially in the absence of the protective presence of international visitors during the Covid-19 pandemic).

In Gaza we have recently again seen an escalation of the vicious cycle of violence. The WCC categorically condemns all such deadly and destructive violence whether perpetrated by Israeli

forces or by Palestinian armed groups. The situation in Israel/Palestine cannot be resolved by violence but only by peaceful means in accordance with international law.

We affirm the rightful place of the State of Israel in the community of nations and recognize its legitimate security needs. At the same time we affirm the right of the Palestinians for self-determination and that the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories since 1967, as well as settlement construction and expansion in the occupied territories, is illegal under international law and must be ended. We believe that it is only through an end to the occupation and a just, comprehensive and lasting peace settlement that the security of both Palestinians and Israelis can be assured.

In June 2022 the WCC central committee observed that “[t]he discrimination against Palestinians is overt and systemic, and the ongoing half-century-long occupation continues to contradict the equal human dignity and human rights of Palestinians living under this system of control, while the response of the international community continues to reflect egregious double standards.” The recent suppression of several Palestinian human rights organisations by the Israeli authorities without any effective opposition by the international community is an emblematic example of this system of control and these double standards. For Palestinian people, the situation is sadly compounded by the grave failings of the Palestinian authorities, including reprisals against opposition leaders and the lack of legal and democratic accountability.

Recently, numerous international, Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations and legal bodies have published studies and reports describing the policies and actions of Israel as amounting to “apartheid” under international law. Within this Assembly, some churches and delegates strongly support the utilization of this term as accurately describing the reality of the people in Palestine/Israel and the position under international law, while others find it inappropriate, unhelpful and painful. We are not of one mind on this matter. We must continue to struggle with this issue, while we continue working together on this journey of justice and peace. We pray that the WCC continues to provide a safe space for its member churches for conversation and collaboration in pursuing truth, and working for a just peace among all people of the region.

With regard to the particular situation of Christians in Israel/Palestine, we are hearing the pleas of the heads of churches in the Holy Land more than ever before in relation to mounting intimidation, violations, limitation of access to places of worship, and attacks by Israeli radicals and authorities on the Christian presence and identity in Jerusalem, threatening the Status Quo and the multi-religious and multi-cultural identity of the city.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, such as Syria after the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ of 2011 and Iraq after the 2003 invasion, the people have been victims of conflict, wars and proxy wars, geopolitical pressures, sanctions and international interventions, violent religious extremism, gross violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law, and economic crisis. This has led to straining the already weakened social fabric, social capital and trust, paving the way for hate and demonizing and dehumanizing narratives of the other based on exclusionary constructions of the collective national identities.

Moreover, several United Nations reports have identified drought (resulting from climate change) as one of the driving factors to the onset of the conflict in Syria. After a decade of war that has already had a destructive impact on agricultural infrastructure and resulted in displacement of farming and herder communities, this extreme drought is turning Syria into a new climate hotspot. Furthermore, Iraq has been ranked the fifth-most vulnerable country to climate breakdown, affected by soaring temperatures, intensified droughts and water scarcity, frequent sand and dust storms, and flooding. Climate change challenges are seriously affecting the region and need to be addressed properly.

A prosperous life in dignity, safety and security can only be achieved under the rule of law, territorial unity, and through sovereignty of the political, judicial, cultural and economic institutions in both countries. Sustainable peace is assured if based on values of justice, equal citizenship and equal human rights for all.

We have greatly appreciated the opportunities presented by this Assembly for fellowship and Christian solidarity with sisters and brothers from the Middle East, and for intensive ecumenical conversations and consultations on the path forward towards a just peace in the region.

The 11th Assembly of the WCC *expresses* the firm commitment of the worldwide ecumenical fellowship to strengthening our support for and cooperation with the churches of the Middle East, the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), faith-based and civil society partners, in order to seek a just and sustainable peace in the region.

