

Kairos for GLOBAL JUSTICE



Kairos Palestine
A Moment of Truth وقفة حق

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Kairos for Global Justice

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Preface

Patriarch Emeritus Michel Sabbah

I went through the texts. Reading them, I felt the Spirit of God at work, giving courage, sharing love and hope and faith. Among and despite the struggles for power around us, this book is a sign that tells us the struggle can be waged with love -- and that everyone on both fronts, those with us and those against us, is the object of our love.

The word **kairos**, considered from our Christian Palestinian perspective, means the “moment,” the “moment of God’s grace,” the moment in which we see the work of God, the grace of God, before us in Palestine/Israel. It is a moment we witness even through the images of blood and mutual human rejection surrounding us, through the darkest moments lived by individuals and by the entire Palestinian people. These same contrasting realities, grace and darkness, are experienced by Israelis as well. One day, both peoples will emerge from the tunnel: a tunnel that had been full of human cruelty, but also of the mystery of the divine presence, enveloping both enemies. They will emerge from the tunnel, washed by and vested with the grace of God -- no longer enemies to anyone, no more seeing the face of terror in the other -- and coming out into the light, coming out to live where God dwells.

The spirit of Kairos Palestine is this: enemies today and human beings tomorrow, vested with the grace of God, moving forth to build together, to wipe off sins committed against human rights, to regenerate and care for new generations of Palestinians and Israelis, to develop the earth where God wants us to continue God’s work.

The essence of the Kairos Palestine document is a call for truth. Indeed, its title is “A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering.” It is a call for the truth that is the human being in his or her essence, every human being; the truth that is God Himself, the truth we must discover in every single event in our life, because God is there. Though the “big” people of this world may think they are creating history alone, this is not the truth. The truth arises when a human being, even in a situation as extreme as war, knows he is not at home, until he discovers that he is in God’s home -- and that the invisible God is visible in the brother or sister, enemy or friend, who live alongside him in that home. After this experience, the true relationships between all those dwelling in the same home will become clearer, and the truth will thus restore dignity to everyone struggling on God’s earth, in God’s own home.

Today, relations between Palestinians and Israelis are marked by control, oppression, and fear of the powerful. These relationships are still based on demands: the powerful one wants the oppressed to accept more oppression, rather than behaving as every human being endowed with God’s dignity would behave: that is, by resisting his oppression and acting to secure both his own liberation and the liberation of his oppressor.

The second essential element in the Kairos Document is love, the commandment of Jesus: love each other, even your enemy. This is, at root, the only commandment, and certainly the most difficult commandment for everyone: the powerful and the weak, the rich and the

poor. Love each other. It is a commandment. Love the other: that means helping the other in the name of his or her own good. When he is entangled in a situation of evil (evil, for example, is the oppression imposed upon another people), you must help him get rid of this evil, to liberate himself, to become a free man or woman, or a free people -- no longer afraid of anyone, having reached the complete freedom that makes him or her a brother or sister to all, to all peoples.

To all the writers who contributed to this book: we thank them for sharing their own faith, hope and love with the Christian Palestinians, who, engaged in concrete human action, wanted to put their lives and their political destiny, far beyond the reach of mere human hands, in God's hands.

Three Palestinian co-authors joined this international work of love: Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek, Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb and Father Jamal Khader. All three have helped discover, deeply engaged in this long fight in the land of God, that it should no longer remain a land of death. Rather, this land should become a land of life, given in abundance by God to all those who dwell in His home, this Holy Land, this Palestine and Israel.

Michel Sabbah, Patriarch Emeritus
Jerusalem, 25 September 2012

The Reality on the Ground

Kairos for Global Justice: An Introduction

Rifat Odeh Kassis

After two full years of hard work, Kairos Palestine is in the process of transforming itself into a broad umbrella movement. We aim to be the focal point and the gathering place for Palestinian Christians, issuing regular position statements, distributing alerts, and offering materials and resources relevant to the life of this community. Kairos Palestine does not carry out regular activities by itself; rather, we work in cooperation with our affiliates, which range from churches, ecumenical organisations, clergy, youth, women, students, and diverse individuals.

Kairos Palestine aims to offer added value to its affiliate organisations and individuals -- to all its national and international partners in the shared quest for a just peace in our region. Our work is concentrated around two primary goals: first, to broaden and develop the local Kairos movement and to network with other Palestinian stakeholders (civil society, faith-based and secular networks); and second, to encourage the establishment of international Kairos movements and to work with global churches and organisations to form an international justice movement.

Both of these overall goals were a natural foundation for this conference, Kairos for Global Justice, held from December 4-10, 2011, in Bethlehem, Palestine. The specific idea for the conference emerged from various encounters held with our friends and supporters around the world. Throughout these encounters, we established a number of common aims: to create a Global Kairos Coalition consisting of countries involved in Kairos work, with a special focus on the global South, that will strengthen coordination and solidarity among us; to encourage these countries to work on their own Kairos groups; and to encourage the formation of new Kairos groups in other countries.

From these fundamental principles emerged our central objectives for the gathering: to share our experiences and understandings of the Kairos; to maintain the momentum of previous international Kairos meetings (in South Africa, India, Jamaica, the Netherlands, etc.); and to build and coordinate a strategic action plan for all those involved in the Kairos -- a plan that will help us build a global Kairos movement and coordination mechanism.

In order to apply these objectives here in Palestine, it is important to discuss and analyse the current Palestinian context, as well as to consider the present and potential role of Kairos within this context.

We believe that we are reaching the peak, the outer limits, of the harsh measures imposed by the state of Israel upon the Palestinians. We are likewise reaching the final moments of de-legitimising the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory -- that is, of exposing the illegitimacy that has always defined this occupation. Israel finds itself isolated on both regional and international scales, and we must not break its isolation now. Additionally, the Russell Tribunal has officially declared Israel an apartheid state. Despite the fact that this was a decision taken on the popular level rather than the governmental one, this is an extremely

important development; we cannot lose its momentum.

Now, in Palestine, we have reached the moment of truth. Thus, we must speak the truth. As Kairos, we will move from a reactive to a proactive approach, raising our voices courageously and without cosmetics or fear. Speaking the truth, then, requires speaking out against what we cannot accept -- against anything that prevents justice from being realised.

First and foremost, we can no longer accept the silence of the church. Silence means complicity with the crime.

We cannot accept any financial assistance from any church or organisation without its commitment to work toward ending the occupation.

We cannot accept any theological or political justifications for the occupation.

We cannot accept any argument that tries to convince us that our problems are with Muslims rather than with the occupation.

We cannot accept the arguments of any church that wants to be “balanced” in its views, putting the victims and the perpetrators on equal footing. This approach leads to a prolongation of the bloodshed, and our blood -- the blood of both peoples -- will stain the hands of those who maintain it.

We cannot accept the arguments of anyone who wants us to refrain from advocating for BDS or any other nonviolent means that could help to end the occupation.

We cannot accept any church still investing in the occupation, whether directly or indirectly -- for example, by investing in companies that support the occupation.

And we cannot accept any church or CROs that organise tours to the Holy Land without seeing us. We will speak out loudly against such initiatives.

With these principles in mind -- principles that exist to strengthen the foundation of justice, and to strengthen solidarity among those working to achieve it -- our expectations from the Kairos for Global Justice Conference become clearer.

We seek a shared understanding of the conflict. This includes analyses of the global social, economic, and political situation, as well as the present theological responses to this situation. What are the shortcomings in this present response? we must ask ourselves. What must be improved, and how? On the basis of these shared understandings, then, we also seek a unified radical and strategic action plan. We seek the structure and the programs that will carry such ideas forward. And we seek to plant the seeds of a Global Kairos for Justice Coalition.

We know that many seeds have, in fact, already been planted. We are hopeful that this conference, and especially the joint work that follows, will provide a chance to help them grow.

The Concept of Kairos: A Biblical-Theological Approach

Naim Ateek

I have been asked to speak on the concept of Kairos, not on Kairos Palestine. This might not seem like a very exciting assignment, since we are all here because of Kairos Palestine, but I am sure there will be plenty of time to interact about Kairos Palestine and its ramifications and the responses to it.

In my short text, you will notice certain allusions to the political situation here in Palestine. I will not elaborate much about them, but I hope that the connections will be clear. I hope also that my remarks will stimulate our thoughts and discussions.

The meaning of the word Kairos

I still remember my seminary days when we were introduced to the concepts of Kairos (καιρός) and chronos (Χρόνος). We were told that in the Greek language there are two words that indicate the concept of time: chronos and Kairos. Chronos is the most common word in classical and Hellenistic Greek; it refers to the general notion of time, as well as a span, period, interval of time, and sometimes it is translated as “ages.” From chronos we have chronology (a list of events in order of their occurrence) and chronicle (history or record).

Kairos is less common in classical Greek and more common than chronos in the Septuagint and the New Testament. Sometimes both words are used synonymously.

When the word Kairos is used it means an appropriate or decisive moment or period of time, and also refers to fixed times such as “seasons” or harvest time. One can therefore say that, while chronos is quantitative, Kairos has a qualitative nature.¹

From my research, it seems that the New Testament developed and transformed the word Kairos to become a more spiritually and theologically loaded term. It refers to Kairos time as “the present moment, the defining moment, and even the God-ordained moment. Kairos is the time-frame for divine interaction and occurrences.”²

Kairos in the New Testament

The writers of the New Testament saw themselves as living in a decisive moment when God in Jesus Christ had intervened in human life. For the early followers of Jesus, the time of God’s intervention may refer specifically to Jesus’s death and resurrection (cf. 1Peter 1:10-11). In other passages, kairos refers to the right moment in the near future in which God will bring about the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ. The theological idea behind it is that God is the God of history who controls and determines historical events.

1 “Kairos,” *New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible S-Z*. Abingdon Press, (2009), pages 598-599.

2 Freier, Mark. “Kairos: Turning Potential Into Reality” <http://growinghealthypassion.com/kairos.pdf> (2010).

Below are a few examples of how the word Kairos is used:

1. (Mark 1:14-15) "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." Kairos is a time that requires a change or reorientation of individuals and people.
2. (Luke 12:54-56) "[Jesus] said to the crowds. 'When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, "it is going to rain"; and so it happens. And when the south wind is blowing you say, "there will be scorching heat"; and it happens; you hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?'" Kairos is extraordinary time requiring interpretation. The capacity to read the signs of the times and to respond to that Kairos moment is crucial.
3. (Luke 19:44) Jesus weeps over the city of Jerusalem and recognises that it does not know the things that make for peace. "But now they are hidden from your eyes. Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side...because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God." Kairos is a "dangerous" time. It is critical to recognise it, for if you allow it to pass the loss will be immeasurable. There is a burden of responsibility tied up in the recognition of the Kairos.
4. (Romans 13:11) "Because this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers." Kairos time is here. It calls for action and transformation – a change of life.
5. (2 Corinthians 6:2) "...See now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation." Kairos is not just crisis but also opportunity and favour. God assists us in discerning the Kairos – a moment of grace.

