

Wesleyan Communities and the World Beyond Christianity
“Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth for Methodists?”

Barry E. Bryant, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of United Methodist and Wesleyan Studies
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
2121 Sheridan Road
Evanston, IL 60201 USA
barry.bryant@garrett.edu

Kairos Palestine: A moment of truth- a word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering (2009) is an ecumenical document written by 15 Christian leaders in Palestine representing Catholic, Greek, Lutheran, Anglican, Episcopal, and Evangelical churches.¹ It was not intended to be a “theoretical theological study or a policy paper, but is rather a document of “faith and work” that is the result of “prayer, reflection and an exchange of opinion.”² When it was released 11 December 2009 a delegation from South Africa was in attendance with a letter from Desmond Tutu, becoming the first nation to endorse the document. On 15 December 2009, church leaders from the Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Coptic, Syrian Orthodox, Maronite, Ethiopian, Greek Catholic, Syrian Catholic, Armenian Catholic, and Lutheran Churches met in Jerusalem to endorse the statement, writing, “We support them and stand by them in their faith, their hope, their love and their vision for the future.”³ Shortly thereafter responses came from the World Council of Churches, the All Africa Council of Churches, Christian groups in India, Korea, Germany, Holland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Costa Rica, among others.⁴

From the start *Kairos Palestine* was intended to be an appeal to the international community to hear the Palestinian stories of suffering and to invite the global Christian community in particular to “stand against injustice and apartheid.”⁵ The title of the document alone is deliberately evocative and a thoughtful attempt to link Palestine and South Africa to apartheid with a single word- “Kairos.”⁶ Fretheim writes, “Through the explicit reference to South Africa, the use of the concept of *kairos*, and the combination of Christian theology, social analysis, and moral discourse, *Kairos Palestine* places itself within the international kairos movement.”⁷ In addition to the comparison to *Kairos South Africa*, in its

¹ *Kairos Palestine, A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering*, 8th edition, Bethlehem, Palestine: Kairos Palestine, 2011. It may also be downloaded at <http://www.kairospalestine.ps> (accessed 25 January 2012) [hereafter cited as *KP*, paragraph and page numbers will be used]. For your convenience a copy of the first edition of the document has been attached as an appendix to this paper. For a list of the groups participants and their affiliations see, <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/?q=node/2> (accessed 1 August 2013).

² *KP*, pp. 2, 4.

³ *KP*, p. 1.

⁴ For a list of some respondents see, <http://kairospalestine.ps/?q=node/18> (accessed 27 July 2013).

⁵ *KP*, p. 2.

⁶ Kairos South Africa, *Challenge to the church: a theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa: the Kairos document*, <http://kairossouthernafrica.wordpress.com/2011/05/08/the-south-africa-kairos-document-1985/> (accessed 17 June 2013) [hereafter cited as *KSA*].

⁷ Kjetil Fretheim, “The Power of Invitation: The Moral Discourse of *Kairos Palestine*,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 51:2 (June 2012), p. 136.

congregational study guide of the document, the Presbyterian Church USA compared *Kairos Palestine* to *The Barmen Declaration* (1934) and Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (1963).⁸ These comparisons indicate the significance and importance of *KP*.

The theme for this gathering of the OIMTS, "Wesleyan Communities and the World Beyond Christianity" is indeed a timely opportunity to gather from a global context to explore this issue. There are certainly several topics that merit our focus. However, it would be a missed opportunity if we did not discuss *Kairos Palestine* because of the document's significant relevance to our theme. As we shall see, by necessity a discussion will engage us in a conversation with people of other faith, no faith, along with secular institutions and movements. This paper will then be less about theory and more about application.

Such a conversation is sorely needed as the struggle between Palestine and Israel is indeed a geo-political conflict with secular and interfaith dimensions. But it also has a profound theological element where Christians are concerned. *Kairos Palestine* will also cause us to engage in both theological reflection and introspection as we consider how we might respond authentically as Wesleyans and Methodists in word, thought, and deed to the appeal being made by Palestinian brothers and sisters in Christ in their own Kairos moment.

Kairos Palestine: Context and Text

The Context: Nakba and Naksa

One of the twentieth century's most heinous evils was the Holocaust, and the direct result Christian Europe's anti-Semitism. One of that century's most atrocious injustices was the Palestinians being deprived of and expelled from their land as a result of the manipulative European colonial powers of England and France, with American complicity.⁹ This is the geo-political starting point in the historical setting of *KP* and fundamentally arises out of the Holocaust (or "shoah") and the creation of a state with a Biblical name, beginning with the British Mandate of 1922, and culminating in the United Nation Partition Plan for Palestine in 1947.¹⁰ Many Palestinians today still think, "The main responsibility for our catastrophe lies with the British Mandate."¹¹

⁸ *Three Week Congregational Study Plan: Kairos Palestine, a Moment of Truth*, Israel-Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church USA, 2010, 1. For an excellent treatment of the connections between *KSA*, *KP*, and the Barmen Declaration see, Robert A. Cathey, "What Can the Barmen Declaration Teach us Today?" *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 36:2 (April 2009), 130-32 and concludes that what all three share is criticism of the state that echoes one of binary oppositions, e.g. oppressed and oppressor, an unjust state and a just God, idolatry versus liberation.

⁹ See John W. Mulhall, *America and the Founding of Israel: An Investigation of the Morality of America's Role*, Los Angeles: Deshon Press, 1995; Noam Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians*, 2nd edition, South End Press: Cambridge, MA, 2003. There is not enough space to explore the US part in the conflict, but you might read Rashid Khalidi, *Brokers of Deceit: How the U.S. has Undermined Peace in the Middle East*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2013; John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008; While England and France may have created the problem Mearsheimer and Walt have demonstrated how American foreign policy has done much to sustain it.

¹⁰ Known as UN resolution 181. For the full text go to, <http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/7f0af2bd897689b785256c330061d253>. For a more comprehensive background see the film by Sufyan Omeish and Abdallah Omeish, *Occupation 101* (<http://occupation101.com>). The film may be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yu15GP2LJAs> (accessed 29 July 2013). See Mitri Raheb, "Displacement Theopolitics: A Century between Theology and Politics in Palestine," *The Invention of History: A Century of Interplay between Theology and Politics in Palestine*, Mitri Raheb, editor, Bethlehem, Palestine: Diyar Publisher, 2011, p. 18.

¹¹ Jamal Khaddura in front of the Joint Parliamentary Middle East Councils, Commission of Enquiry – Palestinian

It is also the beginning of what Palestinians refer to as the “nakba” (or the “catastrophe”) and signifies the exodus of over 700,000 Palestinians (or approximately 80% of Palestinian inhabitants living in the newly created nation of Israel) who either left or were expelled from Palestine; the internal displacement of approximately 156,000 others (also known as the “present absentees”) who either remained in Israel or were resettled to refugee camps in Gaza and the West Bank; and, the hundreds of Palestinian villages that were depopulated and destroyed.¹² The problem of Palestinian displacement was deemed critical from the start, causing the United Nations to create and fund “United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East” (UNRWA) in 1949 and still documents the issues of Palestinian displacement.¹³

As noted by Nur Masalha, the depopulation of the land of the Palestinians was intended to achieve two crucial objectives:

(1) to clear the land for Jewish settlers and would-be immigrants, and (2) to establish an ethnocratic and fairly homogenous Jewish state. During the same period key leaders of Labour Zionism, such as Ben-Gurion, then chairman of the Jewish Agency, strongly believed that Zionism would not succeed in setting up a homogenous Jewish state and fulfilling its imperative of absorbing the expected influx of Jewish immigrants from Europe if the indigenous inhabitants were allowed to remain.¹⁴

As the post-Zionist Israeli historian, Ilan Pappé has chronicled and argued, the policies that resulted in the Palestinian depopulation of Israel fit the definition of ethnic cleansing, namely, the “expulsion by force in order to homogenise the ethnically mixed population of a particular region or territory,” a definition held by the US State Department, the United Nations, and is designated a crime against humanity and subject to adjudication by the International Criminal Court (ICC).¹⁵ Palestinians have always been seen as obstructions to a more homogenous Israel, as the effort to control the demographics became a political and military objective, a policy still explicitly and unapologetically being carried out today.¹⁶

Refugees, London: Labour Middle East Council and others, 2001, in Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oxford: One Word, 2006, p. 125.

¹² Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*, Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992; Nihad Bokae'e, *Palestinian Internally Displaced Persons Inside Israel: Changing the Solid Structures*, Bethlehem, Palestine: Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, 2003; Nur-eldeen Masalha, *The Politics of Denial: Israel and the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, London: Pluto Press, 2003. For some compelling narratives see, Muna Hamzeh, *Refugees in our Own Land: Chronicles from a Palestinian Refugee Camp in Bethlehem*, London: Pluto Press, 2001; the autobiography of Methodist missionary in Bethlehem, Alex Awad, *Palestinian Memories: the Story of Palestinian Mother and Her People*, Bethlehem, Palestine: Bethlehem Bible College, 2008; Archbishop Elias Chacour, *Blood Brothers: The Dramatic Story of a Palestinian Christian Working for Peace in Israel*, Ada, MI: Chosen Books, 2003. For a map of the villages expropriated see, <http://www.palestineremembered.com/Articles/JNF/Story1513.html> (accessed 30 July 2013); and, <http://www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Maps/Story572.html>.

¹³ To keep track of Palestinian displacement on a daily basis see, <http://www.unrwa.org/index.php>. Little work has been done on the Palestinian diaspora, but an excellent treatment is, Helena Lindholm Schulz, *The Palestinian diaspora: formation of identities and politics of homeland*, New York: Routledge, 2003. To admit there is a diaspora there must first be a recognition of the cause for it and there is the rub for many. Schultz handily deals with problem and goes on to connect diaspora with national identity and land in a convincing manner.

¹⁴ Nur-eldeen Masalha, *Politics of Denial: Israel and the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, p. 7. London, GBR: Pluto Press, 2003. p 7. More about this policy of “ethnic cleansing” will be said later.

¹⁵ Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oxford: One Word, 2006, 2-5. Pappé describes the “post-Zionist” scholar in, Ilan Pappé, “Critique and Agenda: The Post-Zionist Scholars in Israel,” *History and Memory*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Israeli Historiography Revisited (Spring - Summer, 1995), pp. 66-90; also, Herbert C. Kelman, “Israel in Transition from Zionism to Post-Zionism,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 555, Israel in Transition (Jan., 1998), pp. 46-61.

¹⁶ For a map of the occupation see Figure 1 and the end of this paper.

To be clear both catastrophes, the Shoah and the Nakba, were the results of European colonialism and anti-Semitism. Michael Lerner has likened the Holocaust unto the Jewish people jumping out of a burning building in Europe and landing on the backs of the Palestinians.¹⁷ The Shoah created the Nakba, leaving Palestinians to suffer from colonial sins. Ottmar Fuchs writes, “The Palestinian Arabs, who had nothing to do with the Holocaust would...function as scapegoats for what the Germans had done.”¹⁸ More to the point *KP* notes, “The West sought to make amends for what Jews had endured in the countries of Europe, but it made amends on our account and in our land. They tried correct an injustice and the result was new injustice.”¹⁹

Zvi Bar’el, a journalist for *Haaretz*, writes, “The nakba terrifies Israel.”²⁰ With its specter of depopulation and ethnic cleansing, the Nakba raises questions about the morality and nobility of the Zionist narrative that has dominated Israeli history since 1947. The Zionist narrative of Shoah has intentionally sought to suppress the Palestinian narrative of Nakba. “Nakba” denial results in what Noam Chomsky has called “the erased chapters of evil.”²¹ Without these erased chapters what results is what post-Zionists refer to as an invented history.