The 11th Assembly particularly calls on:

- The members of the worldwide ecumenical fellowship to listen to the voices and repeated pleas of the churches and Christian communities of the region, and to accompany them in prayer and action.
- All member churches concerned for lasting peace and security for all in the Middle East to engage actively in efforts of dialogue with all sides in order to find a solution that respects and upholds the human rights and inclusive citizenship for everyone living in the region.
- The worldwide ecumenical fellowship of churches to consult and reflect on an alternative policy, perspective and comprehensive solution for Palestine/Israel where all people have equal rights before the law, as opposed to the current systems of control, exclusion and discrimination.
- The WCC to examine, discuss and discern the implications of the recent reports by B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International, and for its governing bodies to respond appropriately.
- The WCC, its member churches and partners to support and maintain the vital and precious work of WCC programmes in the region, such as the Jerusalem Liaison Office (JLO), the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) and the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF), engaging a wider WCC constituency together with the local churches, Christian communities and other faith partners.
- The WCC to strengthen its newly created transversal programme on racism so as to include the Middle East region.

- The WCC to increase its efforts in its present programmatic work in collaboration with its member churches in the Middle East to articulate principles for living together peacefully in post-conflict societies with equal citizenship, human rights and dignity.
- The WCC to facilitate encounter and dialogue in the diverse multi-religious and multi-cultural societies of the region, especially of Syria and Iraq, to help protect these countries' religious, ethnic and cultural diversity, and to promote social cohesion.
- The international community to call for lifting the unilateral sanctions on Syria that are harming the population rather than achieving their stated goals.
- The government of Israel to lift the blockade on Gaza.
- All Christian sisters and brothers to join in prayer for the release and safe return of the Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim and the Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi who were kidnapped more than nine years ago. "These beloved bishops have become iconic figures of all those unjustly detained, tortured, and forcibly disappeared persons." (WCC press release April 2022)
- The worldwide ecumenical fellowship of churches to join in prayer for the people of the Middle East, including Lebanon whose people are suffering from very difficult conditions of life.

4. **On Recognition That Israel’s Laws, Policies, and Practices Constitute Apartheid Against the Palestinian People²⁰**

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

Assembly Action

On this Item, the General Assembly acted as follows:

Approve as Amended

Electronic Vote - Plenary

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.**

²⁰ <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.

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.

Committee Recommendation

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

Approve as Amended

Counted Vote - Committee

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.**

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.**

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 capitol, 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.

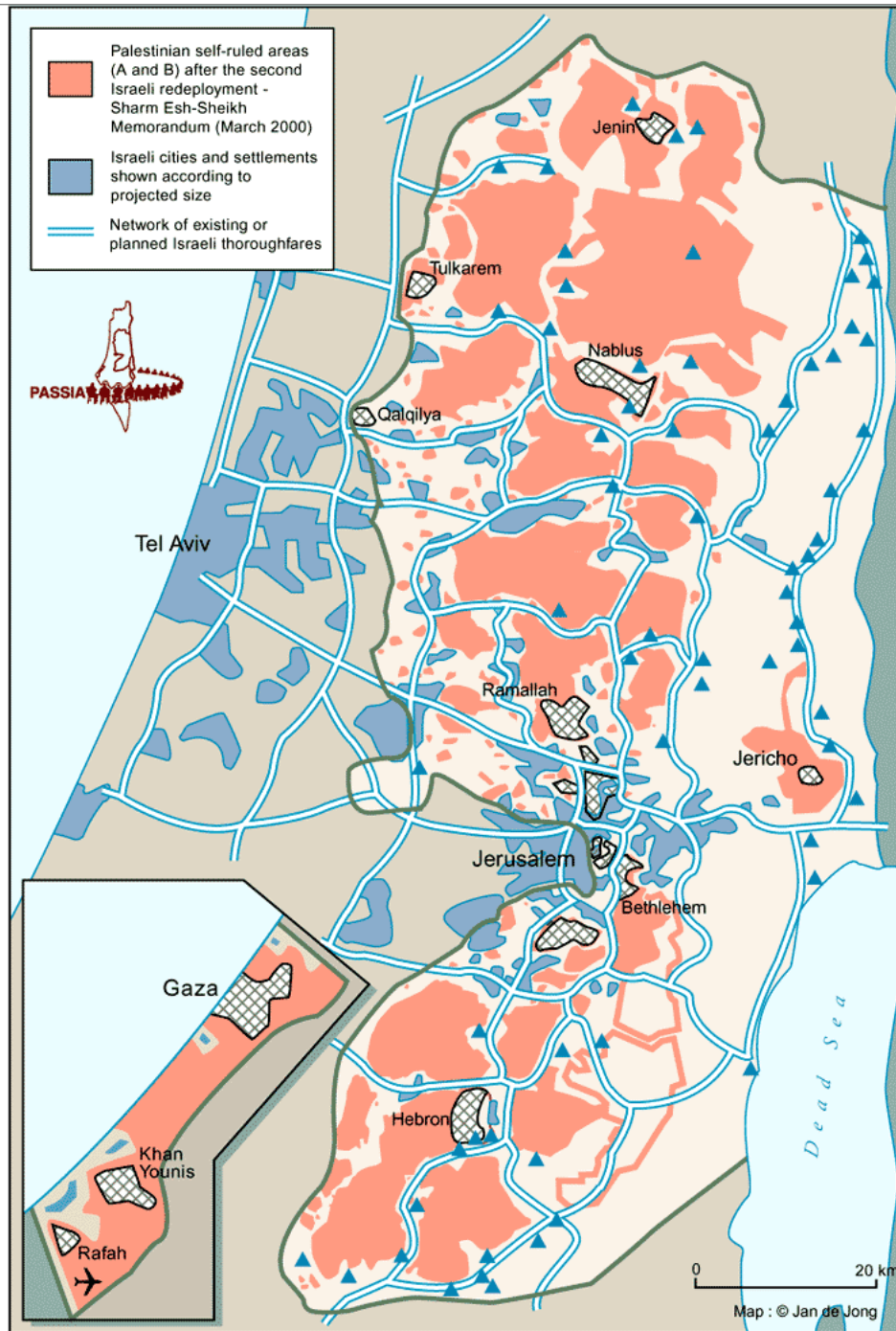
Each year the ordeals and injustices suffered by the Palestinian people in the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel continue. Land is expropriated, homes are demolished, and freedom of movement is restricted. The combination of Israeli settlement colonies on Palestinian land, the bypass roads connecting these 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
linking