One can summarise the multiple dimensions of Kairos in these ways:

1. The divine reality of God and God's kingdom is available in each moment (Kairos).
2. Kairos signifies a decisive moment of history when an old world dies and a new age is born.
3. Kairos moments transcend time (chronos), stirring up emotions and realities to cause decisive action. These are moments that alter destiny, seizing upon the crucial moment to perform accurately and skilfully in order to achieve a goal.

4. Kairos is a divine opportunity – whether season or moment – that one dare not miss.

The apostle Paul knew the importance of reorienting the whole concept of Kairos toward the perspective of the Kingdom of God. Kairos is used 85 times in the New Testament and 30 of these are by Paul.”³ In Kairos, time needs to intersect with the Divine in order to grasp the full power of Kairos. Every person needs to know the real Kairos: God-appointed time. It is possible to say that in the midst of ordinary time (chronos), extraordinary time (Kairos) happens and it demands action.⁴ “To miscalculate chronos is inconvenient. To miscalculate Kairos is lamentable.”⁵

What does it mean to be Kairos People?

“One doesn’t catch up with Kairos time; rather one participates in it. Kairos time can occur during activity or stillness.”⁶ It simply intersects with chronos time and breaks through chronos. “Kairos brings transcending value to chronos time.”⁷

I want to end with some words I found inspiring:

“Nothing is more critical than to recognize and respond to such a moment. It is the very nature of God to give every human being multiple opportunities to seize high impact moments. These Kairos moments are rich with potential and pregnant with possibilities.”⁸

“Yet with every opportunity comes a price tag. One cannot seize the day (or time) without choosing to not seize something else, which will undoubtedly have consequences. Jesus would speak frequently of counting the costs. People who choose to seize the moments are less concerned about the sacrifices they are making than they are about the significance of their decision. The encouragement is to make decisions wisely.”⁹

James W. Moore has written, “Kairos time is full time, vital time, crucial time, decisive time, God’s time – those rich special moments that break into the humdrum and change your life; those powerful dramatic moments when things seem to fall into place; a new perspective comes, and God seems to be speaking loud and clear. That is Kairos.”¹⁰

And, finally, a few words for spiritual reflection on being Kairos people:

“People who choose Kairos living as a way of life believe the future is really in good hands; God’s hands. Jesus wasn’t stretching the truth when he said, ‘Don’t worry about tomorrow.’ It is God’s design that we seek to trust Him with our future. Therefore, Kairos people are people

3 Mark Freier, “Kairos,” page 5.

4 Ibid.

5 Eric Charles White, *Kaironomia: On the Will to Invent*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press (1987).

6 Mark Freier, “Kairos,” page 6.

7 Freier, “Kairos,” page 2.

8 Mark Freier, page 8, paraphrasing from Os Guinness, *God in the Dark: The Assurance of Faith Beyond A Shadow of a Doubt*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, (1996).

9 Mark Freier, “Kairos,” page 8.

10 James Moore, *Seizing the Moments: Making the Most of Life’s Opportunities*. Nashville, TN: Dimensions for Living, (2001), page 16.

of hope. They actually believe the Heavenly Father wants to give them good things and do good things through them. Kairos people put their hope in the One who controls the future and in turn, seeks to deliver increasing amounts of hope to people they meet.”¹¹

“People who choose Kairos living as a way of life know the Heavenly Father loves them first and in turn, respond by loving God with all their heart, soul, and mind. They know the depth of love they receive and want to give it away to others, thereby, living out the Great Commandments of Jesus. Kairos people love God and love people; believing that loving others is directly proportional to how much we love ourselves. Kairos people are people who love, radically and relentlessly and seek to deliver increasing amounts of love to people they meet.”¹²

To be Kairos people is to be people of hope. This means being engaged in the work of truth and justice. Although things around us may seem dismal and hopeless, we live in the hope that comes to us from the God of Hope and our provider. We continue the struggle, noticing the opportune moments!

There is a beautiful hymn we regularly sing, “Live into Hope”:

“Live into hope of captives freed, of sight regained, the end of greed.
Th’oppressed shall be the first to see, the year of God’s own jubilee!

Live into hope the blind shall see, with insight and with clarity,
removing shades of pride and fear—a vision of our God brought near.

Live into hope of liberty, the right to speak, the right to be.
The right to have one’s daily bread, to hear God’s word and thus be fed.

Live into hope of captives freed, from chains of fear or want or greed.
God now proclaims our full release, to faith and hope and joy and peace.”¹³

11 Mark Freier, “Kairos,” page 13.

12 Mark Freier, “Kairos,” page 13.

13 Jane Parker Huber, A Singing Faith. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press (Tune: 1976, Words: 1980, Hymnal: 1987), page 62.

Kairos and Kairos Consciousness

Stiaan van der Merwe

When I am asked to explain what Kairos means -- not just as a document, an organisation, or a network, but also in terms of its potential for radical nonviolent change, its transformative power -- I try to guide people through a visual, experimental exercise that sparks the experience of Kairos consciousness.

I conducted this exercise with the participants of the Kairos for Global Justice Seminar, using a PowerPoint presentation with many visual aids. Although I will try to describe the exercise in this paper and evoke its effects, I realise that the process and its dynamics cannot be completely replicated here, as an article relies on a verbal narrative rather than a visual one. This paper, then, will serve as a summary, and as a guide for future practice and reflection.

I begin by showing participants a grid of many photographs -- a kind of collage, we could say -- portraying a wide variety of scenes, contexts, and people. I will describe three of the photos I often use, just as an example:

- A polar bear clings to a tiny ice floe, smaller than its own body, in the middle of a body of water.
- In an action shot from a football game, a player in red prepares his kick, about to send the ball to the goalie, while two players in white rush forward from the left side of the frame.
- A soldier, dressed in a green uniform and wearing a talit and kippah, stands in the foreground of the photo, reading from what looks like a prayer book. Yards behind him, beyond a stretch of grass and trees, are a number of military tanks.
- A woman with her hair covered in a green scarf, carrying a baby in a sling and accompanied by two small boys seem to be moving forward, towards the camera, across an expanse of stark desert amid a famine. At first, their faces may convey laughter; looking more closely, desperation is found there as well. A group of people are gathered beneath the single tree in the distance.
- Other images include: graphs and statistics of the stock market; military tanks in action; a couple sitting peacefully on a river bank; an image of Jesus in prayer and contemplation; a worship service led by clergy in their clerical dresses; a dead human body decomposing in a field; a group of people walking along the apartheid wall with the words "THIS WALL WILL FALL" painted in enormous letters on the barrier behind them; a group men sitting around a table, apparently deep in discussion, each with a national flag in front of him. (Again, these are just some examples; many other different images could be used.)

I ask participants to examine these images -- one at a time, or focusing on two or three at once, or studying them as part of the entire collage I display, trying to examine the collage as a whole.

Then I ask people to take some time and work through the following tasks:

- Do a basic analysis of your selected photo(s) or of the group of photos as whole. This can be as simple as a description of the items you see: for example, one white polar bear, one piece of ice, blue water, etc.
- What is your immediate reaction to the photo(s) or to the collage?
- What could each image symbolise or say about our present context in terms of, for example, justice, faith, hope, love, freedom, etc.?
- Can you see a different future of that image in terms of these same ideas (justice, faith, hope, love, freedom, etc.)? Look until you can “see” it.
- If you had to say one word, or one sentence of no more than five words, about your image(s), a word or words that expressed a truth you cannot doubt, what would it be? Just allow this to come to mind; don’t think it out.
- If there were one action you would take in response to that truth, what would it be?

What happens when you participate in this exercise is that you allow yourself to see past the surface of an image, beyond simple abstract rational analysis. You allow yourself to see the different faces of what appears in the image. Perhaps you have seen the famous drawing, a simple optical illusion, that depicts a young woman with her head tilted away from the frame -- or, depending on what you perceive, an old woman viewed in profile. The eye must practice seeing what lies beyond its first assumptions: in the exercise I’ve described, you learn to hold up a mirror of truth to dispel illusions, to break down what we assume the truth will look like.

What you experience, then, is a kind of Kairos consciousness. And, indeed, in a moment when a Kairos is declared, something more fundamental than a document or an organisation or a network needs our attention. Instead, the essential focus of our action and attention is and should be Kairos consciousness.

In further discussing the nature and significance of Kairos consciousness, I’d also like to discuss some aspects of its “inside story” -- namely, the stories told by those who have experiential knowledge of what a Kairos consciousness means and what it can do.

A Kairos consciousness is, on the one hand, profound awareness regarding a situation of gross and fundamental systemic injustice. It is also the acute awareness of a time and place when this injustice will no longer exist. Ultimately, a Kairos consciousness is an action taken that is driven both by the awareness of the present situation and by the awareness of a different future.

As for the present situation, a Kairos consciousness is, for example, a state of keen awareness whereby an individual and or a group physically experiences an extreme, life-threatening situation of ongoing systemic injustice. The depth of this situation is measured not only by the extent of injustice, but also by the moral indignation, even outrage, it triggers. In other words, this “depth” comes over those undergoing injustice when they realise that the

situation in itself, coupled with their own experience, rocks even the most fundamental values, identity and spirituality. What's more, the injustices threaten the possibility of upholding these beliefs into the future, both individually and collectively. In the case of Christians, the issue at stake is the heart of the Gospel and the credibility and integrity thereof. Losing the Gospel's core, through threats to and the actual loss of life and livelihood, is simply too ghastly to contemplate.

In the depths of this experience of gross injustice, a Kairos consciousness also gives birth to a concrete bodily experience of a time when this situation will be no more, when reality will be radically different. In that experience, the future already exists physically in the minds, the hearts and bodies of those who dare to see it.

It is in situations like these that profound expressions of spirituality appear: poems, songs, paintings, theatre plays, confessions of faith, and so forth. Kairos documents are another such expression. These articulations of spirituality may unapologetically and unceremoniously rip off the masks of illusions created by power and injustice (for example, the long-held, widely accepted and piously nurtured notion that "whatever happens is God's will and in line with the message of the Bible"). Such spirituality reveals a deep understanding of a situation by cutting through diplomatic niceties that obscure and misrepresent both a situation and people's experience thereof.