This fear was manifested more recently as an Israeli law was passed that expressly forbids the mention of “nakba” in history texts to be used by Arab school children in Israel.²² When there are public remembrances of Nakba, they are met with resistance that is often violent.²³ However, Nakba is not a past event for Palestinians, but a present and ongoing reality. One of the ways to track and document this is through human rights violations and these occur on a daily basis.²⁴ In spite of attempts to eradicate its memory or suppress its public acknowledgement Nakba still survives and is commemorated 15 May each year.²⁵ As Masalha has indicated, the remembrance of Nakba to Palestinian identity is important and functions as an act of hope and liberation.²⁶ *KP* sees Nakba remembrance as a *sign* of hope.²⁷

¹⁷ Michael Lerner, “A Jewish Renewal Understanding of the State of Israel,” Barry E. Bryant, editor, *Quarterly Review* 25, no. 1 (2005): 73-74. It may be downloaded from here, <http://www.quarterlyreview.org/pdfs/VOL25NO1SPRING2005.pdf>.

¹⁸ Ottmar Fuchs, “The Invention of History: A German Perspective,” *The Invention of History: A Century of Interplay between Theology and Politics in Palestine*, Mitri Raheb, editor. Bethlehem, Palestine: Diyar Publisher, 2011, p. 132.

¹⁹ *KP*, 2.3.2.

²⁰ Zvi Bar’el, “Nakba denial and its consequences” *Jews for Justice for Palestinians*, accessed 22 July 2013, <http://jffjp.com/?p=42177>, also, “Apartheid of the consciousness” *Haaretz*, 17 April 2013. For an excellent video on the subject see, Mennonite Central Committee, *Children of the Nakba* (2005), DVD. See, <https://resources.mcc.org/content/children-nakba-dvd> (accessed 30 July 2013).

²¹ Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé, *Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel’s War against the Palestinians*, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010, p. 59.

²² Ian Black, “1948 no catastrophe says Israel, as term nakba banned from Arab children’s textbooks,” *The Guardian*, 22 July 2009.

²³ Since the passing of this law several clashes between Palestinian and Jewish protestors over the law with Israeli authorities has occurred, e.g. Jack Khoury, Gili Cohen and Nir Hasson, “Palestinians clash with IDF forces in Jerusalem, West Bank on Nakba Day” *Haaretz*, 15 May 2013, (<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/palestinians-clash-with-idf-forces-in-jerusalem-west-bank-on-nakba-day-1.524117>, accessed 27 July 2013).

²⁴ In 1975 the UN established the “UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.” See, <http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/com.htm?OpenForm>. Also, see “The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs” (OCHA), <http://www.unocha.org/where-we-work/occupied-palestinian-territory>; the Israeli group documenting human rights violations is B’tsalem, <http://www.btselem.org/>; and, the Arab counterpart is “The Arab Association for Human Rights,” <http://www.arabhra.org/hra/Pages/Index.aspx?Language=2>.

²⁵ See, Noam Sheizaf, “Despite efforts to erase it, the Nakba’s memory is more present than ever in Israel,” *972mag* <http://972mag.com/despite-efforts-to-erase-it-the-nakbas-memory-is-more-present-than-ever-in-israel/71468/> (accessed 23 July 2013).

²⁶ Masalha, Nur. “Remembering the Palestinian Nakba: Commemoration, Oral History and Narratives of Memory.” *Holy Land Studies: A Multidisciplinary Journal* (Edinburgh University Press) 7, no. 2 (November 2008): 123-156. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed June 28, 2013). Israeli activist group collaborating with Palestinians in organizing Nakba remembrance events and educational activities is *Zochrat* (Hebrew for “remembering”),

As catastrophic as Nakba was for Palestinians, the more recent cause of the conflict are the events that have unfolded since the “Six Day War” of 1967. It was during this time that Israel invaded and has since occupied Gaza, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights comprising events commonly referred to by Palestinians as the “naksa,” or the “setback.” This is commemorated 5 June each year. Whereas depopulation and ethnic cleansing characterize the Nakba, the Naksa is characterized by Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestine, creating the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt).²⁸

This is not to suggest that displacement did not occur at this time also. It did. In 1967, over 350,000 Palestinians were displaced leaving Gaza, and the West Bank.²⁹ According to the US State Department the primary cause of the exodus was airstrikes that “hit many civilian targets on the West Bank where there are absolutely no military emplacements.”³⁰ The most common method of Palestinian displacement being used today is home demolition. Jeff Halper, founder and director of the *Israel Committee Against Home Demolition* (ICAHN) has reported that since 1967 over 28,000 Palestinian homes, businesses, and livestock structures have been demolished.³¹ Even more recently, the Israelis announced the “Praver Plan” to displace over 70,000 Arab bedouins and destroy another 35 villages that are not “recognized” by Israel.³² Clearly the Nakba has not ended.

The Naksa is also characterized by what is often called the “separation barrier.” Its construction was started in 2002, in response to suicide bombers under the guise of security. On 9 July 2004, the International Court of Justice rejected the security argument and ruled the wall illegal.³³ The path of the wall gives away its true intent. It has been characterized by others as a “land grab” since much of the wall’s route does not follow the “green line” that established the borders between Israel and Palestine before the Six Day War.³⁴ Water sources, farmable land, and illegal settlements typically determine where

<http://www.zochrot.org/en>.

²⁷ KP, 3.3.3.

²⁸ For documentation regarding the international laws and United Nations resolutions that are being violated see, <http://www.israelawresourcecenter.org/internationallaw/studyguides/sgil3f.htm>; and, the International Red Cross at <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/misc/634kfc.htm>. The UN’s official designation for Palestine is oPt.

²⁹ John Quigley, “Displace Palestinians and the Right of Return,” *The Palestine Question in International Law*, Victor Kattan, editor, London: The British Institute of International and Comparative Law, 2008, pp. 41-99.

³⁰ John Quigley, “Displace Palestinians and the Right of Return,” *The Palestine Question in International Law*, Victor Kattan, editor, London: The British Institute of International and Comparative Law, 2008, p. 51. Keep in mind that during the “Six Day War” the Israelis also attacked the USS Liberty 8 June 1967 in international waters killing 34 crew members. See, John Crewdson, “New Revelations in Attack on American Spy Ship” *The Chicago Tribune*, 2 October 2007, http://www.chicagotribune.com/chi-liberty_tuesoct02.0.7171137.full.story (accessed 27 July 2013).

³¹ See, <http://www.icaahd.org/node/458> (accessed 27 July 2013). That comes to about 2 structures a day being demolished for the last 47 years. Note that the above number was current as of March 2012. It has increased substantially since then. One of the most infamous cases of demolition resulted in the death (March 16, 2003) of Rachel Corrie, see, Joshua Hammer, “The Death of Rachel Corrie” *Mother Jones*, September/October 2003, <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2003/09/death-rachel-corrie> (accessed 27 July 2013). The use of Caterpillar tractors both in Corrie’s death and home demolitions is the reason it has been placed on a boycott list. See, <http://www.endtheoccupation.org/section.php?id=158> (accessed 27 July 2013). The CEO of Caterpillar is United Methodist.

³² “Protest in al-Naqab against the Praver plan displacement of Bedouins” *International Middle East Media Center*, 2 August 2013, <http://www.imemc.org/article/65899> (accessed 3 August 2013).

³³ For a copy of the ruling in its entirety see, The International Court of Justice, <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/131/1671.pdf>; for commentary see Roger O’Keefe, “Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: A Commentary,” *The Palestine Question in International Law*, Victor Kattan, editor, London: The British Institute of International and Comparative Law, 2008, pp. 753-815. The apartheid wall is just one partition in a sordid history of partitions. See, Thomas E. Hachey, *The Problem of Partition: Peril to World Peace*, Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1972, where the partitions of Ireland, Korea, German, India and Pakistan, and Viet Nam are analyzed.

³⁴ There are a great many resources to be used here but the most significant is perhaps, Yehezkel Lein and Eyal Weizman, *Land Grab: Israel’s Settlement Policy in the West Bank*, Jerusalem: B’tselem, 2002.

the wall is placed, and by separating Palestinians from their farmland and other property, along with water aquifers it becomes another tool in the strategy of displacement.³⁵

But occupation is not just accomplished through demolition and the building of a wall. In his brilliant analysis of the occupation through the study of architecture, Weizman has argued, whether it is communication towers, checkpoints, settlements, water pumps, or military encampments, “The mundane elements of planning and architecture have become tactical tools and the means of dispossession.”³⁶ The politics of apartheid manifests itself materially as the “politics of verticality.” What the politics of verticality have constructed since 1967 is the architecture of apartheid and dispossession.³⁷ This architecture of apartheid has resulted in what Jeff Halper has described as a “matrix of control”.³⁸ By which he means,

...a maze of laws, military orders, planning procedures, limitations on movement, kafkaesque bureaucracy, settlements and infrastructure – augmented by prolonged and ceaseless low-intensity warfare – that serves to perpetuate the Occupation, to administer it with a minimum of military presence and, ultimately, to conceal it behind massive Israeli “facts on the ground” and a bland façade of “proper administration.”³⁹

The word “Apartheid” is used advisedly and accurately as a description of the situation and is based on the 1973 meaning ratified by the UN General Council, which defined it 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.”⁴⁰ The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court has reaffirmed the definition of apartheid as acts “committed in the context of an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime.”⁴¹ While the definition of apartheid evolved in response to conditions in South Africa, eventually it was being used to describe reality on the ground in Palestine. In 1989 Uri Davis was among the first of the post-Zionists to write extensively about Israel as an apartheid state.⁴² More recently former president Jimmy Carter has used the term.⁴³ More significantly, Desmond Tutu used “apartheid” to describe the situation in Israel

³⁵ See, “The Right to Water in Palestine: A Background” at <http://www.cesr.org/downloads/Palestine.RighttoWater.Factsheet.pdf> (accessed 15 July 2013); “The Right to Water: A Policy of Denial and Forced Displacement in the Occupied Palestinian Territories” at http://www.alhaq.org/images/stories/PDF/PCHRO_Contribution_to_ENP_Progress_Report_Israel_2012.pdf (accessed 29 July 2013); and Jamal L. El-Hindi, “The West Bank Aquifer and Conventions regarding Laws of Belligerent Occupation” (1989-1990), *The Palestine Question in International Law*, Victor Kattan, editor, London: The British Institute of International and Comparative Law, 2008, pp. 391-404.

³⁶ Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel’s Architecture of Occupation*, London: Verso, 2012, p. 5.

³⁷ Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel’s Architecture of Occupation*, London: Verso, 2012, p. 9-11.

³⁸ Samira Shah, “On the Road to Apartheid: The Bypass Road Network in the West Bank,” *The Palestine Question in International Law*, Victor Kattan, editor, London: The British Institute of International and Comparative Law, 2008, 405-428. Jeff Halper, “The 94 Percent Solution: A Matrix of Control” *Middle East Report*, 30:216 (Summer 2000), pp. 14-19.

³⁹ For a video of Halper’s description see, Jeff Halper, “The Matrix of Control: An Introduction” <http://www.icahd.org/node/398> (accessed 25 July 2013).

⁴⁰ For the document see, *The Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, <http://web.archive.org/web/20061001200717/http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/11.htm> (accessed 29 July 2013).

⁴¹ See the following for the UN’s adoption of this treaty, http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-10&chapter=18&lang=en (accessed 21 June 2013).

⁴² Uri Davis, *Israel: An Apartheid State*, London: Zed Books, 1989; *Apartheid Israel: Possibilities for the Struggle Within*, London: Zed, 2004.

⁴³ Jimmy Carter, *Palestine: Peace not Apartheid*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007.

and to better describe the function of the “security wall” there.⁴⁴ Alice Walker has recently narrated the film, *Roadmap to Apartheid* (2012).⁴⁵ As a result of the ongoing and expanding practices in Israel regarding treatment of Palestinians a growing number of Israelis and Jews in America are refusing to call the situation and the wall anything else.