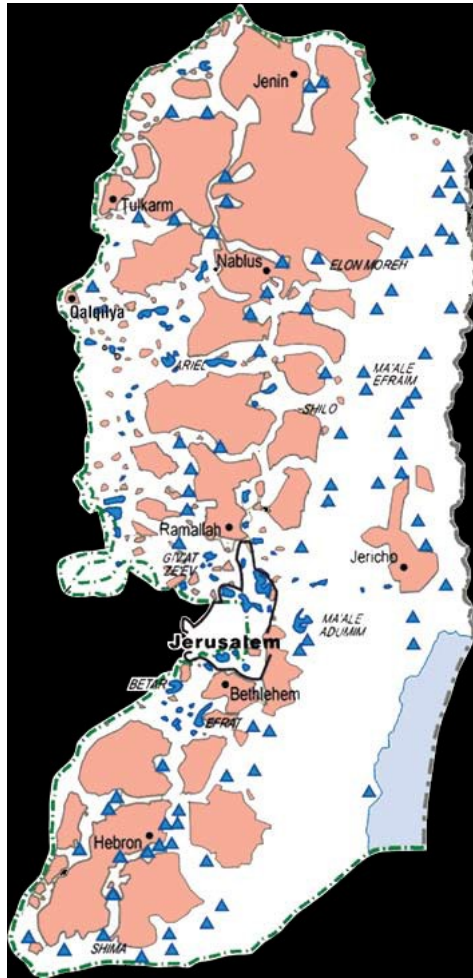
Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA)

settlement colonies in the West Bank with Israel allow unrestricted settler movement but allow limited or no access to Palestinians. Triangles are major Israeli settlement colonies.