This is, in short, the spirituality of prophetic anger. Its job is to say the unsayable ("This power, even as it claims to be acting in the name of God, is nothing but evil," "The occupation is sin," etc.). It prays in humility or otherwise for a fall of a brutal government and an end to its dispensation; it can declare a status confessionis and develops confessions of faith, as the very essence of the Gospel is at stake; it prays and expresses compassion and love for "the enemy" or "the oppressor." It is a spirituality that sees far beyond the surface, beholding the signs of the times in seemingly cold statistics, newspaper photos, television images, events, speeches, and so on. It takes nothing at face value. This spirituality is acutely aware that a moment of truth has arrived: a moment of speaking truth to power in the absence of fear, or at least in trembling without succumbing to fear. For Christians, this is a moment to announce a profound, no-nonsense word from God and about God, about life, about human and other life forms, borne of and informed by the most basic spiritual values. These are not cerebral exercises. These thoughts, feelings, words and actions come from the heart: the heart of the experience of injustice. These are moments whereby the eyes see more, and see more deeply; the ears hear more, and hear more deeply; the senses cut right to the core in analysing a situation, focused, unapologetic. This is our spiritual intelligence in action as we deal with ourselves and the situations we face.

But there is more. The brave ones will not only analyse the present: they also experience a concrete bodily awareness of a different future. Their forward-looking reveals the true depth of gazing, deeply and deeper, into what is seen, heard, felt, and experienced. As soothing as this point may sound, we must remember that this is where the sharp end of the wedge sits. A future dream, for example, excludes current vested interests and power. Jesus's good news to the poor and disempowered was not and is not good news to the rich and powerful.

A vision of the future must be shaped by a consciousness that can deal with deep values as primary information and essential data: it must be driven by our spiritual consciousness and spiritual intelligence.

Ultimately, this bodily experience of the present and future is what motivates action. And without action, Kairos consciousness remains merely an abstract academic idea.

These and other experiences and expressions of spirituality represent victories of prayerful, meditative, reflective, discerning and ultimately courageous action-driven faith over the cerebral and ego-driven rationality that emerges even in theology and theological discussions. In this way, it is silence (even amid robust discussions) and action triumphing over empty noise, intellectual analysis-paralysis, and getting bogged down in inaction. It is an awareness of the presence of God, listening deeply to God's voice urging action, including the action of speaking out. It is, again, our spiritual intelligence and consciousness that permits us to hear His voice and be aware His presence in the absence of even the most basic concrete evidence.

In any moment of crisis, we hear cries from the heart and the guts. Sometimes we only hear faint sounds, or even silence, of profound pain. Sometimes we hear expressions such as "Um...um...um..." or "I don't know what to say..." These are the many sounds of response to a moment when "all my bones shake" (with apology to Robert Jensen¹⁴) down to their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual marrow. A woman who has been raped probably won't methodically string together a meticulous academic description, footnotes and all, of her experience, nor should she have to.

Such a moment of crisis may last for years, even decades, as it has in Palestine.

So a Kairos consciousness does not necessarily arise from an instance of great intellectual clarity, not right away. Words cannot express such a moment or its accompanying state of consciousness. Perhaps words shouldn't capture such a moment, at least not the words of our usual abstract academic analyses. Images, sounds, metaphors and rituals may come closer. These, after all, are expressions of profound wisdom and insight, often wordless revelations of clarity and direction. Certainly, rational clarity, research and information are very important for a Kairos process and for discussions around it. It is, however, the type of consciousness within which such discussions take place that is problematic and being problematised here. A response to a Kairos is never absolutely clear or neatly packaged, and it should not have to be.

Our rational (left-brain) consciousness mostly works with memory (that which we know) and what is known from resolved and established positions. Our rational consciousness is typically also the space where ego (individual and/or collective) plays an important role. Ego is often the driving force in upholding doctrinal, denominational, political, economic, ideological, partisan, social and cultural conventions and vested interests underpinning such positions. As enriching and significant as such conventions and positions may be, the question remains: from where inside ourselves are we upholding them?

¹⁴ Robert Jensen: All My Bones Shake: Seeking a Progressive Path to the Prophetic Voice. Soft Skull Press, Brooklyn: 2009

The rational consciousness does and will inevitably shift our discussions away from the complexities, messiness and chaos of concrete situations; it is difficult, if not impossible, for the rational consciousness to integrate the intricacies of personal, subjective experience. Even worse is a discussion that is not driven by ethical values as its base information or primary influence. In short, rational discussions generally do not proceed from that part of our minds that can deal with such values: our spiritual intelligence. At best, the rational mind responds to values and principles as rules, as do's and don'ts, along with all the shenanigans that ensue from such discussions.

By contrast, Kairos consciousness becomes a primary state of awareness in eating, sleeping, working, playing, and so forth, as an indication of the heightened and sustained sense of a given moment, both in crisis and opportunity. And, as earlier implied, a Kairos consciousness as spiritual endeavour is borne of values and principles, blooming forth at times when our spiritual intelligence -- as our highest form of intelligence -- must be activated and accessed. These are the times when paradigms are made and broken. Spiritual intelligence also guides our practical intelligence on what to do, and how best to do it, when facing a crisis situation. Thus, ethical values undergo radical interpretations and take on radical significance in our hearts and actions when rules, regulations, policies and procedures have failed us.

Notably, the Palestinian Kairos Document radically reinterpreted the values of faith, hope and love in and for the situation facing Palestinians under decades of occupation and all the accompanying crises of justice. In this document, faith, hope and love are presented as bodily states of awareness driving the Kairos consciousness. These values help us find true north even in uncharted areas, such as moments when we have to face "the enemy" in a post-liberation situation. Faith, hope and love are not simply intellectual concepts designed for academic dissection; they are our compass.

Radical decisions (that is, systemic root-cause decisions) are called for. A situation of gross injustice it is not a matter of something basically good being badly handled; rather, it is unjust from the roots upward. The internal shifts demanded of us when we encounter individuals and groups during the awakening of our spiritual intelligence, our Kairos consciousness, can be deeply uncomfortable, even painful. But this consciousness requires us to take a stand against external powers, internal vested interests, and sometimes people we hold dear. It takes a special kind of courage to make such decisions. This courage rests in the clarity of our collective and individual Kairos consciousness.

What else happens when we exercise our Kairos consciousness?

Illusions of ego disappear. There is simply no place for it, or for its hierarchal structures and selfish interests. In fact, during this state of consciousness, the trappings of ego (e.g. titles, positions, material benefits, even one's own life) cannot even be seen; or, at least, we can't perceive them as being relevant or significant. If and when they do materialise, Kairos consciousness allows us to seriously and robustly challenge them. Kairos, and the awareness thereof, is not the time for warm and fuzzy interactions that maintain the illusion of unity

and peace in order to massage people's egos.

Further, boundless freedom is experienced, especially freedom from fear and control through fear. Attachments and submissions to hierarchies, ideologies, doctrines, and pointless social conditionings disappear and are kept at bay. The authenticity of the courage that springs from such freedom is indomitable -- even when exercising this freedom in contexts of the church and religion, which can themselves become "sites of struggle." Indeed, we must not forget that church hierarchies, internal positions of power, doctrine, and the interpretation thereof are sometimes found to be complicit with deep injustices. The prophetic space is a space of love and freedom, especially freedom from fear.

What becomes clear, despite the lack of recognition and appreciation, is that a Kairos consciousness is a priceless asset to any society. It is an early warning system, a set of prophecies about crises brewing -- even and especially when people desperately want the warnings to be wrong. In situations where extreme injustice is the order of the day, Kairos consciousness becomes the truth-speaking function when expressions of truth are in short supply. Often, the price to pay is that truthful words and actions do not increase the truth-speakers' popularity before the powers that be; the price could be as high as a life or livelihood. Those acting in the name of Kairos consciousness do not seek martyrdom, yet they accept that it may be asked of them in any number of ways.

One uncomfortable, frustrating and often disturbing aspect emerging from Kairos is called "false prophecy," false Kairos consciousness. These are risks that can be found in Kairos networks or movements, in pronouncements or actions or positions that are neither based on the truest values nor emanate from the consciousness that has driven the search for and desire to speak the truth. In this way, the greatest challenge for a community of people sharing a Kairos consciousness is the waning and even eventual death of that consciousness.

In this respect, we must be sure to focus on and pay due attention to issues like the following:

Great care should be taken about declaring a Kairos for any situation in which a word of prophecy is uttered. That is, we should be careful not to cheapen the definition of what the Kairos truly is by overusing it. In a very definitive way, a moment of prophecy against injustice, one expressing a different hope for a different future, is a Kairos-type moment, and it can occur even in small and "unknown" situations facing individuals and communities. While there are no rules (nor should there be rules!), I only mean a word of caution: If everything is Kairos, then nothing can be Kairos. The word and concept thus becomes overused and runs the risk of losing its unique value -- not to mention losing the value such a statement could hold, a value that goes beyond its particular moment and context.

A Kairos consciousness could turn fundamentalist and fanatical. This risk arises when high wisdom gives way to simplistic rationality or gets stuck in forms, expressions, slogans, decisions of the past, etc., without working with and in response to a dynamic and changing situation.

Difficulties also emerge when analyses of a present-day situation diverges from the different dreams of a future. Differences are not a problem in themselves; in fact, differences can provide opportunities to deepen and enrich our awareness of a situation. But the real difficulty arrives when people prefer not to see a situation and what needs to be done according to what is clearly perceived with the aid of Kairos consciousness. This can apply to those in opposition within a community of faith, a totally external “enemy,” or even companions walking a precarious journey of discernment together. The awareness of love and compassion are crucial in engaging with such differences; these are truly some of the great consciousness-shifts required here. The “logic of love” (see the Kairos Palestine document) defies the ego: both my own and that of “the other.”

The most sensitive situation arises in declaring a status confessionis or something to that effect. It is here where lines are drawn, where the fundamentals of faith are carved. Such moments find expressions in statements or confessions of faith. Yet, even then, the moment’s spirit can be lost when these expressions are disassociated from the history and awareness of that moment. This situation comes about when, for example, documents (even Kairos documents) become weapons of discipline and destruction towards “the other” instead of becoming expressions of spiritual consciousness driven by bodily experiences and expressions of love and compassion.