As a geo-political conflict the *KP* is set against a background of the Nakba with its displacement and ethnic cleansing, and the Naksa with its illegal occupation and policy of apartheid. While the description thus far has included historical aspects of these events, *KP* describes “reality on the ground” in more existential terms of the separation wall, the settlements, checkpoints, displacement, the curtailment of religious liberty, the denial of freedom of movement, the denial of civil rights to Palestinian citizens of Israel, political prisoners, the flaunting of international law by Israel, and the hemorrhage of immigration.⁴⁶ Once the context and “reality on the ground” are better understood it should come as no surprise when the appeal in *KP* begins with both a sense of frustration and urgency as it,

...requests the international community to stand by the Palestinian people who have faced oppression, displacement, suffering and clear apartheid for more than six decades...[W]e Palestinian Christians declare that the military occupation of our land is a sin against God and humanity, and that any theology that legitimizes the occupation is far from Christian teachings because true Christian theology is a theology of love and solidarity with the oppressed, a call to justice and equality among peoples.⁴⁷

From the suffering that Nakba and Naksa have created, a call is given.

We call out as Christians and as Palestinians to our religious and political leaders, to our Palestinian society and to the Israeli society, to the international community, and to our Christian brothers and sisters in the Churches around the world.⁴⁸

It is certainly an ecumenical call to Christians around the world, but a solution to the problem means that Christians must also participate in an interfaith call particularly given to Jews and Muslims; and, it also means we must engage in collaboration with secular institutions and organizations since it is not primarily a theological issue but a political one. Quickly, it becomes apparent that this is more than a “call out.” Clearly, *KP* is also an open invitation to all to engage in a moral discourse about the Palestinian context of ethnic cleansing and apartheid.

⁴⁴ Desmond Tutu, “Apartheid in the Holy Land” *The Guardian*, 28 April 2002, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/apr/29/comment> (accessed 31 July 2013).

⁴⁵ Ana Nogueira and Eron Davidson, directors/producers, *Roadmap to Apartheid* (2012), DVD. The film makes the connection between South Africa and Palestine while it shows the abuse of religion in both instances. It may be viewed online at <http://www.youtube.com/movie/roadmap-to-apartheid> (accessed 29 July 2013).

⁴⁶ *KP*, “Reality on the Ground,” 1-1.5.1. For a detailed account how immigration in particular is effecting the church see, Rania Al Qass Collings, Rifat Odeh Kassis, and Mitri Raheb, *Palestinian Christians in the West Bank: Facts, Figures and Trends*, second edition, Bethlehem, Diyar Publisher, 2012, where we are told that there is a greater percentage of Christians in Egypt (10%), Lebanon (30%), Syria (5%), Iraq (3%), and Jordan (3%) than in either Israel (1.7%) or the oPt (1.2%), p. 13.

⁴⁷ *KP*, 2.

⁴⁸ *KP*, “Introduction”.

Kairos Palestine is deliberately connected to *Kairos South Africa* and they are both a part of a larger group of “kairos” documents that consist of *Kairos Central America* (1988); *The Road to Damascus: Kairos and Conversion*, (1989); *Kairos Europa*, (1989).⁴⁹ All five texts share certain characteristics. It will be helpful to consider what these are before going further.

Because of their constitutive nature all are examples of contextual, political, and public theology.⁵⁰ There is also the obvious connection to the term “kairos,” which is used to denote a particular character given to a specific moment in time and the necessity to speak and act in that moment to address a set of social evils. *Kairos Palestine* specifically takes kairos to mean, “...the moment when we see God’s gifts in the midst of our suffering.”⁵¹ *Kairos Palestine* is the result of a grace filled epiphany in the context of travail. It is the occasion for epiphany, or a moment of revelation when the will of God and the nature of truth are made known prophetically. Through this epiphany there is a sense of utter urgency created by the extent of suffering. In the midst of this kairos theologians pronounce, “The kingdom of God is at hand.”

Their similarities, however, are not due to the common use of “kairos” but the result of a mutual methodology.⁵² First, kairos moments are the result of a dynamic and diverse group process that shares a mutual identity as Christian disciples and the experience of injustice in their context. The diversity is created in part by the participant’s vocations. Some are clergy, some are laity, some are trained theologians, and some are not. Another aspect of diversity is the ecumenical nature and theological nuances in the group. With *KP* the members range from an archbishop and a patriarch, prominent Palestinian theologians and academics such as Khader, Khoury, Raheb, Ateek, Katanacho, along with pastors such a Diab, community activists and organizers such as Kassis, Duaybis, and Kort.

In addition to diversity, this process is in some sense done from the inside-out. There is a shared experience of oppression and suffering different to those on the outside of it looking in. However, there is also an outside-in dynamic. When it comes to the Church the kairos group is in some respects from the outside. While all are members of varying denominations, the document produced is not official position held by a particular denomination.

The group’s first task is to engage in a thorough and critical contextual social analysis of the situation. In the case of *KP* the analysis consists of the Nakba, the Naksa, ethnic cleansing, and apartheid, among other things. Complex social justice issues entail engagement with secular and political institutions that are on one hand as representative of systemic evil. However, on the other hand if properly reformed and rehabilitated such institutions may also be used as a part of the solution. Political engagement cannot be isolated from prophetic pronouncement.

⁴⁹ For the texts of the other three see, Robert McAfee Brown, *Kairos: Three Prophetic Challenges to the Church*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990. Also see, Dirk J. Smit, “Kairos Documents,” *Essays in Public Theology*, Study Guide in Religion and Theology 12, Stellenbosch: African Sun Media, 2007, pp. 251-254.

⁵⁰ Kjetil Fretheim, “The Power of Invitation: The Moral Discourse of *Kairos Palestine*,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 51:2 (June 2012), p. 137. See also Steven Bevins, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002; Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh, *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publications, 2004; and, Duncan B. Forrester, William F. Storrar and Andrew R. Morton, eds. *Public Theology for the 21st Century: Essays in Honour of Duncan B. Forrester*, London: T&T Clark, 2004.

⁵¹ *KP*, p. 4.

⁵² Smit, “Kairos Documents,” p. 254.

Secondly, only after this information is analyzed is there a theological reflection, and a theological analysis of the social context indicates that in the kairos moment human lives are at stake making neutrality regarding the issue no longer possible. The binary nature of the situation entails a simple response. You are either for oppression, or you are for liberation. But such a change cannot come about without the transformation of human hearts and minds. The kairos moment dares to name names and identify the powers and principalities that give rise to flesh and blood adversaries who are the source and cause of the oppression.

Astonishingly, given the church's frequent complicity and complacency to evils identified by a kairos moment, the agent of such radical change is still seen as the church. The prophetic role in kairos ecclesiology is taken seriously. It is the church, as the agent of Christ in the world, who calls people to repentance, conversion, transformation, in order to be agents of social change.

The alpha and omega points of any kairos moment are ultimately, fundamentally, and inexorably connected to the outrageous hope of the resurrection that results in something far more significant than utopian idealism.⁵³ It envisions the kingdom of God among us. Kairos is a kingdom call.

To be engaged by a kairos moment and its inherent methodology is, therefore, to be engaged in moral discourse. Fretheim has observed that James Gustafson suggests there are four varieties of moral discourse: prophetic, ethical, narrative, and policy discourse.⁵⁴ Lisa Cahill adds participatory discourse as a fifth.⁵⁵ Fretheim adds yet a sixth type of moral discourse, that of invitational discourse, a concept he borrows from peace education.⁵⁶

Prophetic discourse- Prophetic engagement of social injustice is constitutive to a kairos moment. The prophetic type of moral discourse is grounded in the Biblical tradition where prophetic discourses usually "address what the prophet perceives to be the root of religious, moral, or social waywardness, not specific instances in which certain policies are judged to be inadequate or wrong."⁵⁷ Perhaps the essence of the kairos moment itself is prophetic discourse. There is an eschatological vision of the Kingdom of God that is in some sense construed as a utopian state of affairs, and this is radically contrasted with "reality on the ground." There is a prophetic binary created between the goodness of a loving God against the evils of an unjust state.⁵⁸ In that sense there is a clear prophetic announcement made by *KP* that unequivocally declares that the military occupation of Palestine by Israel to be a sin, while at the same time there is a call to Christians to repent for ignoring it.

We say to our Christian brothers and sisters: This is a time for repentance...Perhaps, as individuals or as heads of Churches, we were silent when we should have raised our voices to condemn the injustice and share in the suffering. This is a time of repentance for our silence, indifference, lack of communion, either because we did not persevere in our mission in this land

⁵³ Smit, "Kairos Documents," p. 254.

⁵⁴ Kjetil Fretheim, "The Power of Invitation: The Moral Discourse of *Kairos Palestine*," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 51:2 (June 2012), pp. 135-144. James M. Gustafson, "Varieties of Moral Discourse: Prophetic, Narrative, Ethical and Policy," in *Seeking Understanding: The Stob Lectures, 1986-1998*, ed. Calvin College and Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001, 43-76.

⁵⁵ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Theological Bioethics: Participation, Justice, and Change* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005).

⁵⁶ Fretheim, "The Power of Invitation," p. 143.

⁵⁷ Gustafson, "Varieties of Moral Discourse," p. 53.

⁵⁸ See note 9 above.

and abandoned it, or because we did not think and do enough to reach a new and integrated vision remained divided, contradicting our witness and weakening our work.⁵⁹

The source of frustration is the intermingling of good and evil in both human beings and institutions resulting in what calls the “moderation of violence” which is a part of the logic of violence.

Humanitarianism, human rights and international humanitarian law...when abused by state, supra-state and military action, have become the crucial means by which the economy of violence is calculated and managed.⁶⁰

The most one can then hope for is the “least of all possible evils” and “Indeed, it is through the use of the lesser evil that societies that see themselves as democratic can maintain regimes of occupation and neo-colonization.”⁶¹ It is precisely on these tumultuous grounds that prophetic stances are taken and if they are not grounded in love and reaching out in what is outrageous hope the despair can be overwhelming. This is where Palestinians stand.

Ethical Discourse- Ethical discourse is more analytical, philosophical and argumentative. The challenge here, according to Gustafson is to make a dialectical connection between the particular and the universal in issues of morality. The particularity of Palestinian suffering under ethnic cleansing and apartheid indicts the world’s indifference, hypocrisy where the violations of their human rights are concerned. This becomes the reason for the kairos moment and the writing of the document.

Narrative Discourse- Gustafson relies on Hauerwas to discuss narrative discourse and indicates three interrelated functions of narrative; narratives sustain and confirm religious and moral identity of Christian communities; they appeal to empathy and emotion as a moving prophetic function; they offer moral pedagogy and offer an enlarged vision of what is going on. Where the Palestinians are concerned the dominance of the Zionist narrative has come at the expense of the suppression of the Palestinian one. The narratives of Nakba and Naksa are crucial to Palestinian identity and to their prophetic function. The invitation is not just to be engaged in ethical discourse. It is also one of story sharing. The hope is that their narrative will eventually be heard with empathy and responded to with compassion and justice and this becomes an opportunity for moral pedagogy.

Policy Discourse- Policy discourse is conducted by those who are on the inside of a problem and confronting with making choices in order to carry actions that are required by their choices. The particularity of conditions within a problem in which the policy is developed must be taken into consideration and how the problems may limit or enable those who are making policy. While *KP* denied being a policy paper, the Palestinian frustration is nonetheless that they are not viably or seriously considered to be a part of the decision and policy-making process. There is a disproportionate distribution of power resulting in a feeling of powerlessness and exclusion from the policy discourse.