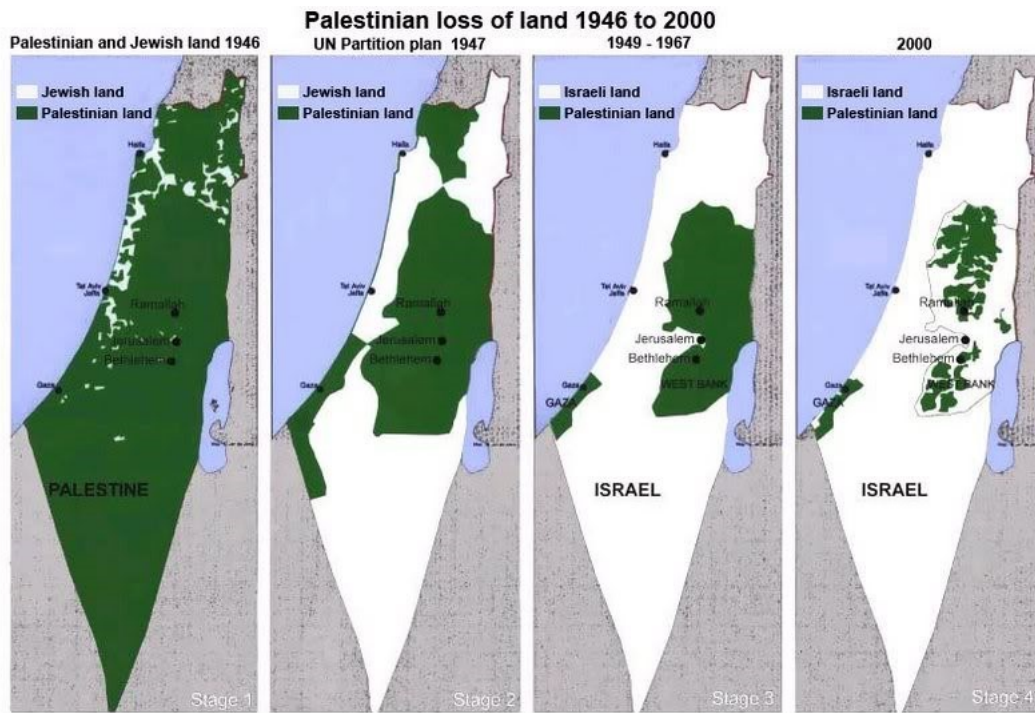
Map 2: The Separation Wall (blue line). None of the Palestinian West Bank is part of Israel under international law. However, the separation wall is not on the West Bank's border, but meanders deeply into Palestinian territory and puts large swaths on the "Israel side" of the wall.



Map 3: Encircled enclaves (reserves or ghettos) confine Palestinians into 64 isolated and totally surrounded canton-like reserves in the West Bank. The triangles are major Israeli settlement colonies.



Map
4:



Palestinian Loss of Land 1946-2010. The green area shows land under Palestinian control.

5. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967²¹

By Francesca Albanese

<i>Summary</i>
In the present report, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese, addresses a number of human rights concerns, in particular regarding the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, in the context of the settler-colonial features of the prolonged Israeli occupation.

VII. Recommendations

77. The Special Rapporteur recommends that the Government of Israel complies with its obligations under international law and ceases to impede therealization of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, ending its settler-colonial occupation of the Palestinian territory immediately and unconditionally and making reparations for its wrongful acts.

78. The Special Rapporteur recommends that all States:

a) Condemn the intentional violations by Israel of the Palestinian right to self-determination including through settler-colonial practices. This requires that:²²

(i) States demand an immediate end to the illegal Israeli occupation, return of all land and resources from which the Palestinian people have been displaced and dispossessed while refraining from making withdrawal subject to negotiation between Israel and Palestine;

(ii) The General Assembly develops a plan to end the Israeli settlercolonial occupation and apartheid regime;

(iii) States stand ready to resort to the diplomatic, economic and political measures afforded by the Charter of the United Nations in case of non-compliance by Israel;

(b) Deploy an international protective presence to constrain the violence routinely used in the occupied Palestinian territory and protect the Palestinian population, in line with the report of the Secretary-General on the protection of the Palestinian civilian population (A/ES-10/794);

(c) Act to ensure a thorough, independent and transparent investigation of all violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including those amounting to potential war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression, committed in the occupied Palestinian territory. The Special Rapporteur further recommends that the international community pursue accountability for perpetrators through both ICC in its ongoing investigation into the situation in Palestine, and universal jurisdiction mechanisms;

(d) Take appropriate steps to prevent, investigate and redress human rights abuses by all business enterprises domiciled in their territory and/or under their jurisdiction by adopting the necessary policies to regulate business

²¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/a77356-situation-human-rights-palestinian-territories-occupied-1967>

conduct in the occupied Palestinian territory, including disengaging from the colonies and providing effective remedy for victims.

79. **The Special Rapporteur** recommends that the High Commissioner for Human Rights release, without delay, the updated database of businesses involved in settlements (Human Rights Council resolution [31/36](#)).

80. The Special Rapporteur fully supports the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel, and encourages it to investigate the status of the right to self-determination and Israeli settler-colonial endeavours in more depth than the territorial and geographic limitations of her mandate allow.



2023
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