Other concerns arrive once liberation from injustice is achieved, or at least when some degree of liberation takes place. A Kairos consciousness will die off when is exclusively attached to a certain situation of the past that has since changed.

More pertinent, and even more challenging, is when the new situation becomes a status quo that must be sustained and defended. The concern is not the celebration and defence of advances that have been achieved. Rather, the question is: with what kind of mindset -- and, thereby, with what state of consciousness, individually and collectively -- is a new situation discerned and supported? Quite often, a conservative mentality develops in response to a new situation. The prophets of old succumb to the power of the status quo, and they sustain it uncritically, or at least not managing to understand and honour its foundation. Such a position stands in stark contrast to exercising the freedom to make everything new...even the new itself. In my view, many prophets succumb all too easily to the heresy of the status quo.

In situations like these, prophets are often no longer eliminated by “the enemy.” Rather, they develop vested interests in a new situation, losing the self-reflection and the perceptiveness necessary to constantly scan any and all scenarios requiring a word of discernment and truth. Prophets and prophetic awareness are numbed in favour of engaging with the surface-level concerns and daily practicalities without regard for the deeper vision. It is often said that you can kill a prophet bloodlessly: just appoint him or her to a leadership position with serious material benefits. As a group, the oppressed often become the new oppressors with frightening ease. The prophets of old become the high priests of the new status quo upon the death of their Kairos consciousness.

Faced with such risks, a networked core group of individuals and/or institutions must keep lit the flame of Kairos consciousness and assert the prophetic space. This is not a matter of yesterday's rebels being in search of a cause. The necessary group, network, or organisation is often a "rare breed," frequently placed at the margins of the mainstream church, society, politics, and economy, while remaining an invaluable asset to any society. They constantly sustain a prophetic consciousness, assessing the environment for emerging injustices not sensed by our ordinary rational consciousness. It is all about the eyes and eyesight of the prophets.

They/we must learn to be "amongst the people" while sustaining the eyes of the prophets in an awareness of the deeper spiritual challenges to face. This way of looking at ourselves and our context is only possible by nurturing a Kairos consciousness. Yes, they/we will sometimes suffer at the hands of the same people who accompany us, and in other moments they/we will suffer with others, despite prophetic pronouncements that may point in a different direction.

It should be clear that a Kairos consciousness is the "disk operating system" (DOS) of a Kairos and the central driving force of a Kairos moment. Kairos exists in people's hearts. This is the place a Kairos should be engaged with, even by opposing positions.

In short: a Kairos consciousness is what a Kairos document is all about. The core purpose of a Kairos document is to ignite, nurture, sustain, deepen, and expand a Kairos consciousness. This must happen vis-à-vis the situation from which it emanates. A Kairos document may also have this effect in other similar and even unrelated situations, as happens to be the case with the better-known South African and Palestinian Kairos documents. Equally true: the core business of an organisation or network promoting a particular Kairos -- including a Kairos document -- is nourishing and spreading Kairos consciousness as a state of awareness in action.

Consequently, the fundamental task of a Kairos for global justice, which we have met to discuss and foster, is to nurture and strengthen a global consciousness of the Kairos, a consciousness that both takes root in different locations and also transcends borders altogether. Our solidarity with Palestine and the Kairos Palestine initiative can be best honoured through our awareness of the challenges present in our own contexts. This becomes a resonance that echoes through, and unites, a network or movement borne of Palestinian suffering and the world we are called to serve.

Jesus, who walked the hills and valleys of Bethlehem, where we have met, is not merely a historical example: he is with us. See him weep over Jerusalem and the world. He has not lost the eyes of the prophets. He encourages us to maintain our gaze, and to ensure that we speak and act in accordance with the vividness of what we see. He seemed to say that what He did was something like a starting point. As Christed persons, we can and should do even more. The power to transcend the foundational work of Jesus is not found within ourselves. Hence, Christians, we must pray and act in every situation in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Kairos Echoes

What is a Kairos Document?

Mark Braverman

I address you as an American, fully aware of my responsibility as an American citizen for the crime that is being continually committed in Palestine.

I also address you as a Jew: one who is deeply connected to my tradition and to my people, who is horrified and heartbroken over what is being done in my name, who grieves both for the suffering of my Palestinian sisters and brothers in Palestine and in exile and for the psychological and spiritual peril of my own people who have imprisoned themselves behind the wall they have built. Israel is on an unsustainable, sinful, and suicidal course. I address you in mourning for the institutional Jewish community throughout the world that remains blind, and which will someday sink to its knees in contrition for what we have done. I feel like that Palestinian Jew felt 2000 years ago, who, as Assis¹⁵ Naim Ateek has reminded us, wept over a Jerusalem that found itself on the course of self-destruction because it had forgotten God.

At the same time, I am deeply grateful for the faithful witness of Christians. Like Rifat Kassis, I am profoundly hopeful because of what I have seen in my country -- the faithful work of so many, working so hard and so persistently in the face of opposition and the blindness and false prophecy perpetuated by much of the church itself. I am inspired by what I learned from my sisters and brothers in South Africa and in the Netherlands earlier this year, and I am hopeful because of what I continue to see in Palestine.

With this hope and inspiration in mind, I would like to discuss what "Kairos" itself means, and what makes a Kairos document.

Kairos is hard to define. It is one of those hard, brilliant nuggets of a word that seems to contain an entire universe, and which continues to expand its essence in an unlimited fashion.

Kairos is, like theology itself, a living thing, constantly growing and unfolding and deepening. Like theology, it is only alive when it is doing its job -- helping us understand what God expects of us in relationship to our fellow creatures and the natural environment that has been given to us. Like theology, it is only valid as long as it remains in conversation with history. Kairos is a response to a proper reading of the signs of the times. Kairos-time is the time when, in the words of American theologian Robert McAfee Brown, "opportunity demands a response. God offers us a new set of possibilities and we have to accept or decline."

Kairos presents what a friend once described to me as a case of "insurmountable opportunity." Even when -- as is usually the case -- the objective is clear but the road uncertain, uncharted, full of hazards, you must go. Even in the face of opposition and persecution, you must go. And here we must revisit, as I will suggest we must do continually, the experience of those who lived the original Kairos, as recounted in the Acts of the Apostles: "We cannot but speak

¹⁵ "Assis" means "pastor" in Arabic.

of what we have seen and heard" (4:19-20). "We must obey God rather than any human authority" (5:29).

This is a moment of truth for the church! The concept of status confessionis speaks to this: in McAfee Brown's phrasing, "When the issues become so clear, and the stakes so high, that the privilege of amiable disagreement (which Christians have proven themselves to be so good at -- the ability to occupy both sides of every controversial question) must be superseded by clear cut decisions, and the choice must move from both/and to either/or."

In trying to answer the question "What is a Kairos document?" in little space, I want to focus on three fundamental aspects or qualities: prophecy, confession, and community.

Prophecy

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.

Kairos Palestine Document, Bethlehem, 2009

We have heard that Kairos involves reading the signs of the times. But, even more, it involves being struck by something inescapably compelling, an experience that is sometimes likened to that first, famous conversion -- hence the naming of the 1989 African/Asian/Latin American Kairos, The Road to Damascus. It is when reality is so strong and so present that it knocks you down, first blinding you and then leading you to clear sight. It is the fortunate time; it is God's time.

The first Kairos embodied three key elements: (1) An urgent, horrific socio-political situation -- the tyranny of Rome -- that threatened the economic and social fabric of an agrarian society; (2) An ancient, God-given ethical and spiritual tradition, rooted in a people and a land, and a tradition put under mortal threat by that same tyrannical system; and (3) The appearance of a prophetic witness, teacher and leader, speaking for God, whom he called the father, calling his people and their leadership to nonviolent struggle against that tyranny -- a resistance based on faithfulness to the essence of their tradition. Jesus knew that the challenge of the historical circumstance required a return to the essential truths of that tradition, truths that had been betrayed by the political/religious system in power in Jerusalem, which of course was working for the Roman occupier. There, indeed, is where opposition and persecution come from: not only from the tyranny itself, but also from the conservative forces within society that seek only to preserve their power and privilege.

This is where we find ourselves today. We are called to the same challenge -- and we have the manual, and we have the teacher. Kairos requires us to see: to see not only the injustice in plain sight, but also, as Rifat Kassis has written, to see that we are God's hands and that we speak as God's voice.

In this way, Kairos is prophecy, one based in the theology grounded in Matthew 25: What

you do for those among you who are in need, you do for me. This is the calling of the church. It calls to us, in each of our contexts. Where is Christ to be found? Wherever the poor and the dispossessed are to be found; wherever a people or group are subject to systematic denial of human rights; wherever they are imprisoned, driven out of their homes, exiled, transferred, bombed, or slaughtered at close range. In the refugee camps, in the poor neighbourhoods and shantytowns in the centres or edges of our cities. The disinherited. Those, in the words of African-American theologian Howard Thurman, with their backs against the wall.

And so we know that to write a Kairos document is to articulate a prophetic theology -- a theology that is a challenge, a confrontation of the status quo, of the normative social and political order. In the gospel of John, Jesus stands before the Temple in Jerusalem and declares: "Destroy this Temple and in three days I will build it up again!" The apostles, of course, did not understand. And so the writer of the gospel explains: "He spoke of the Temple of his body." The body of Christ: one humanity, united in one communion. This is the Kingdom of God, the alternative to all that the Temple represented. Jesus was making a clear, powerful, political statement.

But there is the risk, a risk that a Kairos document is precisely designed to prevent: the lure and power of the false prophetic. Our comrade Stiaan van der Merwe has written eloquently about this danger. Jesus speaks of false prophets; there is a false prophetic. We can allow ourselves to be fooled. We can miss the boat.

And our energy can thus go for naught, and this, too, is the risk. In Luke 8 Jesus tells us the parable of the sower who sows the seeds that do not always take root. Jesus explains the meaning of the parable, that about it is about how to bring about the Kingdom of God, and he actually gives us pointers on how to do it, and how to avoid going about it the wrong way. There are lots of ways to scatter the seed, and there will be many conditions -- including the challenge of those who will persecute you.

So where is the good soil? Where do you sow?

I recently heard Marc Ellis speak at the American Academy of Religion. Marc is the author of *A Jewish Theology of Liberation*, a man who exemplifies the prophetic (and is paying for it). Marc talked about the difference between the prophetic voice and the liberal or progressive voice, about what he called a watered-down prophetic. We all know what this looks like, tastes like, smells like. It is often called reform -- an ethic that stands back from the confrontation with injustice that is articulated in every Kairos document. Perhaps these are the seeds that are sown on the path -- the comfortable, well-worn path where so many walk, and where the seeds of the Kingdom will not grow.