Why now? Because today we have reached a dead end in the tragedy of the Palestinian people. The decision-makers content themselves with managing the crisis rather than committing themselves to the serious tasking of finding a way to resolve it...What is the international

⁵⁹ *KP*, 5.2.

⁶⁰ Eyal Weizman, *The Least of all Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza*, London: Verso, 2011, p.

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⁶¹ Weizman, *Least of all Possible Evils*, p. 9. I wish there was time and space to say more about Weizman’s analysis at this point. He lays a great deal of the blame for the “least of all possible evils” at the feet of Augustine. I have long maintained that a Wesleyan will find it difficult to buy into an Augustinian notion of evil because if one does the hope of holiness in this lifetime is impossible.

community doing? What are the political leaders in Palestine, in Israel and in the Arab world doing? What is the Church doing?⁶²

The Palestinian plea is to be involved in a policy discourse that will determine their future.

Participatory Discourse- Cahill's understanding of participatory discourse alludes to a shared sphere of behavior that is oriented by a cluster of shared concerns and goals. Its function is to constitute relations constructed by empathy and interdependence. At this point *KP* seeks to directly engage the Church and others to participate, and the concrete action being proposed is a boycott of Israel as an act of non-violence that sees love as resistance to evil.

Palestinian civil organizations, as well as international organizations, NGOs and certain religious institutions call on individuals, companies and states to engage in divestment and in an economic boycott of everything produced by the occupation.⁶³

Invitational Discourse- As a concept, invitational discourse is a "form of communication based on a commitment to equality, recognition and self-determination," that "promotes change and transformation [...] through the incorporation of new ideas and perspectives."⁶⁴ This is at the heart of *KP*, and is the nature of its appeal. The issues of recognition and self-determination for Palestinians are crucial to a lasting peace.

As a moral discourse the document is constructed around faith, hope, and love.

Faith – While the word "trinity" is not used there is an obvious Trinitarian connection with implications on a theological anthropology. Their faith in one good and just God who is the loving Creator of all things is affirmed. As a direct result of this affirmation it is maintained that, "every human being is created in God's image and likeness and that everyone's dignity is derived from the dignity of the Almighty One."⁶⁵ The connection between the doctrine of God to the image of God and the image of God to human rights is explicitly made.

With a strong affinity to a Johannine Christology and an implicit incarnational theology, *KP* affirms faith in God's eternal Word as a Christological description and not a reference to Scripture.⁶⁶ To be sure, there is an interchange between this use and referring to Scripture as God's word with the theological interplay between Christ and Scripture.

There is underlying all this is a robust pneumatology, with an affirmation of faith in the Holy Spirit who helps us to understand Holy Scripture, which "makes manifest the revelation of God to humanity, past, present and future."⁶⁷ This explicit connection between Scripture and Spirit and Word is the starting point for a post-colonial hermeneutic of liberation that unfolds in the following section, "How do we understand the word of God?" To read, meditate and interpret results in Scripture becoming a

⁶² *KP*, "Introduction."

⁶³ *KP*, 4.2.6.

⁶⁴ Donald Ellis and Yael Warshel, "The Contribution of Communication and Media Studies to Peace Education," in *Handbook on Peace Education*, ed. G. Salomon and E. Cairns (New York: Psychology Press, 2010), 139. See also Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric," *Communication Monographs* 62 (1995): 2–18. Many of these same concepts are used by "compassionate listening." See, <http://www.compassionatelistening.org/>. Maha El-Taji is the consultant living in Haifa who works in the Palestinian/Israeli context; see, <http://www.compassionatelistening.org/?s=maha+&x=-340&y=-324> (accessed 31 July 2013).

⁶⁵ *KP*, 2.1.

⁶⁶ *KP*, 2.1.1.

⁶⁷ *KP*, 2.1.2.

“living Word.”⁶⁸ This is put into contrast with a “fundamentalist Biblical interpretation that brings us death and destruction...”⁶⁹ A bit more needs to be said about this.

The essence of the hermeneutics of Christian fundamentalism is that it was constructed from a colonial perspective and still seeks to maintain it. The colonial hermeneutic is invariably (to borrow Said’s phrase) “orientalist” in its understanding.⁷⁰ Orientalism is derived from the experiences of Western colonial powers, namely Britain and France, and is ultimately a “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and have authority over the Orient.”⁷¹ Said argued that French and British colonial perceptions of Arabs constructed through stereotypical images and binary constructs. This *essentializes* depictions of Arabs in particular as not just being antithetical to the West, but inferior. Here is uncovered the hermeneutical assumptions of the British mandate.

It was what Maxime Rodinson has referred to as *homo islamicus*. The Oriental may always have been characterized as a savage enemy, but during the Middle Ages, he was at least considered on the same level as his European counterpart. And, to the men of the Enlightenment, the ideologues of the French Revolution, the Oriental was, for all his foreignness in appearance and dress, above all a man like anyone else. In the nineteenth century, however, he became something quite separate, sealed off in this own specificity, yet worthy of a kind of grudging admiration. This is the origin of the *homo islamicus*, a notion widely accepted even today.⁷²

In the same way that the African peoples were racialized in the 19th century under by a similar construct, so were Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular. The issue of racialization is why the Palestinian issue is also an African, and more to the point, an African-American one.⁷³ It is easier for us to manage *homo islamicus* as an extension of Orientalism with its Palestinian application than to engage in a constructive dialogue that sees Palestinians, even Palestinian Christians, as our neighbor as someone besides one who is other. This objectification too easily results in the villainization of Palestinians as “jihadists terrorists” and the rationale for the architecture of apartheid as the “lesser of evils.” One cannot politically deny human rights without explicitly denying the image of God. What may be easily overlooked during the process of villainization is that the emergence of a radicalized Islamism is a political movement connected to anti-colonial sentiments and the rejection of globalism as imperialistic. All of this is reflected in the struggle of Palestinians for self-identity.⁷⁴

Fundamentalists of all stripes (whether Jewish, Christian, or Islamic) have produced an oppressive and limited reading of, among many other things, what the Biblical concept of “land” means.⁷⁵ Jamal Khader, one of the document’s authors, points out that it is the rise of religious fundamentalism that has resulted in religion being used to justify political claims on the land.⁷⁶ Christian and Jewish fundamentalists in particular link the land with the doctrine of election and Israel “exclusivism” and does

⁶⁸ KP, 2.2.1, 2.2.2.

⁶⁹ KP, 2.2.2.

⁷⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1978.

⁷¹ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 3.

⁷² Maxime Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam*, New York: IB Tauris Publishers, 2002, p. 60.

⁷³ Susan Aluhawa, “The Palestinian Struggle is a Black Struggle” *The Electronic Intifada*, <http://electronicintifada.net/content/palestinian-struggle-black-struggle/12530> (accessed 11 June 103).

⁷⁴ Jacqueline O'Rourke, *Representing Jihad: The Appearing and Disappearing Radical*, New York: Zed Books, 2012, pp. 6-10.

⁷⁵ See, Mitri Raheb, editor, *The Biblical Text in the Context of Occupation: Towards a New Hermeneutics of Liberation*, Contextual Theology Series, Bethlehem, Palestine: Diyar Publisher, 2012.

⁷⁶ Jamal Hader (sic), “The Context of Kairos Palestine.” *Ecumenical Review* 64, no. 1 (March 2012): 3-6. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed June 28, 2013).

not see the land as “the prelude to complete and universal salvation.”⁷⁷ (Is there a connection between “land” theology and prevenient grace here?) The land should be seen as a land of “reconciliation, peace and love” with a Palestinian connection to it that is seen as a “natural right.”⁷⁸

The section concludes with two prophet pronouncements. The first is directly aimed at a fundamentalist/colonialist hermeneutic, saying,

...any use of the Bible to legitimize or support political options and positions that are based upon injustice, imposed by one person on another, or by one people on another, transform religion into human ideology and strip the Word of God of its holiness, its universality and truth.⁷⁹

Secondly, “...the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is a sin against God and humanity because it deprives the Palestinians of their basic human rights, bestowed by God. It distorts the image of God in the Israeli who has become an occupier just as it distorts this image in the Palestinian living under occupation.”⁸⁰ Implicit to Palestinian faith is the hope for a deconstruction of the fundamentalist and colonialist hermeneutic.

Hope- Hope consists primarily of faith in God, and faith in God for a better future.⁸¹ The nature of hope requires the

...capacity to see God in the midst of trouble, and to be co-workers with the Holy Spirit who is dwelling in us. From this vision derives the strength to be steadfast, remain firm and work to change the reality in which we find ourselves. Hope means not giving in to evil but rather standing up to it and continuing to resist it.⁸²

The theologians of *KP* see several signs of hope beginning with the Church and a vibrant parish life that includes many young people committed to justice and peace. There are local centers of theology that are religious and social in nature. In some quarters there is a robust interfaith dialogue between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. There is also a “steadfastness” of spirit and a “continuity of memory which does not forget the Nakba and its significance.”⁸³

At this point another Arabic word needs to be introduced to better understand what these theologians are trying to convey through the idea of “steadfastness.” The word that is often used to describe the concept of “sumud.” What it means literally is “steadfastness” and is often symbolized by the olive tree. Steadfastness is life lived out as resistance to both the ethnic cleansing of Nakba and the apartheid of Naksa.⁸⁴ The correlation of hope with steadfastness is an important one to be made at this point. Steadfastness is driven by a faith in God and a hopeful vision that scans the countryside for evidence that God is at work in the midst of trouble through Spirit empowered brothers and sisters in Christ, and that this same Spirit is capable of working through people of other faiths and even through world institutions. Steadfastness is the manifestation of an outrageous hope that is rooted and grounded in the belief that God is creator of all, the Spirit is mysteriously at work in all things, and that Christ has

⁷⁷ *KP*, 2.3.

⁷⁸ *KP*, 2.3.1, 2.3.4.

⁷⁹ *KP*, 2.4.

⁸⁰ *KP*, 2.5.

⁸¹ *KP*, 3.2.

⁸² *KP*, 3.2.

⁸³ *KP*, 3.3-3.3.3

⁸⁴ The work of photographer James Prineas captures the concept beautifully at <http://www.sumud.net/> (accessed 31 July 2013).

been raised from the dead “in victory over death and evil”.⁸⁵ It is only on this basis that there may arise another sign of hope- “...determination among many to overcome the resentments of the past and to be ready for reconciliation once justice has been restored.”⁸⁶

The final section on hope deals with the Church and its mission, which envisions a praying and serving people to be “prophetic, to speak the Word of God courageously, honestly and lovingly in the local context and in the midst of daily events.”⁸⁷ If there is a side to be taken it is to be the side of the oppressed.⁸⁸ This means proclaiming the Kingdom of God as a “kingdom of justice, peace and dignity” “which cannot be tied to any earthly kingdom.”⁸⁹

Love- Love is without discrimination and includes friends as well as enemies. However, while love may be seen as non-coercive it is bound by an obligation to “resist evil of whatever kind.”⁹⁰ Love sees the “face of God” in every human person, but this does not mean that evil and aggression on their part is to be accepted. Instead, “love seeks to correct the evil and stop the aggression.”⁹¹ To that end “the occupation is both an evil and a sin that must be resisted and removed.”⁹² Such a resistance is a “right and a duty for the Christian,” however such a resistance must have “love as its logic.”⁹³ In the Christian’s imitation of Christ it is clear “that we cannot resist evil with evil.”⁹⁴ While evil must not be resisted with evil it may be resisted through civil disobedience.⁹⁵

What is stated next is of such importance it should be quoted extensively.