We know them when we see them. We feel the lie contained in these strategies when they are applied in the face of the prophetic -- dialogue, reconciliation, balance, dual narratives, as Rifat Kassis has addressed. This last tactic, dual narratives, is one I am particularly familiar with, as we Jews are particularly attached to it. I attended the Kairos Netherlands conference in Amsterdam in 2011 and listened to a local rabbi speaking on a panel about the Kairos

Palestine document. I sympathise with the Palestinian cause, said the rabbi, but I cannot endorse this document, because it leaves out the Jewish narrative. He meant that he could not be open to the story of Palestinian suffering or the abrogation of Palestinian rights without a “balancing” narrative of Jewish suffering.

The dual narratives abound. There are the reforms that the Pretoria government was proposing in the 1980s in a desperate effort to hold on to Apartheid: blacks in Parliament, a two-state Bantustan solution with client governments installed. There are the Israelis who talk about a kinder, gentler Zionism committed to social justice and a fair deal for the Palestinians -- as long as they stay contained and strangled in their Bantustans and stay off our roads and out of our sight and do not interfere with our project to establish a hegemonic Jewish state on the territory of historic Palestine.

The job of a Kairos document, therefore, is not only to witness the truth, but also to challenge false prophecy. We are talking about the real prophetic, one that deserves its name. One in which the story you tell challenges the narrative of the tyrannical system and its institutional supports (which are, sadly, very often held up by the church itself) seeking always to preserve itself. Our story must be that of the poor, the oppressed, the disinherited. The Jewish narrative that needs to be told, the story that the rabbi failed to see, is not our history of suffering; it is not the story of, as it appears to our minds, the eternal, murderous, implacable Enemies Who Seek Our Destruction. No, the real Jewish story today -- the story that could redeem us -- is the story of the Palestinian Nakba. This story involves understanding what we have done, so that there is a chance to change our course before it is too late. Until that becomes our story, we are lost.

That is the Jewish story -- and, as my brother Stiaan van der Merwe has pointed out, we must have compassion for the Israelis trapped behind their wall and praying to their wall -- but that is not the story of Kairos. Kairos is the Christian story; it is confessional, and it is about the church. And it is about a church struggle, a confession about how the church has lost its way, has given way to theologies that run directly counter to Matthew 25, theologies that serve to support the Temple of great stones and gold and tax collectors and all that it represents. In Road to Damascus this phenomenon is called “right wing, state theology, a theology of reconciliation.” In the South African Kairos it is described so well as “church theology.” In our context in the US, it is called Christian Zionism. In Holland, I have heard it referred to as Israel theology by a church official in defending the Dutch Protestant church’s position of theologically based support for the State of Israel.

Confession

How do we avoid the trap of false prophecy, the seduction of reform, of balance, of dialogue, of “can’t we just talk about this”? This is where confession comes in. Along with prophecy, with clear vision, must come confession -- the realization of how we have failed, how we have been complicit. This is, after all, what the prophets demand, and they do their work in the marketplace, at the gate of the city, and even, perhaps especially, in the Temple courtyard: look not only at the evil around you, look at yourselves, in your everyday context, in your

courts, your houses of worship, your schools; look at how you have allowed the heresy to flourish.

“Do you suppose,” Jesus asks in Luke 12:51, “that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division” (my italics). The meaning of the Greek *diamerismos* is to make a clear demarcation: to know the difference. It is to know the difference between a theology that supports the policies and institutional structures of oppression and a theology that, in response to history and human affairs, stands boldly with the widow, the orphan, the poor, and the dispossessed. It is to know the difference between actions and words that seek at all costs to preserve cherished beliefs, attitudes and relationships, and those that faithfully challenge them in order to bring about a world of love and compassion.

This confession, therefore, is two-pronged. First, it is self-critical directed inward: we have failed. Second, it tells the truth about the social and political system of which we are a part.

You might say that the first is an individual experience, a conversion -- Saul on the road -- and that the second, confession, is collective, rooted in society, in the institutions. In, as the South African Kairos puts it, a social analysis of the evil. And once you achieve confession, action follows. In fact, action is conditional on confession: confession represents the gap between living with, and even participating in, the evil, and what must be done to bring it to an end. This is how Jesus challenged his own people. Once you confess, you cannot continue to go along with things as they are. Once you see, you no longer have that option. You have stepped outside of the system. And so you must create a new one, here and now.

In my tradition, when you do confession, it is always in the first-person plural -- we -- and it is done as a community. This is very wise, and it is crucial.

This, then, is the function of the Kairos document. It is a we statement: a prophetic witness, a communal expression and social analysis, and a prescription for action. Barmen is the prototypical twentieth-century example of this idea. It is what the World Alliance of Reformed Churches did in Ottawa in 1982 after being confronted by the South African black and coloured pastors who refused to sit at the communion table with their white counterparts because they could not do so at home in South Africa. The church knew what to do, and in a little over ten years Apartheid had fallen.

Last But Not Least: Community

So, returning to our parable of the sower, where is the good soil? Right here. In gatherings of solidarity like those convened by Kairos Palestine. Like the early church: outposts of grassroots organising in the heart of the Empire.

The act of creating a Kairos document brings people together, and in the process you provide a home for people who have been toiling for justice in isolation, for groups within church denominations who have been working hard, but not in coordination with others from other churches or denominations. Here in the Kairos movement is the church within

a church, the Blessed Community. It is not “ecumenical” in the sense that the word is often used, as if it were sort of a UN of churches, each in his place with his denominational or theological hat on. Rather, we are a single body, united in a faithful ministry.

This is what is particularly exciting about what is happening in the formation of Kairos USA. In the US there are walls within the church. There is an evangelical-mainline divide; there is a racial divide. The wonderful and important development is that, in the process of creating Kairos in America, these walls are in the process of being breached. I believe this is what is meant by the body of Christ. This is a dynamic that occurred in South Africa during their struggle. Rifat writes about the creation of the Pentecostal Witness Kairos in South Africa in 1988. Confessing their self-imposed isolation and nonparticipation in the anti-Apartheid struggle, the Pentecostals asked: “Why then, have we never joined together with the rest of the body as one united witness against Apartheid?” So this is a matter of enlivening the church, a matter of renewal; this is about the true church.

Discussing Kairos, MacAfee Brown puts it in the broader context of a fundamental shift in the church -- he calls it a “second reformation” -- from salvation by faith alone to good news to the poor. It is, in the words of Road to Damascus, “a call to conversion to those who have strayed from the truth of Christian faith and commitment.”

Charles Villa-Vicencio, one of the authors of the 1985 Kairos South Africa document, asks the question: can a creative, prophetic drive penetrate the institutional church, a church that is trapped in the dominant structures of oppression, a church conditioned by a history of compromise with the structure of oppression -- and, indeed, by having joined that structure? Villa-Vicencio asks, “Can religion truly break the iron cage of history? Can religion produce a qualitatively different kind of society? Is the Kingdom of God a real possibility?”

And the answer is yes -- if we discover, or rediscover, or uncover, the true meaning of the Christian faith, as so many of the Kairos documents cry for. The moment of truth, the time for the church to make a decision.

We are talking about something very powerful.

In 1963, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., sat in a cell in Birmingham Alabama, jailed for civil disobedience. He received a letter from a group of ten white pastors asking him to back off from his campaign of direct action. We love you, Martin, they said, and we support your movement, but this is hurting the cause. Let us work through the channels. Let us have a peace process. And you know his response. This is not the Christian way, he said; this is not what we are called by Jesus to do in the face of the evil of racism in this country. When the early Christians entered a town, they were persecuted as “outside agitators” -- but they persisted, knowing that they were a colony of heaven, called to obey God rather than man. And he writes:

“The judgment of God is upon the church as never before... If today’s church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty

of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century.”

Contexts change and shift, but that which is essential endures. The lesson of Kairos is that we must pay close attention to our own context, to the arena in which the bringing of the Kingdom of God is being enacted. And so I, in the company of my American colleagues, must pay close attention and keep my eyes open.

MacAfee Brown, writing up until his death in 2001, never addressed in writing the story of Palestine -- but I believe that if he were alive today his eyes would be opened. He deeply understood the legacy of the US’s pursuit of global economic hegemony, how it has motivated our illegal and immoral and murderous policies manifested throughout the world. He would have had to contemplate our government’s financing and diplomatic support of Israeli Apartheid. We have built it, and that wall is our wall -- our racist, hegemonic frontier. Look at Palestine, unpack the story of Palestine today, and what emerges is the larger, global picture of Western economic imperialism.

We would do very well to keep this in mind: the power of the Palestinian cause is its ability to reveal the broader global context of Empire. We return, again and again, to the original Kairos -- the confrontation between a visionary, prophetic figure and the evil of empire, the man from tiny Galilee standing up to the greatest power in the world. Isn’t it right, then, that we should gather here, at the very scene of this drama that unfolded 2000 years ago?

And here we are. And here we stand.



Kairos Southern Africa and Asia

Can the Church in Swaziland, Palestine or Anywhere in the World Afford to Be Silent?

Zwanini Shabalala

Introduction

First and foremost, I wish to deliver greetings from the Christians in Swaziland. I relay special greetings from a group of courageous men and women calling themselves Concerned Church Leaders, whom Rev. Solomon Nxumalo and I have represented in attending the Kairos for Global Justice Conference. I must mention that Palestinian Christians' plight is not very well known in Swaziland, as almost all people who visit this part of the world only get to hear the Israeli side of your history. Many Christians in Swaziland are still encouraged "to pray for the 'peace' of Jerusalem because those who bless Israel shall also be blessed." This is, to say the least, an embarrassment. However, we are doubly glad for this chance to come to understand your situation even better. When I had my first encounter with Palestinian Christians early this year, I wanted to hear more, and even wanted see for myself what these people likewise created in God's image are going through; I am grateful to the conference organisers for affording me such an opportunity.

I would also like to congratulate the Palestinian Christians for the development and launching of your Kairos Document. This is a document that has helped create more awareness on the plight of the Palestinian people, reaching out even to the Christians in Swaziland. The Concerned Church Leaders in Swaziland wish to express their support to the Christians and all the people of Palestine in your struggle for liberation. We will use this opportunity to learn more about how the Christians in Swaziland, as well as the government, can better demonstrate such support.

Background Information on Swaziland

Swaziland is a landlocked country in southern Africa, sharing its borders with South Africa and Mozambique. It has an area 17,363 square kilometres and a population of about 1.1 million people. Swaziland remains the only country in Africa with an absolute monarchy, in which the king is above the law and can do anything he wants. His Majesty King Mswati III has been on the throne since 1986, following the passing of his father King Sobhuza II in 1983. The king is in charge of all three arms of government and appoints the prime minister, cabinet and judges. For such a small country, Swaziland faces many enormous challenges, several of which I will highlight in this paper.

Constitutional Crisis

Until 1968, Swaziland was one of the so-called British protectorates. When the country was granted independence, she adopted a constitution that guaranteed separation of powers and included a bill of rights. The powers of the king were clearly defined in the constitution. This was short-lived, however: on April 12, 1973, the constitution was abrogated following a

motion by parliament. The king assumed all powers and ruled the country by decree, along with the cabinet. The country had no parliament until 1978 when a kind of parliament was formed. I say a “kind” of parliament because its members were elected by what was known as an electoral college.

Swaziland had no constitution until a process to draft a new one was commissioned by the king in 1996. This development was the result of pressure from civil society and banned political organisations as well as from the international community. It took the Constitutional Review Commission almost 10 years to come up with a draft constitution, which was finally adopted as the country’s constitution in 2005. The process was not at all inclusive, failing to accommodate views of major stakeholders like organised groups. This meant that, even when the constitution was adopted, many Swazis could not identify with it. What the constitution did was re-affirm the powers of the king as an absolute monarch and promote a dual system of governance. Political parties remained banned, although some argue that the constitution does make room for political parties.

In the midst of all this, several unhealthy events occurred within the country: for example, the Suppression of Terrorism Act of 2008, which saw a number of people being charged with terrorism. Of course, these people are never brought to trial; these charges are meant to intimidate and frustrate people with dissenting views.

Civil society has increased its protests, calling for change and transformation to a multiparty democracy in Swaziland. Here, too, the security forces have showed a high-handed attitude toward demonstrators, refusing citizens their right to express themselves. Many are harassed, beaten and locked up during demonstrations.

Economic Crisis

In addition to a constitutional crisis, the country is also experiencing an economic crisis, which has since grounded government operations and many companies doing business with the government. Swaziland is rated as a middle-income country, but this is not the reality for the majority of Swazis. It is frightening to note that 80% of the country’s wealth is enjoyed by an elite constituting less than 20% of the population. About 68% of the population lives below the poverty line, and there is a 40% unemployment rate, as more and more companies are closing down. As if this were not enough, about 26% of the population between 15 and 49 years old is HIV positive.

Over the years, the IMF and the World Bank have been reminding the Swazi government to control its spending -- for instance, by reducing its wage bill. They have also set conditions that must be met by the government if the country is to access any financial assistance, such as loans. However, the government has not adhered to them; even a loan that was negotiated with the South African government has been delayed. One of the conditions that seems difficult to meet is democratisation.

The Church in Swaziland

The kingdom of Swaziland has always wanted to be seen as a Christian country, a desire evident in the debate that occurred during the final stages of the constitution-writing process. Statistics also show that over 80% of the population claims to be Christian or subscribe to a Christian denomination. Many people have even gone to the extent of calling Swaziland the “pulpit” of Africa. The king and the queen mother, together with the cabinet, have always called upon Swazis to pray for the financial situation to improve. On the other hand, we have witnessed armed forces stopping prayer services and invading funeral services to intimidate unarmed citizens.

All this being said, the question I keep asking myself is, How genuine are we when we call ourselves Christians? Do people truly understand the meaning of being a follower of Christ in present-day Swaziland?

The Role of the Church

In his letter to Timothy, Paul says, “Be ready to spread the word whether or not the time is right. Point out errors, warn people, and encourage them. Be very patient when you teach” (2 Timothy 4:2). According to St. Paul, preaching in season and out of season should be understood in two ways.

First, it refers to the people to whom you are preaching, and that you should continue speaking the word of God whether they view your preaching as seasonable or unseasonable: “Just as the fountains, though none may draw from them, still flow on; and the rivers, though none drink of them, still run; so must we do all on our part in speaking, though none give heed to us” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary). In other words, we cannot make any excuses for not preaching just because we think there is no one listening or no one is interested in what we are saying. The church can never claim that the environment is not conducive for us to do what God has called us to do, even when no one is prepared to hear our message.

Second, we have to understand “in season or out of season” as referring to the preacher or the church. The church does not carry out her different ministries simply when it is convenient for the church to do so or when the preacher feels like preaching. This is what Paul is exhorting Timothy to do in carrying out the work of the Lord, “...not merely when convenient, but when inconvenient to thee, night as well as day (Acts 20:31), in danger as well as in safety, in prison and when doomed to death as well as when at large, not only in church, but everywhere and on all occasions, whenever and wherever the Lord’s work requires it” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary). The church of Jesus Christ cannot afford to allow herself to be intimidated by anyone or anything: what we are about is God’s business, not our business.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul says, “I eagerly expect and hope that I will have nothing to be ashamed of. I will speak very boldly and honour Christ in my body, now as always, whether I live or die” (Philippians 1:20). This is what separates “boys” from “men” even

amongst the clergy, or God's servants from the "lords" of the church. Our preparedness to serve makes all the difference, as those who are called to serve truly listen to the voice of the Master, thinking less of themselves or their personal interests. These people know very well that "greater is he that is in [them] than the one in the world" (1 John 4:4). In fact, Paul says that our Master "is far above all rulers, authorities, powers, lords, and all other names that can be named, not only in this present world but also in the world to come" (Ephesians 1:21).

The Concerned Church Leaders

The Concerned Church Leaders in Swaziland draw their strength and courage from these words of St. Paul, reminded of the fact that the church is called to serve God without fear or favour. It is deeply unfortunate and depressing that the church in Swaziland seems to allow the socio-political and economic environment to dictate what, when and how to preach. We have a tendency of wanting to please certain individuals, from influential members of our churches to political leaders of the country. In the process, we distort the biblical truth and compromise God's message to His people. Instead of rebuking those who mock God, we promote the mockery of our God by allowing political leaders and the monarch to "preach" to us and tell us how we should present God's message. This has silenced the prophetic voice of the church and rendered the church itself irrelevant in Swaziland. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that people who want to genuinely engage God on the country's current situation are prevented from doing so by those who do not want to find out what God has to say about present-day Swaziland.

As the Concerned Church Leaders, we are calling upon all God-fearing people of Swaziland to stand up and speak the truth -- God's truth -- because this is only the truth that will set all citizens of our country free. The stand of the Palestinian Christians, the way they have spoken out and let the world know about the injustices they are made to suffer, has given us courage to do the same in Swaziland. We are also going to continue to call for prayers in which all citizens of the country, especially those who call themselves Christians, will come together to pray to God for our country. As we pray, we shall continue to name the ills that have led to the suffering of God's people in Swaziland. These include bad governance, greed and corruption, disregard of human rights, religious hypocrisy, etc.

Development of a Swaziland Kairos Document

The Concerned Church Leaders, in consultation with those church organisations that are willing to be part of this process, have started drafting a Swaziland Kairos document. We felt it was necessary to first consult with the churches, with the aim of raising awareness rather than seeking permission. A smaller group was given the task of drafting and presenting to the bigger group for feedback. The process is still in its infancy, but we hope that by February 2012 we will have a document to share with the world.¹⁶ I am grateful to the men and women who are giving their time and energy to this endeavour -- even though there is still no funding to support it.

¹⁶ At the time of this book's production, the drafting group is hard at work on the document, which remains in progress.

We are counting on the Southern African Kairos movement, Kairos Palestine and the Global Kairos movement to support our initiatives. On the other hand, we are also looking forward to making valuable contributions to the Global Kairos movement, as we view it as an opportunity to learn from one another. We are also hoping that forums like the Kairos for Global Justice Conference will assist us by providing technical guidance and mobilising the necessary resource for such work to be completed. The next major challenge will be engaging church leaders and Christians on the document; we hope it will help stimulate pertinent debates within the church and in all sectors of Swazi society.

Finally, regarding the matter of Palestine, we are challenged as churches in Swaziland to ensure that Christians who come to the Holy Land are aware of the oppression and suffering endured by the Palestinian people. It is not right that Christians from Swaziland, or anywhere else in the world, can visit holy sites without ever encountering the Christians in Palestine. To us, it is like when people romanticise Swazi culture and rhapsodise about the beauty of our country without talking about the injustices and oppression inflicted in the name of culture. It is time for the church to speak out against any form of injustice and suffering experienced by God's people, no matter where they are. We therefore pledge our solidarity with the people of Palestine and join others in the Kairos movement in condemning the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel and all those who support the policies of this state.



***Towards an Emmaus Experience:
An Indian Response to Kairos Palestine Document***
Raj Bharath Patta

Introduction

On behalf of the Indian Solidarity Ecumenical Network (ISEN), I want to express my sincere appreciation to the Kairos Palestine group for their various inroads in promoting solidarity and friendship for the cause of justice in Palestine. The document has indeed created ripples in multiple contexts, calling people to be inspired and challenged in accompanying Palestinians through their search for liberation and justice.

In the post-resurrection narrative of Jesus, the Lukan perspective records the conversation of two people on their way to Emmaus as they debate the “talk of the town”: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As they “walk the talk,” Jesus Christ accompanies them and helps them realise, recognise and refresh their articulations of faith -- building a community of peace between those two walkers on the road to Emmaus. The experience helped them learn from one another, appreciate one another, correct one another, strengthen one another, and, even more, build a friendship of solidarity in order to witness the resurrection and liberating power of Jesus Christ. Such a walk is an experience worth attempting!

When, through such an experience, contextual articulations of faith narratives are at a cross-roads; when, in experiences of “walking the talk” among during God-human-talk, other people, theologies, traditions, etc., are perceived as competitors rather than collaborators; when such expressive talks fail to make their relevance felt -- it becomes essential to gather local critical faith articulations so they may “walk” together. The motive of this gathering is to build bonds of solidarity, to encourage for dialogue and mutual understanding.

In response to Kairos Palestine’s invitation to “Come and See,” my own trip to Palestine makes me realise that I am on an Emmaus journey here, and I hope my Palestinian brothers and sisters will allow me to be their co-pilgrim in the journey towards justice. As co-pilgrims, we have a common destiny; as co-pilgrims, we share our struggles by listening and sharing; as co-pilgrims, we have embarked on a journey of hope, for we affirm a God of hope who is willing to journey alongside us; and, as co-pilgrims, we strengthen our commitment and resolve when hope seems obscure. Building friendships of solidarity is a step forward in realising our dream of liberation and justice.