- 1.2.6. Palestinian civil organizations, as well as international organizations, NGOs and certain religious institutions call on individuals, companies and states to engage in divestment and in an economic and commercial boycott of everything produced by the occupation. We understand this to integrate the logic of peaceful resistance. These advocacy campaigns must be carried out with courage, openly sincerely proclaiming that their object is not revenge but rather to put an end to the existing evil, liberating both the perpetrators and the victims of injustice. The aim is to free both peoples from extremist positions of the different Israel governments, bringing both to justice and reconciliation. In this spirit and with this dedication we will eventually reach the longed-for resolution to our problems, as indeed happened in South Africa and with many other liberation movements in the world.

Here the call is certainly to people of faith but it is also extended beyond the people of faith to civil and international organizations to engage in divestment and boycott of those companies that benefit from the occupation.

⁸⁵ *KP*, 3.5.

⁸⁶ *KP*, 3.3.4. See, Naim Ateek, *A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009.

⁸⁷ *KP*, 3.4.

⁸⁸ *KP*, 3.4.1.

⁸⁹ *KP*, 3.4.2, 3.4.3.

⁹⁰ *KP*, 4.2., 4.2.1.

⁹¹ *KP*, 4.2.1.

⁹² *KP*, 4.2.1.

⁹³ *KP*, 4.2.3.

⁹⁴ *KP*, 4.2.4.

⁹⁵ *KP*, 4.2.5.

Kairos Palestine: Some Responses

The Palestinian plea is threefold. First, it calls for a Christian response to fundamentalism. The specific problem that goes unnamed in the document is Christian Zionism and its eschatology, namely dispensationalism. Secondly, it calls for boycott, divestment, and sanction. Thirdly, it calls for an independent Palestinian state.

What have been some of the responses so far?

Imam A. Rashied Omar has noted five things to be learned from *KP*.

1. It contextualizes the struggle and places responsibility for it at the feet of the West and Israel.
2. It insists that Israel's aggression through the occupation is an evil that must be resisted non-violently on the basis of love.
3. It calls for the international community to end its double standards and selective application of international law and engage in a boycott of Israel.
4. At the same time it offers an unequivocal love for Islam and presents a challenge to Muslims to reject fanaticism and extremism.
5. It calls for the establishment of a secular Palestinian state.⁹⁶

One of the significant American responses has come from Kairos USA. In addition to offering a well thought out study guide it has suggested six actions to be taken in response.

1. Learn: Move beyond stereotypes, longstanding prejudices and biased, oversimplified reporting, toward a well-considered, more complex understanding of the Middle East, its conflicts and the yearnings of its peoples for justice, peace and co-existence.
2. Build personal relationships: Visit the land and meet Palestinians, including Palestinian Christians, and Israelis working for justice and peace—listening to their stories, understanding their pain and hearing their hopes and dreams.
3. Enrich worship and congregational life: Take initiative in our places of worship to pray and preach justice and peace in Palestine and Israel, pursue opportunities to learn and study about the situation, explore cultural and economic exchange and challenge your congregation to participate in the blessed calling of peacemaking.
4. Engage in theological reflection: Examine flawed biblical interpretations and unexamined theology that have shaped attitudes and perceptions leading to and allowing the present injustice to continue unchallenged. Pursue open and active theological inquiry and encourage study and reflection, in order to guide your actions in striving to follow Jesus' injunction to "interpret the present time" (Luke 12:56).
5. Participate in nonviolent action: Translate concern into action. Support those—in Israel, the occupied territories and throughout the world—who work to end the illegal occupation through peaceful means. We urge Christians to become educated about the

⁹⁶ A. Rashied Omar, "Kairos Palestine: The Voice of Palestinian Christians" *The Ecumenical Review*, 63:1 (March 2011), pp. 122-124.

Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions and to explore this and other forms of legitimate, nonviolent resistance.

6. Advocate with the U.S. government: As Christians who are committed to justice, peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians, we hold our government and its elected officials to the same principles.⁹⁷

What has been the response of Methodists? In a press release issued by the World Methodist Council it was announced,

Part of the 2009 Kairos Palestine document says: “In order to understand our reality, we say to the Churches: Come and see. We will fulfill our role to make known to you the truth of our reality, receiving you as pilgrims coming to us to pray, carrying a message of peace, love, and reconciliation. You will know the facts and the people of this land, Palestinians and Israelis alike.”

According to Kemper, this is exactly what the office will help facilitate. “These holy places are not just tourist destinations—they are places where Methodists can learn from and stand in solidarity with our Palestinian brothers and sisters in Christ.”

Bishop Ivan Abrahams, the General Secretary of the World Methodist Council, said: “The opening of the Palestine/Israel Liaison office is a prophetic action by the Methodist community. It gives content, shape, and form to the myriad resolutions taken by the Methodist, Wesleyan, Nazarene, United, and Uniting churches around the world.”⁹⁸

At its meeting in Durban, South Africa in 2012 the following actions were adopted:

1. Distance itself from any theology that justifies the illegal and sinful occupation of Palestine.
 2. Recommend the Kairos Palestine document for study in the congregations of our member churches.
 3. Urge member churches through their respective congregations to observe the annual World Council of Churches Week of Prayer for Palestine, and pray for the peace of Jerusalem.
 4. Send warm solidarity greetings to members of the Christian Churches in Palestine.
 5. Work and pray for a just and sustainable peace In Israel and Palestine.
 6. Urge groups in our respective congregations to work with Kairos Palestine and Kairos Southern Africa in planning pilgrimages to the Holy Land that seek justice and connect the World Methodist Council Churches with persons of all faiths in the region.
- Motivation for this resolution.⁹⁹

What is missing from this proposal is even a suggested participation in boycott, divest, and sanctions.

⁹⁷ *Call to Action: U.S. Response to the Kairos Palestine Document*, Kairos USA, <http://www.kairosusa.org/images/kairosusabooklet.pdf> (accessed 31 July 2013).

⁹⁸ Melissa Hinnen, “Methodist Church Will Open a New Office in the Holy Land” *World Methodist Council*, 20 April 2012, <http://www.umcmission.org/Learn-About-Us/News-and-Stories/2012/April/Methodist-Church-Will-Open-a-New-Office-in-the-Holy-Land> (accessed 25 July 2013).

⁹⁹ The World Methodist Council, Social Justice, 8 August 2011, <http://socialjustice.worldmethodistcouncil.org/what-we-do/resolutions/2011-resolutions/> (accessed 28 July 2013).

What of a specific United Methodist response? In October 2010 several United Methodist clergy and laity met to form United Methodist Kairos Response (UMKR). The group has collaborated with several other organizations, including Jewish peace groups. While they were unable to pass any divestment motions at General Conference in 2012, there was a motion passed to invest in Palestine. Most of the focus of UMKR has been on the annual conference level to try and get motions passed to engage in boycott, divestment, and sanctions.¹⁰⁰

What is often missing from many of the responses is any advocacy for a two state solution. While that is a long held dream the building of settlements makes that untenable. If a two state solution were realized what would result is the creation of a series of bantustans. There are at least two major implications of this. First, it will end of any real discussion of a Palestinian right to return to a Palestinian homeland. Secondly, when the two state solution is finally abandoned what that means is the next phase will consist of Palestinian civil rights, not just for those residing in what is now the oPt, but also for Palestinians who are citizens of Israel.

Points of Opposition

What are the points of opposition to the Palestinian plea for action? There are at least four. First, we have tolerated dispensationalist theology in our midst to the extent that it has subverted justice, allowing Christian Zionism to flourish and oppose any effort to address Palestinian pleas for action.¹⁰¹ This has created a colonial eschatological hermeneutic that has contributed to the “nakbah” in much the same way that anti-Semitism lead to a hermeneutic that contributed to the “shoah.” Secondly, we have allowed what Marc Ellis has referred to as liberal Protestant “holocaust guilt” to suppress any criticisms of the Israeli government, thus allowing the architecture of apartheid to continue unabated, tightening up the grip of the matrix of control. On a weekly basis United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has documented how apartheid has taken root and allowed to flourish without international consequences as we slowly pass the opportunity for a two state solution. Soon that hope for a two state solution must be abandoned and in its place there must be a struggle for Palestinian civil rights. Thirdly, we are often intimidated by charges of “anti-Semitism” by the Jewish community here in the U.S. To be anti-Zionist is not to be either anti-Semitic or a self-loathing Jew. For this reason Christians fail to use our “special relationship” with Jewish people to engage in some serious and difficult discussions around Israel as an apartheid state. There has been a tacit assumption that such matters are not up for discussion. The reason there is such an Israeli fear over being labeled an apartheid state is because being labeled as such would entail a moral mandate from the international community for boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) as a non-violent response to a situation of violence. After all, there is already a historical and political precedent for that with South Africa. Fourthly, we often fail to have the kind of relationships needed with the Muslim community engage them on the issue of Palestine. There is a huge incentive among Zionists of all stripes to keep the church distrustful of Muslim motivations and this is often done by promoting Islamophobia.

¹⁰⁰ United Methodist Kairos Response, https://www.kairosresponse.org/UMKR_Home.html (accessed 31 July 2013). For a brief history of the United Methodist involvement with the issue see, Rhonda McCarty, “United Methodists and the Israel-Palestine Situation,” *Quarterly Review*, 25:1 (Spring 2005), pp. 44-59.

¹⁰¹ See, Barry E. Bryant, “Reflections of a Recovered Christian Zionist,” *Quarterly Review*, 25:1 (Spring 2005), pp. 31-43.

So what should our strategy be? First, there should be ongoing and serious engagement with dispensationalism as an eschatology that subverts justice. Stephen Sizer is an example of how this work may be carried out.¹⁰² Secondly, we should follow the lead of emerging Israeli and Jewish voices, Palestinian Christian leadership, the South Africans who have seen the “facts on the ground” and in labeling the situation as an apartheid state. Omar Barghouti, Noam Chomsky and others have argued that because it is apartheid the international community should organize boycotts, divestment, and sanctions against the Israeli government, just as it has done before with South Africa.¹⁰³ Thirdly, Christian theologians should pay more attention to the post-colonial and post-Zionist scholarship that has emerged in recent years, particularly the work of Ilan Pappé, who has called what is being going on, not just apartheid, but “ethnic cleansing.” It is the hope of post-Zionism that a truly democratic Israel can be imagined and realized.

Finally, Americans have an additional role to play. We should be engaged in a campaign to end military aid to Israel. But, dealing with this issue is a two-headed monster. To deal with this in congress one has to deal with American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the lobbying power of the military industrial complex. The reason being, the US gives Israel money and they come shopping for arms in the US, the Wal-Mart of military armaments.¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, Stop US Tax Aid to Israel Now (SUSTAIN) argues that one way to end apartheid and the occupation is to end US tax aid.¹⁰⁵ Not only does our tax money help to finance apartheid and the occupation, the military equipment purchased in the US with US money is often used against civilians.¹⁰⁶

For United Methodists in particular the Palestinian plea to join them in a resistance movement is an opportunity to simply live out our baptismal vows. We savor what God does in baptism and then we come to our response to God’s grace. We said aloud, together, in front of God and everybody (often with the very lives of about-to-be-baptized babies at stake) our vows of baptism and the vows we renew during the congregational reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant. They comprise our response to God’s gift of grace offered to us without price.

On behalf of the whole Church, I ask you:

Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?

I do.

Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?

I do.

¹⁰² Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Roadmap to Armageddon?* Westmont, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004; *Zion’s Christian Soldiers: The Bible, Israel and the Church*, Westmont, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2007. For an excellent documentary that challenges Christian Zionism see, Porter Speakman, Jr., *With God on Our Side*, 2010, DVD, <http://www.withgodonourside.com/> (accessed 6 August 2013).

¹⁰³ Omar Barghouti, *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions: The Global Struggle for Palestinian Rights*, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011; Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé, *Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel’s War against the Palestinians*, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010.

¹⁰⁴ For the statistics see, <http://endtheoccupation.org/section.php?id=451> (accessed 6 August 2013).