In a further response to Kairos Palestine, I will attempt to highlight contextual realities and their resonances in our own “ground zero,” thereby attempting to elaborate a theological response to the Kairos from the perspective of a young Indian Dalit ecumenical learner.

Our Common Milieu: Resonances from Ground Zero

Israel happens to be the cradle of three of the world's major religions -- Judaism, Christianity and Islam -- and its land is therefore deemed "holy." Like Israel, India is home to four of the world's other major religions -- Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism -- and so its land is thus considered "holy" as well. In both of these holy sites, unholy sights have been created and perpetuated.

1. *Unholy Sights in the Holy Sites: Walls and Gates*

Journeying through the streets of Palestine caused me anger, distress, disappointment and frustration. Visualising the segregation and separation inflicted by Israel's cruel occupation; its confiscations of Palestine lands; its construction of walls, fences and gates; its division and dispersion of Palestinian towns and villages -- all exceed the powers of the imagination in this so-called "holy land." You see the contrast between the foreign settlers on mountaintops, guarded by security forces, while the native inhabitants of the Palestinian land live as if their own homes were prisons. The humiliations, discriminations and human right violations enacted against Palestinians know no bounds.

Such sites are hardly unfamiliar to a country like India; Indian societies have long since been divided in the name of caste. The dominant caste groups live around the temple inside the villages, while those born outside the caste, the Dalits, live in segregated communities outside the villages. There are invisible gates around these Dalit communities, which are very strong and deep, for they are built on the grounds of purity and pollution. There are endless examples of how Dalits are denied entry to the dominant caste localities, prevented from renting houses, prohibited from building. Dalits are humiliated and ostracised when attempting to walk along their paths. The oppressions suffered by Dalits in the present day may be subtle or aggressive: violence against Dalits, including killings, rapes and arrests, is increasing, while many other events go unreported or unattended. Dalits are forced to work as manual scavengers to clean human excrement with their bare hands, a form of systemic occupation-based and caste-based discrimination that continues unabated. The cries of Dalit women are beyond description; they have been oppressed not only by questions of caste, but also of gender and class. Walls dividing the cemeteries, walls in the churches, walls among different communities -- all form part of today's reality, all erected in the name of caste.

2. *The Hydra of Zionism and Hindutva: Hatred and Violence*

Like Zionism in Israel, which calls for one nation and one religion, a Hindu cultural fundamentalist group in India, subscribing to the ideology of Hindutva, calls for one Hindu rashtra (state) with one Hindu religion. Both these trends are dangerous and venomous, for they have been attacking and persecuting the religious minorities in both our countries, particularly Muslims and Christians. Indeed, the onset of

globalisation is hand-in-glove with these ideologies, as it promotes homogenisation and counters all forms of diversity, fostering uniformity rather than unity. Both Zionist and Hindutva ideologies promulgate violence, seeking to achieve their goal of one-ness at all costs, breeding exclusivism and absolutism. These ideologues perpetuate violence, encourage hatred and depend on inflammatory speeches and hate campaigns against minorities. Once again, it is the Palestinians and the Dalits who have become their gravest victims.

Moreover, the state governments are softer towards them. The saffronisation of education, extra-judicial killings, state-sponsored violence, unjust trials in the courts of law, extra-constitutional authority granted to the rabbis and swamijis, etc., are all part and parcel of these ideologies. Demolitions of places of worship (for example, on December 6, 1992, the Babri Masjid mosque was demolished in Ayodhya by pro-Hindutva forces), destructions of sites of spiritual importance, attacks on minority-owned properties and places, and so forth, all spring from exclusivist mentalities. Both Zionist and Hindutva ideologies are like the hydra, a serpent-like creature from Greek mythology, which has many heads that pop up according to the need of the uncertainty that exists.

3. *The Plundering of Lands and Natural Resources: Groaning and Pain*

The Israeli settlements and the dominant caste/class groups plunder the lands belonging to Palestinians and to Dalits and Adivasis. In Israel, land is plundered in the name of God, in the name of force and for the cause of security. In India, land is plundered in the name of development, in the name of bonded labour and for the cause of prosperity. Such plundering renders communities landless and powerless; in their land, their spiritualities and their sentiments are intertwined. While these people are the land's original inhabitants, outsiders take it away and control their resources -- which, in turn, causes massive displacement, turning many people into refugees and strangers in their own home.

The communities themselves are not the only ones affected by the plundering: mother earth, too, groans in pain, suffering from the insensitivity with which those in power have treated her. The rich green lands are turned into deserts; ecological balances are disrupted. The unholy alliances of patriarchy, capitalism, casteism, etc., form a vicious cycle of oppression. Among the many manifestations of injustice that surround us, the injustices done to mother earth and those inflicted upon the people living in the margins of society -- Palestinians, Dalits, tribal communities, women, migrants, and so on -- particularly call for our attention as people dedicated to questions of peace and justice. Both creation itself and the marginalised peoples mutually share their pain and have been yearning for justice and peace now, yearning that it may come now and only now!

From the contextual realities outlined above, deciphering the signs of our times, one can draw various parallels between Palestinians and Dalits and our respective struggles:

- a. Both happen to be the local indigenous inhabitants of their own lands, both have been denied possession of this land; in both cases, lands and natural resources are owned and controlled by those in power.
- b. Both have been segregated and oppressed, whether in the name of nationality and religious identity or in the name of caste and ethnicity.
- c. Both systems of oppression involve religious sanctions and have used religious scriptures to justifying these very oppressions.
- d. Neither community enjoys religious liberty, as both are denied access to their holy places: Palestinians on the pretext of security and Dalits on the pretext of pollution. (In most Hindu temples, at the holy of holies, a sign reads "Non-Hindus are not allowed into this holy place.")
- e. Both communities are humiliated and subjected to various kinds of torture, creating a culture of fear among them.
- f. Both communities live and have lived as refugees in many parts of the world; emigration and migration among these people have been on the rise.
- g. Both have been the victims of unjust laws and policies; international human rights laws are not implemented by their respective governments.
- h. Both have been the victims of historical injustices, ongoing violence, and human rights violations.
- i. Both have been viewed by the international community as subjects of humanitarian aid or of charity; their plights have rarely been analysed as matters of justice and peace.
- j. Both Palestinian Christians and Dalit Christians have been denied their constitutional rights. Palestinian Christians in Jerusalem are slowly being stripped of their right to life and living, whereas Dalit Christians are denied mechanisms of affirmative actions like the "Scheduled Caste" status from the government upon becoming Christians. Many policies conceived for Dalit empowerment are not being channelled or utilised.

Justice and Peace: Kairos Now!

The title above has an exclamation point, and this is only to show that justice and peace can surprise power structures: by pulling them down. The exclamation point also serves to challenge young people with the surprise of bringing about change in society. Justice and peace: are they a possibility now? "Maybe" is a pessimistic answer and "certainly" is an optimistic one; the bridge between them is a surprise, one that must be built now and only now.

a. Why Now?

The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem has said that God has a little defect: he acts slowly. Kindly allow me to contradict this idea. I think this idea of God's slowness only adds salt to our existing wounds and makes us live with an unrealistic hope. The moment of truth and justice now is the necessity of the hour. These days, the delay and denial of justice and peace are

modern techniques employed by those in power, rendering immediacy and “now-ness” redundant and forgotten. Delay and denial are the deadliest forms of injustice at work in the world; those struggling for justice go from pillar to post in search of it, and oftentimes grow frustrated and fall prey to injustice. “Now” is not merely a chronological period sandwiched between hours and seconds, nor merely a measurement expressed in those values; rather, “now” is an invitational situation calling for action towards justice and peace. We believe in a “God of now!,” for God has always acted in the given now-ness, -- a now-ness that God cannot afford to lose, as He accompanies every “now” and every “now and then.”

Jesus Christ has been always God-conscious and carries forward these characteristics; for him, “now” is all that matters. When Jesus called Zaccheaus, he said, “Today I bring salvation to you and your household” (Luke 19:10), and when he was hanging on the cross, Jesus told the man hanging next to him, “Today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Jesus never tarried or postponed in exercising justice; indeed, he was against the denial and delay of justice, for “now” was an important premise upon which he preached and practised. Therefore, without “now,” justice and peace lose their taste and intensity, as they are only meaningful in the given “now.” Justice, peace and “now” are all interwoven; they are all part of the package.

God as a creator intervened in that “now” when there was darkness, void and emptiness, creating order and light within that chaos to express His ways of justice and peace. God in Jesus Christ came into that “now” to deliver justice and peace through Jesus’s experiences of death and resurrection. God in the Holy Spirit acts through our “nows,” accompanying us in our struggles for justice and peace. Therefore, all of the “nows” put together constitute the life of every creature, and God journeys in all of them. If we imagine this idea as an equation, $L = N1 + N2 + N3 + \dots + \infty$, life is the sum total of every “now” until eternity. Justice and peace, meanwhile, are matters of now and now alone, for today -- now -- is the day of salvation.

b. Justice and Peace

Elaborating a definition of “now” likewise helps us illuminate a definition of justice. We can think of justice as “the activity in ‘now,’ where systems of asymmetries which groom life-denial forces of past and present are addressed so that there is affirmation and celebration of life till eternity.” This definition of justice, although tentative, extends the parameters for young people and encourages them to act as channels of justice in our homes and places where injustice persists.

Today, peace is another word thrown about in every context. Those waging wars say that they do so in order to establish peace; those in power say that, in order to bring about peace and harmony, force is the only option left. But peace is not simply the absence of war or the calm in the graveyards enjoyed by the dead. Nor is peace merely nonviolence: indeed, for peace to be defined in the first place, it must be coupled with justice, for when justice is achieved, peace is realised. A further probe into the concept of justice will help us better understand peace for now and for our times. Below, I will briefly address three manifestations of a just peace; while they are not exhaustive, they will help lay the groundwork for a fuller

discussion of justice and peace.

i. Spiralling Justice Achieves Sustainable Peace

“For judgement I have come into the world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.” John 9:39

Jesus Christ’s way of missioning is not always soothing; it isn’t carried out from the comfort of an armchair. Time and time again, he confronted the oppressive forces of his day, and was bold in calling a “spade a spade.” He did not mince words; he was prolific and prophetic in his missional approaches. There was aggression in Christ’s words and actions, aggression for the sake of giving life to all.