¹⁰⁵ See, <http://www.aidtoisrael.org/section.php?id=379>; <http://stop30billion.org/>; <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/foreign-supplied-weapons-used-against-civilians-israel-and-hamas-20090220> (accessed 4 August 2013).

¹⁰⁶ See, “Israel Misuses U.S. Weapons against Palestinians: Case Study of F-16 Fighter Jets” *US Campaign to End the Israel Occupation*, <http://www.endtheoccupation.org/article.php?id=3352> (accessed 6 August 2013).

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races?

I do.¹⁰⁷

There are times when these words leap from the page like words on fire and sear me to my soul. I am quite certain that when they do they are kindled by the same Spirit who set tongues on fire on the day of Pentecost. It is due in no small measure to our participation in the ecumenical movement that we have allowed to blossom a robust theology of baptism. We certainly did not get that from Wesley. Baptism has been the subject of a great deal of Methodist attention and the subject of a wonderful study that resulted in *This Gift of Water*.¹⁰⁸ In response to the study, we the baptized have been called and encouraged to “live out our baptism.” We have affirmed (in the words of the *Discipline* and quite rightfully so) that, “All Christians are called through their baptism to this ministry of servanthood in the world to the glory of God and for human fulfillment.” But try for just a moment to imagine, what if we used our baptismal vows to respond to *Kairos Palestine* by,

- Renouncing the spiritual forces of wickedness as experienced through Nakba and Naksa
- Rejecting the evil powers of this world, the economic powers, the political powers, and any other power or principality that seeks to disfigure the image of God in those who are oppressed and those oppress them
- Repenting of our sin of omission, our sin of commission, and our sin of indifference while allowing the cries of God’s children in the homeland of a Palestinian Jesus to go ignored or unheard
- Resisting evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves, particularly in the systems of apartheid and all its permeations and manifestations
- Confessing Jesus Christ as Savior as the Word who became both flesh and Kairos making connection between then and now.

Try to imagine for just a moment an understanding of discipleship based on the commitment to renounce, reject, repent, resist, and confess, all words that rise up out of the waters of the river Jordan with a newly baptized Jesus himself, words that accompanied him and helped to define his own mission as he stared the Satan down in the wicked wilderness rejecting repeated temptations to do otherwise. Words that accompanied him as he healed, walked on water, deterred a mob with arms cocked ready to stone a woman discovered in adultery, and as he told stories about the likes of *good* Samaritans. Words that no doubt drove him to pick up a cross with his name on it, and then to forgive those that even participated in his death. And then, to top all this off, these words were there, and quite possibly became the resurrecting and stone rolling words of the first Kairos moment, words that were surely alpha and omega words. Renounce! Reject! Repent! Resist! Confess! Allow these words not just to burn within

¹⁰⁷ Carlton Young, editor, *The United Methodist Hymnal*, Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989, p. 42.

¹⁰⁸ Gail Carlton Felton, *This gift of water: the practice and theology of baptism among Methodists in America*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992.

us, but to also be poured over our hearts, souls, and minds like baptismal water from the river Jordan in the land of Palestine. This is a moment of truth even for us.

Figure 1



<http://palsolidarity.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/shrinking-map-of-palestine.png>

A MOMENT OF TRUTH

**A word of faith, hope, and love
from the heart of
Palestinian suffering**

KAIROS PALESTINE

2009

First print

PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF CHURCHES JERUSALEM

WE HEAR THE CRY OF OUR CHILDREN

We, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, hear the cry of hope that our children have launched in these difficult times that we still experience in this Holy Land. We support them and stand by them in their faith, their hope, their love and their vision for the future. We also support the call to all our faithful as well as to the Israeli and Palestinian Leaders, to the International Community and to the World Churches, in order to accelerate the achievement of justice, peace and reconciliation in this Holy Land . We ask God to bless all our children by giving them more power in order to contribute effectively in establishing and developing their community, while making it a community of love, trust, justice and peace.

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox

H is B eatitude Patriarch

Church

His Beatitude Patriarch, Armenian Orthodox Very Revd Father Pierbattista

Pizzaballa, Custody of the Holy Land H.E. Archbishop Dr Anba Abraham, Coptic

H .E. A rchb ish

Swerios Malki Murad, Syrian Orthodox

hishop A rchb ish

Abba Mathaious, Ethiopian

-His Beatitude Patriarch, Catholic

B ishop G regor

Malki, Syrian Catholic

B ishop M unib A

Raphael Minassian, Armenian Catholic

Jerusalem - December 15, 2009

Kairos Palestine

This document is the Christian Palestinians' word to the world about what is happening in Palestine. It is written at this time when we wanted to see the Glory of the grace of God in this land and in the sufferings of its people. In this spirit the document requests the international community to stand by the Palestinian people who have faced oppression, displacement, suffering and clear apartheid for more than six decades. The suffering continues while the international community silently looks on at the occupying State, Israel. Our word is a cry of hope, with love, prayer and faith in God. We address it first of all to ourselves and then to all the churches and Christians in the world, asking them to stand against injustice and apartheid, urging them to work for a just peace in our region, calling on them to revisit theologies that justify crimes perpetrated against our people and the dispossession of the land.

In this historic document, we Palestinian Christians declare that the military occupation of our land is a sin against God and humanity, and that any theology that legitimizes the occupation is far from Christian teachings because true Christian theology is a theology of love and solidarity with the oppressed, a call to justice and equality among peoples.

This document did not come about spontaneously, and it is not the result of a coincidence. It is not a theoretical theological study or a policy paper, but is rather a document of faith and work. Its importance stems from the sincere expression of the concerns of the people and their view of this moment in history we are living through. It seeks to be prophetic in addressing things as they are without equivocation and with boldness, in addition it puts forward ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and all forms of discrimination as the solution that will lead to a just and lasting peace with the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Al-Quds as its capital. The document also demands that all peoples, political leaders and decision-makers put pressure on Israel and take legal measures in order to oblige its government to put an end to its oppression and disregard for the international law. The document also holds a clear position that non-violent resistance to this injustice is a right and duty for all Palestinians including Christians.

The initiators of this document have been working on it for more than a year, in prayer and discussion, guided by their faith in God and their love for their people, accepting advice from many friends: Palestinians, Arabs and those from the wider international community. We are grateful to our friends for their solidarity with us.

As Palestinian Christians we hope that this document will provide the turning point to focus the efforts of all peace-loving peoples in the world, especially our Christian sisters and brothers. We hope also that it will be welcomed positively and will receive strong support, as was the South Africa Kairos document launched in 1985, which, at that time proved to be a tool in the struggle against oppression and occupation. We believe that

liberation from occupation is in the interest of all peoples in the region because the problem is not just a political one, but one in which human beings are destroyed.

We pray God to inspire us all, particularly our leaders and policy-makers, to find the way of justice and equality, and to realize that it is the only way that leads to the genuine peace we are seeking.

With thanks

- His Beatitude Patriarch Michel Sabbah
- His Eminence Archbishop Atallah Hanna
- Rev. Dr. Jamal Khader
- Rev. Dr. Rafiq Khoury
- Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb
- Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek
- Rev. Dr. Yohana Katanacho
- Rev. Fadi Diab
- Dr. Jiries Khoury
- Ms. Cedar Duaybis
- Ms. Nora Kort
- Ms. Lucy Thaljeh
- Mr. Nidal Abu El Zuluf
- Mr. Yusef Daher
- Mr. Rifat Kassis - Coordinator

Note: You can review the list of Palestinian Christian institutions and personalities signed the document and copies in other languages on the following website: www.kairospalestine.ps

A moment of truth

A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering

Introduction

We, a group of Christian Palestinians, after prayer, reflection and an exchange of opinion, cry out from within the suffering in our country, under the Israeli occupation, with a cry of hope in the absence of all hope, a cry full of prayer and faith in a God ever vigilant, in God's divine providence for all the inhabitants of this land. Inspired by the mystery of God's love for all, the mystery of God's divine presence in the history of all peoples and, in a particular way, in the history of our country, we proclaim our word based on our Christian faith and our sense of Palestinian belonging – a word of faith, hope and love.

Why now? Because today we have reached a dead end in the tragedy of the Palestinian people. The decision-makers content themselves with managing the crisis rather than committing themselves to the serious task of finding a way to resolve it. The hearts of the faithful are filled with pain and with questioning: What is the international community doing? What are the political leaders in Palestine, in Israel and in the Arab world doing? What is the Church doing? The problem is not just a political one. It is a policy in which human beings are destroyed, and this must be of concern to the Church.

We address ourselves to our brothers and sisters, members of our Churches in this land. We call out as Christians and as Palestinians to our religious and political leaders, to our Palestinian society and to the Israeli society, to the international community, and to our Christian brothers and sisters in the Churches around the world .

1. The reality on the ground

1.1 *"They say: 'Peace, peace' when there is no peace"* (Jer. 6:14). These days, everyone is speaking about peace in the Middle East and the peace process. So far, however, these are simply words; the reality is one of Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, deprivation of our freedom and all that results from this situation:

1.1.1 The separation wall erected on Palestinian territory, a large part of which has been confiscated for this purpose, has turned our towns and villages into prisons, separating them from one another, making them dispersed and divided cantons. Gaza, especially after the cruel war Israel launched against it during December 2008 and January 2009, continues to live in inhuman conditions, under permanent blockade and cut off from the other Palestinian territories .

1.1.2 Israeli settlements ravage our land in the name of God and in the name of force, controlling our natural resources, including water and agricultural land, thus depriving hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, and constituting an obstacle to any political solution.

1.1.3 Reality is the daily humiliation to which we are subjected at the military checkpoints, as we make our way to jobs, schools or hospitals.

1.1.4 Reality is the separation between members of the same family, making family life impossible for thousands of Palestinians, especially where one of the spouses does not have an Israeli identity card.

1.1.5 Religious liberty is severely restricted; the freedom of access to the holy places is denied under the pretext of security. Jerusalem and its holy places are out of bounds for many Christians and Muslims from the West Bank and the Gaza strip. Even Jerusalemites face restrictions during the religious feasts. Some of our Arab clergy are regularly barred from entering Jerusalem .

1.1.6 Refugees are also part of our reality. Most of them are still living in camps under difficult circumstances. They have been waiting for their right of return, generation after generation. What will be their fate?

1.1.7 And the prisoners? The thousands of prisoners languishing in Israeli prisons are part of our reality. The Israelis move heaven and earth to gain the release of one prisoner, and those thousands of Palestinian prisoners, when will they have their freedom?

1.1.8 Jerusalem is the heart of our reality. It is, at the same time, symbol of peace and sign of conflict. While the separation wall divides Palestinian neighbourhoods, Jerusalem continues to be emptied of its Palestinian citizens, Christians and Muslims. Their identity cards are confiscated, which means the loss of their right to reside in Jerusalem. Their homes are demolished or expropriated. Jerusalem, city of reconciliation, has become a city of discrimination and exclusion, a source of struggle rather than peace .

1.2 Also part of this reality is the Israeli disregard of international law and international resolutions, as well as the paralysis of the Arab world and the international community in the face of this contempt. Human rights are violated and despite the various reports of local and international human rights' organizations, the injustice continues.

1.2.1 Palestinians within the State of Israel, who have also suffered a historical injustice, although they are citizens and have the rights and obligations of citizenship, still suffer from discriminatory policies. They too are waiting to enjoy full rights and equality like all other citizens in the state.

1.3 Emigration is another element in our reality. The absence of any vision or spark of hope for peace and freedom pushes young people, both Muslim and Christian, to emigrate. Thus the land is deprived of its most important and richest resource – educated youth. The shrinking number of Christians, particularly in Palestine, is one of the dangerous consequences, both of this conflict, and of the local and international paralysis and failure to find a comprehensive solution to the problem.

1.4 In the face of this reality, Israel justifies its actions as self-defence, including occupation, collective punishment and all other forms of reprisals against the Palestinians. In our opinion, this vision is a reversal of reality. Yes, there is Palestinian resistance to the occupation. However, if there were no occupation, there would be no resistance, no fear and no insecurity. This is our understanding of the situation. Therefore, we call on the Israelis to end the occupation. Then they will see a new world in which there is no fear, no threat but rather security, justice and peace.

1.5 The Palestinian response to this reality was diverse. Some responded through negotiations: that was the official position of the Palestinian Authority, but it did not advance the peace process. Some political parties followed the way of armed resistance. Israel used this as a pretext to accuse the Palestinians of being terrorists and was able to distort the real nature of the conflict, presenting it as an Israeli war against terror, rather than an Israeli occupation faced by Palestinian legal resistance aiming at ending it.

1.5.1 The tragedy worsened with the internal conflict among Palestinians themselves, and with the separation of Gaza from the rest of the Palestinian territory. It is noteworthy that, even though the division is among Palestinians themselves, the international community bears an important responsibility for it since it refused to deal positively with the will of the Palestinian people expressed in the outcome of democratic and legal elections in 2006.

Again, we repeat and proclaim that our Christian word in the midst of all this, in the midst of our catastrophe, is a word of faith, hope and love.

2. A word of faith

W e believe in one G od, a good and just G od

2.1 We believe in God, one God, Creator of the universe and of humanity. We believe in a good and just God, who loves each one of his creatures. We believe that every human being is created in God's image and likeness and that every one's dignity is derived from the dignity of the Almighty One. We believe that this dignity is one and the same in each and all of us. This means for us, here and now, in this land in particular, that God created us not so that we might engage in strife and conflict but rather that we might come and know and love one another, and together build up the land in love and mutual respect.

2.1.1 We also believe in God's eternal Word, His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, whom God sent as the Saviour of the world.

2.1.2 We believe in the Holy Spirit, who accompanies the Church and all humanity on its journey. It is the Spirit that helps us to understand Holy Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, showing their unity, here and now. The Spirit makes manifest the revelation of God to humanity, past, present and future.

How do we understand the word of God?

2.2 We believe that God has spoken to humanity, here in our country: *"Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days God has spoken to us by a Son, whom God appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds"* (Heb. 1:1-2)

2.2.1 We, Christian Palestinians, believe, like all Christians throughout the world, that Jesus Christ came in order to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, and in his light and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we read the Holy Scriptures. We meditate upon and interpret Scripture just as Jesus Christ did with the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. As it is written in the Gospel according to Saint Luke: *"Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures"* (Lk 24:27)

2.2.2 Our Lord Jesus Christ came, proclaiming that the Kingdom of God was near. He provoked a revolution in the life and faith of all humanity. He came with "*a new teaching*" (Mk 1:27), casting a new light on the Old Testament, on the themes that relate to our Christian faith and our daily lives, themes such as the promises, the election, the people of God and the land. We believe that the Word of God is a living Word, casting a particular light on each period of history, manifesting to Christian believers what God is saying to us here and now. For this reason, it is unacceptable to transform the Word of God into letters of stone that pervert the love of God and His providence in the life of both peoples and individuals. This is precisely the error in fundamentalist Biblical interpretation that brings us death and destruction when the word of God is petrified and transmitted from generation to generation as a dead letter. This dead letter is used as a weapon in our present history in order to deprive us of our rights in our own land.

Our land has a universal mission

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

2.3.1 God sent the patriarchs, the prophets and the apostles to this land so that they might carry forth a universal mission to the world. Today we constitute three religions in this land, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Our land is God's land, as is the case with all countries in the world. It is holy inasmuch as God is present in it, for God alone is holy and sanctifier. It is the duty of those of us who live here, to respect the will of God for this land. It is our duty to liberate it from the evil of injustice and war. It is God's land and therefore it must be a land of reconciliation, peace and love. This is indeed possible. God has put us here as two peoples, and God gives us the capacity, if we have the will, to live together and establish in it justice and peace, making it in reality God's land: "*The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it*" (Ps. 24:1).

2.3.2 Our presence in this land, as Christian and Muslim Palestinians, is not accidental but rather deeply rooted in the history and geography of this land, resonant with the connectedness of any other people to the land it lives in. It was an injustice when we were driven out. The West sought to make amends for what Jews had endured in the countries of Europe, but it made amends on our account and in our land. They tried to correct an injustice and the result was a new injustice.

2.3.3 Furthermore, we know that certain theologians in the West try to attach a biblical and theological legitimacy to the infringement of our rights. Thus, the promises, according to their interpretation, have become a menace to our very existence. The "good news" in the Gospel itself has become "a harbinger of death" for us. We call on these theologians to deepen their reflection on the Word of God and to rectify their interpretations so that they might see in the Word of God a source of life for all peoples.

2.3.4 Our connectedness to this land is a natural right. It is not an ideological or a theological question only. It is a matter of life and death. There are those who do not agree with us, even defining us as enemies only because we declare that we want to live as free people in our land. We suffer from the occupation of our land because we are

Palestinians. And as Christian Palestinians we suffer from the wrong interpretation of some theologians. Faced with this, our task is to safeguard the Word of God as a source of life and not of death, so that "the good news" remains what it is, "good news" for us and for all. In face of those who use the Bible to threaten our existence as Christian and Muslim Palestinians, we renew our faith in God because we know that the word of God can not be the source of our destruction.

2.4 Therefore, we declare that any use of the Bible to legitimize or support political options and positions that are based upon injustice, imposed by one person on another, or by one people on another, transform religion into human ideology and strip the Word of God of its holiness, its universality and truth.

2.5 We also declare that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is a sin against God and humanity because it deprives the Palestinians of their basic human rights, bestowed by God. It distorts the image of God in the Israeli who has become an occupier just as it distorts this image in the Palestinian living under occupation. We declare that any theology, seemingly based on the Bible or on faith or on history, that legitimizes the occupation, is far from Christian teachings, because it calls for violence and holy war in the name of God Almighty, subordinating God to temporary human interests, and distorting the divine image in the human beings living under both political and theological injustice.

3. Hope

3.1 Despite the lack of even a glimmer of positive expectation, our hope remains strong. The present situation does not promise any quick solution or the end of the occupation that is imposed on us. Yes, the initiatives, the conferences, visits and negotiations have multiplied, but they have not been followed up by any change in our situation and suffering. Even the new US position that has been announced by President Obama, with a manifest desire to put an end to the tragedy, has not been able to make a change in our reality. The clear Israeli response, refusing any solution, leaves no room for positive expectation. Despite this, our hope remains strong, because it is from God. God alone is good, almighty and loving and His goodness will one day be victorious over the evil in which we find ourselves. As Saint Paul said: *"If God is for us, who is against us? (...) Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long" (...) For I am convinced that (nothing) in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God"* (Rom. 8:31, 35, 36, 39).

What is the meaning of hope?

3.2 Hope within us means first and foremost our faith in God and secondly our expectation, despite everything, for a better future. Thirdly, it means not chasing after illusions – we realize that release is not close at hand. Hope is the capacity to see God in the midst of trouble, and to be co-workers with the Holy Spirit who is dwelling in us. From this vision derives the strength to be steadfast, remain firm and work to change the reality in which we find ourselves. Hope means not giving in to evil but rather standing up to it and continuing to resist it. We see nothing in the present or future except ruin and

destruction. We see the upper hand of the strong, the growing orientation towards racist separation and the imposition of laws that deny our existence and our dignity. We see confusion and division in the Palestinian position. If, despite all this, we do resist this reality today and work hard, perhaps the destruction that looms on the horizon may not come upon us.

Signs of hope

3.3 The Church in our land, her leaders and her faithful, despite her weakness and her divisions, does show certain signs of hope. Our parish communities are vibrant and most of our young people are active apostles for justice and peace. In addition to the individual commitment, our various Church institutions make our faith active and present in service, love and prayer.

3.3.1 Among the signs of hope are the local centres of theology, with a religious and social character. They are numerous in our different Churches. The ecumenical spirit, even if still hesitant, shows itself more and more in the meetings of our different Church families .

3.3.2 We can add to this the numerous meetings for inter-religious dialogue, Christian–Muslim dialogue, which includes the religious leaders and a part of the people. Admittedly, dialogue is a long process and is perfected through a daily effort as we undergo the same sufferings and have the same expectations. There is also dialogue among the three religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as well as different dialogue meetings on the academic or social level. They all try to breach the walls imposed by the occupation and oppose the distorted perception of human beings in the heart of their brothers or sisters.

3.3.3 One of the most important signs of hope is the steadfastness of the generations, the belief in the justice of their cause and the continuity of memory, which does not forget the "Nakba" (catastrophe) and its significance. Likewise significant is the developing awareness among many Churches throughout the world and their desire to know the truth about what is going on here.

3.3.4 In addition to that, we see a determination among many to overcome the resentments of the past and to be ready for reconciliation once justice has been restored. Public awareness of the need to restore political rights to the Palestinians is increasing, and Jewish and Israeli voices, advocating peace and justice, are raised in support of this with the approval of the international community. True, these forces for justice and reconciliation have not yet been able to transform the situation of injustice, but they have their influence and may shorten the time of suffering and hasten the time of reconciliation.

The mission of the Church

3.4 Our Church is a Church of people who pray and serve. This prayer and service is prophetic, bearing the voice of God in the present and future. Everything that happens in our land, everyone who lives there, all the pains and hopes, all the injustice and all the efforts to stop this injustice, are part and parcel of the prayer of our Church and the service of all her institutions. Thanks be to God that our Church raises her voice against injustice despite the fact that some desire her to remain silent, closed in her religious devotions.

3.4.1 The mission of the Church is prophetic, to speak the Word of God courageously, honestly and lovingly in the local context and in the midst of daily events. If she does take sides, it is with the oppressed, to stand alongside them, just as Christ our Lord stood by the side of each poor person and each sinner, calling them to repentance, life, and the restoration of the dignity bestowed on them by God and that no one has the right to strip away.

3.4.2 The mission of the Church is to proclaim the Kingdom of God, a kingdom of justice, peace and dignity. Our vocation as a living Church is to bear witness to the goodness of God and the dignity of human beings. We are called to pray and to make our voice heard when we announce a new society where human beings believe in their own dignity and the dignity of their adversaries.

3.4.3 Our Church points to the Kingdom, which cannot be tied to any earthly kingdom. Jesus said before Pilate that he was indeed a king but *"my kingdom is not from this world"* (Jn 18:36). Saint Paul says: *"The Kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"* (Rom.14:17). Therefore, religion cannot favour or support any unjust political regime, but must rather promote justice, truth and human dignity. It must exert every effort to purify regimes where human beings suffer injustice and human dignity is violated. The Kingdom of God on earth is not dependent on any political orientation, for it is greater and more inclusive than any particular political system.

3.4.4 Jesus Christ said: *"The Kingdom of God is among you"* (Luke 17:21). This Kingdom that is present among us and in us is the extension of the mystery of salvation. It is the presence of God among us and our sense of that presence in everything we do and say. It is in this divine presence that we shall do what we can until justice is achieved in this land .

3.4.5 The cruel circumstances in which the Palestinian Church has lived and continues to live have required the Church to clarify her faith and to identify her vocation better. We have studied our vocation and have come to know it better in the midst of suffering and pain: today, we bear the strength of love rather than that of revenge, a culture of life rather than a culture of death. This is a source of hope for us, for the Church and for the world.

3.5 The Resurrection is the source of our hope .Just as Christ rose in victory over death and evil, so too we are able, as each inhabitant of this land is able, to vanquish the evil of war. We will remain a witnessing, steadfast and active Church in the land of the Resurrection.

4. Love ~~The commandment of love~~ *as I have loved you, you also should love one*

another" (Jn 13:34). He has already showed us how to love and how to treat our enemies. He said: *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous (...) Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect"* (Matt. 5:45-47).

Saint Paul also said: *"Do not repay anyone evil for evil"* (Rom. 12:17). And Saint Peter said: *"Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called"* (1 Pet. 3:9).

Resistance

4.2 This word is clear. Love is the commandment of Christ our Lord to us and it includes both friends and enemies. This must be clear when we find ourselves in circumstances where we must resist evil of whatever kind .

4.2.1 Love is seeing the face of God in every human being. Every person is my brother or my sister. However, seeing the face of God in everyone does not mean accepting evil or aggression on their part. Rather, this love seeks to correct the evil and stop the aggression.

The aggression against the Palestinian people which is the Israeli occupation, is an evil that must be resisted. It is an evil and a sin that must be resisted and removed. Primary responsibility for this rests with the Palestinians themselves suffering occupation. Christian love invites us to resist it. However, love puts an end to evil by walking in the ways of justice. Responsibility lies also with the international community, because international law regulates relations between peoples today. Finally responsibility lies with the perpetrators of the injustice; they must liberate themselves from the evil that is in them and the injustice they have imposed on others.

4.2.2 When we review the history of the nations, we see many wars and much resistance to war by war, to violence by violence. The Palestinian people has gone the way of the peoples, particularly in the first stages of its struggle with the Israeli occupation. However, it also engaged in peaceful struggle, especially during the first Intifada. We recognize that all peoples must find a new way in their relations with each other and the resolution of their conflicts. The ways of force must give way to the ways of justice. This applies above all to the peoples that are militarily strong, mighty enough to impose their injustice on the weaker .

4.2.3 We say that our option as Christians in the face of the Israeli occupation is to resist. Resistance is a right and a duty for the Christian. But it is resistance with love as its logic. It is thus a creative resistance for it must find human ways that engage the humanity of the enemy. Seeing the image of God in the face of the enemy means taking up positions in the light of this vision of active resistance to stop the injustice and oblige the perpetrator to end his aggression and thus achieve the desired goal, which is getting back the land, freedom, dignity and independence.

4.2.4 Christ our Lord has left us an example we must imitate. We must resist evil but he taught us that we cannot resist evil with evil. This is a difficult commandment, particularly when the enemy is determined to impose himself and deny our right to remain here in our land. It is a difficult commandment yet it alone can stand firm in the face of the clear declarations of the occupation authorities that refuse our existence and the many excuses these authorities use to continue imposing occupation upon us.

4.2.5 Resistance to the evil of occupation is integrated, then, within this Christian love that refuses evil and corrects it. It resists evil in all its forms with methods that enter into the logic of love and draw on all energies to make peace. We can resist through civil disobedience. We do not resist with death but rather through respect of life. We respect

and have a high esteem for all those who have given their life for our nation. And we affirm that every citizen must be ready to defend his or her life, freedom and land.

4.2.6 Palestinian civil organizations, as well as international organizations, NGOs and certain religious institutions call on individuals, companies and states to engage in divestment and in an economic and commercial boycott of everything produced by the occupation. We understand this to integrate the logic of peaceful resistance. These advocacy campaigns must be carried out with courage, openly sincerely proclaiming that their object is not revenge but rather to put an end to the existing evil, liberating both the perpetrators and the victims of injustice. The aim is to free both peoples from extremist positions of the different Israeli governments, bringing both to justice and reconciliation. In this spirit and with this dedication we will eventually reach the longed-for resolution to our problems, as indeed happened in South Africa and with many other liberation movements in the world.

4.3 Through our love, we will overcome injustices and establish foundations for a new society both for us and for our opponents. Our future and their future are one. Either the cycle of violence that destroys both of us or peace that will benefit both. We call on Israel to give up its injustice towards us, not to twist the truth of reality of the occupation by pretending that it is a battle against terrorism. The roots of "terrorism" are in the human injustice committed and in the evil of the occupation. These must be removed if there be a sincere intention to remove "terrorism". We call on the people of Israel to be our partners in peace and not in the cycle of interminable violence. Let us resist evil together, the evil of occupation and the infernal cycle of violence.

5. Our word to our brothers and sisters

5.1 We all face, today, a way that is blocked and a future that promises only woe. Our word to all our Christian brothers and sisters is a word of hope, patience, steadfastness and new action for a better future. Our word is that we, as Christians we carry a message, and we will continue to carry it despite the thorns, despite blood and daily difficulties. We place our hope in God, who will grant us relief in His own time. At the same time, we continue to act in concord with God and God's will, building, resisting evil and bringing closer the day of justice and peace.

5.2 We say to our Christian brothers and sisters: This is a time for repentance. Repentance brings us back into the communion of love with everyone who suffers, the prisoners, the wounded, those afflicted with temporary or permanent handicaps, the children who cannot live their childhood and each one who mourns a dear one. The communion of love says to every believer in spirit and in truth: if my brother is a prisoner I am a prisoner; if his home is destroyed, my home is destroyed; when my brother is killed, then I too am killed. We face the same challenges and share in all that has happened and will happen. Perhaps, as individuals or as heads of Churches, we were silent when we should have raised our voices to condemn the injustice and share in the suffering. This is a time of repentance for our silence, indifference, lack of communion, either because we did not persevere in our mission in this land and abandoned it, or because we did not think and do enough to reach a new and integrated vision and remained divided, contradicting our witness and weakening our word. Repentance for our

concern with our institutions, sometimes at the expense of our mission, thus silencing the prophetic voice given by the Spirit to the Churches.

5.3 We call on Christians to remain steadfast in this time of trial, just as we have throughout the centuries, through the changing succession of states and governments. Be patient, steadfast and full of hope so that you might fill the heart of every one of your brothers or sisters who shares in this same trial with hope. *"Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you"* (1 Pet. 3:15). Be active and, provided this conforms to love, participate in any sacrifice that resistance asks of you to overcome our present travail ..

5.4 Our numbers are few but our message is great and important. Our land is in urgent need of love. Our love is a message to the Muslim and to the Jew, as well as to the world.

5.4.1 Our message to the Muslims is a message of love and of living together and a call to reject fanaticism and extremism. It is also a message to the world that Muslims are neither to be stereotyped as the enemy nor caricatured as terrorists but rather to be lived with in peace and engaged with in dialogue.

5.4.2 Our message to the Jews tells them: Even though we have fought one another in the recent past and still struggle today, we are able to love and live together. We can organize our political life, with all its complexity, according to the logic of this love and its power, after ending the occupation and establishing justice.

5.4.3 The word of faith says to anyone engaged in political activity: human beings were not made for hatred. It is not permitted to hate, neither is it permitted to kill or to be killed. The culture of love is the culture of accepting the other. Through it we perfect ourselves and the foundations of society are established .

6. Our word to the Churches of the world

6.1 Our word to the Churches of the world is firstly a word of gratitude for the solidarity you have shown toward us in word, deed and presence among us. It is a word of praise for the many Churches and Christians who support the right of the Palestinian people for self determination. It is a message of solidarity with those Christians and Churches who have suffered because of their advocacy for law and justice .

However, it is also a call to repentance; to revisit fundamentalist theological positions that support certain unjust political options with regard to the Palestinian people. It is a call to stand alongside the oppressed and preserve the word of God as good news for all rather than to turn it into a weapon with which to slay the oppressed. The word of God is a word of love for all His creation. God is not the ally of one against the other, nor the opponent of one in the face of the other. God is the Lord of all and loves all, demanding justice from all and issuing to all of us the same commandments. We ask our sister Churches not to offer a theological cover-up for the injustice we suffer, for the sin of the occupation imposed upon us. Our question to our brothers and sisters in the Churches today is: Are you able to help us get our freedom back, for this is the only way you can help the two peoples attain justice, peace, security and love?

6.2 In order to understand our reality, we say to the Churches: Come and see. We will fulfil our role to make known to you the truth of our reality, receiving you as pilgrims coming to us to pray, carrying a message of peace, love and reconciliation. You will know the facts and the people of this land, Palestinians and Israelis alike.

6.3 We condemn all forms of racism, whether religious or ethnic, including anti- Semitism and Islamophobia, and we call on you to condemn it and oppose it in all its manifestations. At the same time we call on you to say a word of truth and to take a position of truth with regard to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. As we have already said, we see boycott and disinvestment as tools of non violence for justice, peace and security for all.

7. Our word to the international community

7. Our word to the international community is to stop the principle of "double standards" and insist on the international resolutions regarding the Palestinian problem with regard to all parties. Selective application of international law threatens to leave us vulnerable to a law of the jungle. It legitimizes the claims by certain armed groups and states that the international community only understands the logic of force. Therefore, we call for a response to what the civil and religious institutions have proposed, as mentioned earlier: the beginning of a system of economic sanctions and boycott to be applied against Israel. We repeat once again that this is not revenge but rather a serious action in order to reach a just and definitive peace that will put an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories and will guarantee security and peace for all.

8. Jewish and Muslim religious leaders

8. Finally, we address an appeal to the religious and spiritual leaders, Jewish and Muslim, with whom we share the same vision that every human being is created by God and has been given equal dignity. Hence the obligation for each of us to defend the oppressed and the dignity God has bestowed on them. Let us together try to rise up above the political positions that have failed so far and continue to lead us on the path of failure and suffering.

9. A call to our Palestinian people and to the Israelis

9.1 This is a call to see the face of God in each one of God's creatures and overcome the barriers of fear or race in order to establish a constructive dialogue and not remain within the cycle of never-ending manoeuvres that aim to keep the situation as it is. Our appeal is to reach a common vision, built on equality and sharing, not on superiority, negation of the other or aggression, using the pretext of fear and security. We say that love is possible and mutual trust is possible. Thus, peace is possible and definitive reconciliation also. Thus, justice and security will be attained for all.

9.2 Education is important. Educational programs must help us to get to know the other as he or she is rather than through the prism of conflict, hostility or religious fanaticism. The educational programs in place today are infected with this hostility. The time has come to begin a new education that allows one to see the face of God in the other

and declares that we are capable of loving each other and building our future together in peace and security.

9.3 Trying to make the state a religious state, Jewish or Islamic, suffocates the state, confines it within narrow limits, and transforms it into a state that practices discrimination and exclusion, preferring one citizen over another. We appeal to both religious Jews and Muslims: let the state be a state for all its citizens, with a vision constructed on respect for religion but also equality, justice, liberty and respect for pluralism and not on domination by a religion or a numerical majority.

9.4 To the leaders of Palestine we say that current divisions weaken all of us and cause more sufferings. Nothing can justify these divisions. For the good of the people, which must outweigh that of the political parties, an end must be put to division. We appeal to the international community to lend its support towards this union and to respect the will of the Palestinian people as expressed freely.

9.5 Jerusalem is the foundation of our vision and our entire life. She is the city to which God gave a particular importance in the history of humanity. She is the city towards which all people are in movement – and where they will meet in friendship and love in the presence of the One Unique God, according to the vision of the prophet Isaiah: *"In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it (...) He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more"* (Is. 2: 2-5). Today, the city is inhabited by two peoples of three religions; and it is on this prophetic vision and on the international resolutions concerning the totality of Jerusalem that any political solution must be based. This is the first issue that should be negotiated because the recognition of Jerusalem's sanctity and its message will be a source of inspiration towards finding a solution to the entire problem, which is largely a problem of mutual trust and ability to set in place a new land in this land of God.

10. Hope and faith in God

10. In the absence of all hope, we cry out our cry of hope. We believe in God, good and just. We believe that God's goodness will finally triumph over the evil of hate and of death that still persist in our land. We will see here "a new land" and "a new human being", capable of rising up in the spirit to love each one of his or her brothers and sisters.