The passage from the book of John, quoted above, reveals a profound mission motive with respect to Christ’s coming into the world. Throughout the history of the mission, Christians and missions were content with preaching good news, translating it to the extent of giving charity to the poor and the weak. But Christian missions did not boldly preach and practice the virtues of justice, a transformative justice. This quote, “For judgment I have come into the world...”, is a reminder to the missions today to be bold in preaching the judgement so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind. The context of these mission words is the healing of a blind man: the religious leaders condemn Jesus and his healing, and the blind man, too. Jesus, who came to give life in abundance, makes sure that life is given at any cost, regardless of religious sanctions, of the texts and leaders who try to limit it.

Besides giving sight to the blind, Jesus also blinds the short-sighted, selfish, nominally religious people, who try to obstruct healing for the oppressed. Jesus said he has come to give “good news to the poor”; perhaps we should also translate this as “bad news to the rich.” I believe that this is the strength of the good news: to convince the poor and prompt confessions from the rich about their greed and selfish motives. Theories of retribution have their due place in the discourses of justice and peace. “You will be paid for what you have done,” “you will reap the consequences right here in this world for what you have sown” -- these sayings will provide an ample space for missioning in the Dalit context. Over the years, preaching from the pulpit has emphasised that people will be rewarded or compensated in life after death, a focus that sidetracks the ontological relevance of Christ’s mission. Therefore, the passage from the book of John provides a clue into addressing the needs of the oppressed, as well as the need for the oppressor to repent and undergo harsh judgement. We are called, meanwhile, to develop a theology of liberation for the oppressor: one that seeks their repentance, reconciliation and the removal of systemic and structural practices of caste. The true mission, according to Christ’s way, is to give sight to the blind and to call for reconciliation and repentance from those who have inflicted oppression, for they will be judged accordingly.

ii. Sword-like Justice Ensures Peace on Earth

“...I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.” Matthew 10:34

Jesus has always been conceived and perceived as meek. Here, however, we see Jesus speaking with aggression, addressing the now-ness of the injustice of his times. Jesus, who took up a whip in cleansing the temple, challenges us to creatively address our own contexts of injustice.

Resisting the violence done to those in the margins raises the question of violence as a possible answer to violence. This is not a new phenomenon for Dalits. Is violence an appropriate response to violence? Can this be part of God's mission in overcoming violence? Sathianathan Clarke's observations on this matter are relevant to our discussion. He suggests that "victimised collectives such as Dalit communities can creatively work on means to use symbolic violence in proactive ways. This may be an acceptable method of preventive violence, one which can safeguard Dalits against the well oiled wheels of the fierce and vicious caste machine." He further proposes "'rebounding violence' which does not instrumentalise violence, but adroitly deflects violence back to the originator."¹⁷ Do these concepts of symbolic violence and rebounding violence correspond to discussions of justice and peace discussions, and can they be considered an expression of God's mission?

In addressing evil, Felix Wilfred proposes "prophetic anger," by which he explains that

"...it is first and foremost the anger of the victims. The anger of the victims has something visceral about it. The whole being of the victim reacts to the injustice and oppression suffered – be it women, the discriminated ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or any victim of human rights violation. There is ample room to speak about 'black rage' and similarly gender rage etc., which express the anguish of the victims pushed to the wall through long-standing oppression, and yet having the strength to imagine something different. Prophetic anger is a healing anger. It opens the wounds of the society, and has ultimately the goal of healing them."¹⁸

These observations provide us with the space to understand the sword-like aspect of a just peace.

Jesus Christ's mission comes to the rescue of our situation by overcoming violence. Jesus cleansing the temple, Jesus taking up the whip, Jesus pronouncing that he has not come to bring peace, but a sword: these are all ways of addressing violence through symbolic violence and rebounding violence. Jesus Christ may not approve passive nonviolence, for he never accepted the unjust status quo of his times. When Palestinians, Dalits, tribals, migrants, etc., are attacked, what legal safeguards are maintained? What justice do they receive? God's mission is not static, blind or lethargic; rather it is proactive and dynamic, one that expresses itself according to local requirements and situations. Therefore, the mission of God tries to

17 Sathianathan Clarke, "Dalits Overcoming Violation and Violence, A Contest between Overpowering and Empowering Identities in Changing India" Pp. 296-98

18 Felix Wilfred, "Prophetic Anger and Sapiential Compassion" in Asian Public Theology (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2010) P.

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ensure that violence in all forms is overcome, and is taken to the right platforms for justice to be done unto victimised people.

iii. *The Signature of Justice is Truth*

"In fact, for this reason, I was born, and for this I came into this world, to testify to the truth." John 18:37

Jesus Christ has another reason for coming to this world: the purpose of his mission was to testify to the truth within it. Jesus provides the clue to the truth, for upon learning the truth one is set free. Truth is no one's exclusive property, and therefore Jesus' way of missioning is to testify to the truth of liberation and the truth of equality. Since God Himself is truth, as the mission agent sent from God, Jesus Christ testifies to this truth and provides a way towards it; he leads everyone to truth from falsehood. Situating this missiological approach of testifying to the truth within the parameters of justice and peace, the lessons to be drawn from this mission are to testify and witness to the truth of equality, freedom, justice and peace. Testifying to the truth means condemning falsehood and inequality it promotes and to live with honesty, for the truth itself is all-liberating. Witnessing (marturia) to truth is to become a martyr for the cause and the sake of truth.

Therefore, this characteristic of justice requires a mission paradigm that calls people to live truthfully and to testify to the truth of liberation and life. Mission as witness; mission as a path toward all truth; and mission as a confrontation of all falsehood: these definitions provide the basis for a new, emerging missiological paradigm. Truth is always triumphant, and one who testifies to the truth is also triumphant, and will emerge victorious from all pains of bondage and oppression. So, justice must be blended with truth; thus, it shall lead all people into all truth and make them live in hope, for liberation is not far when everyone lives in truth. Because of growing falsehood, oppression and discrimination grows as well; caste creates false manifestations of inequality and unjust practices. Christ's mission, therefore, is to testify to the truth, to live in truth and make all people live in truth. When truth encompasses our society, transformation is at hand.

Signposts for Moving Forward

We must:

- Recover the Bible. A joint Dalit-Palestinian reading of the Bible should be arranged and undertaken in order to generate a shared perspective about our struggles. Books like Nehemiah, for example, should be re-read; we often read this book via the message "Come, let's build the walls," without grasping the adverse impact it has for the Palestinians. We need to deconstruct such readings and add new meanings like building bridges among people today.
- Situate and localise our struggles in our own Asian setting. Our struggles are Asian struggles in need of Asian solutions; we should expand our networks among Asian countries in order to achieve a solid, profound solidarity for our struggles.

- Inculcate “earth-centred spiritualities.” Let issues of land be the common denominator for our struggles: interfacing between Dalit liberation theology and Palestine liberation theology is an essential way to work out common strategies and methodologies for achieving freedom and equality. We should encourage Dalit-Palestinian theological dialogue: for example, the Chengara land struggle in Kerala and how 5000 Dalits have taken land by setting up their tents there.
- Develop exchanges between our communities. For example, for the student social forum held by the Student Christian Movement of India (SCMI), we want to invite young people from Palestine to speak and learn from our contexts.
- Expose our local pilgrim tour operators to the Palestinian realities and encourage alternative tourism.
- Popularise the international day in solidarity with Palestine, 29 November, calling on local congregations to provide the necessary homilies and liturgies. We should designate one Sunday as Palestine Sunday and call on people to observe it globally; carrying out activities on that day will strengthen our resolve as well.
- Organise a joint madang (open marketplace) at the upcoming WCC Assembly in Busan, Korea, in order to exhibit our struggle for justice. No issues other than the Dalit and Palestinian quests for justice can add greater meaning to the words “God of life, lead us into justice and peace.”
- Work to ensure that the Dalit and Palestine plights are treated as matters of justice and faith, not merely as diakonial matters.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by echoing the clarion call made by the National Council of Churches in India, at its National Ecumenical Conference on Justice for Dalits in October 2010, as an attempt to articulate the spirit Kairos-India:

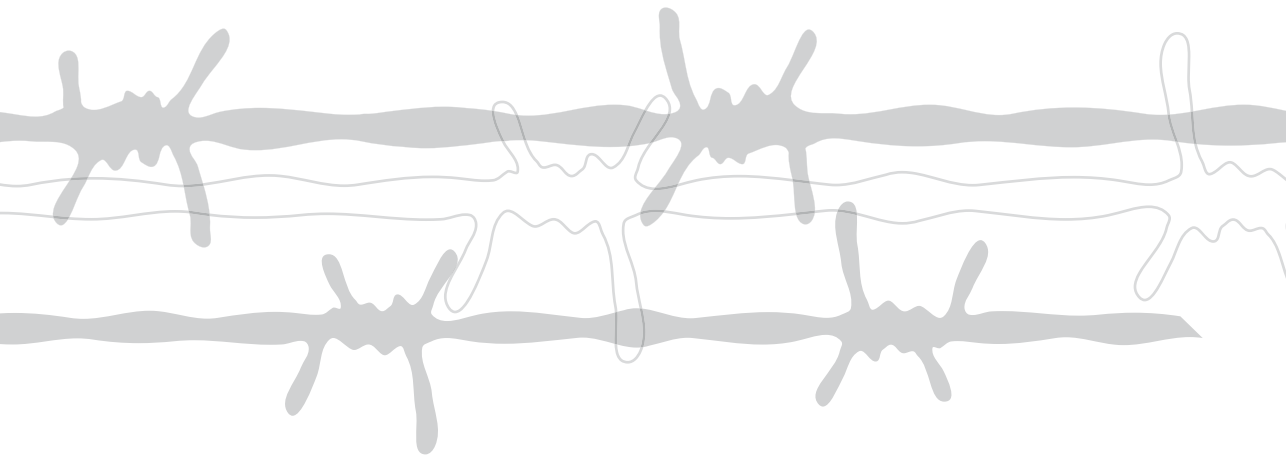
“As Christians we claim to reflect the mind of Christ but we are vested in the logic of caste. Jesus says ‘No one can serve two masters, for a slave will either love the one and hate the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other’ (Matthew 6:24). In a context of caste division, caste discrimination and caste violence we announce from the rooftop: ‘No one can serve Christ and caste!’ We also confess that in our caste-infested world ‘We have decided to follow Christ.’ Empowered by a deep faith in God, who binds us into communion, who frees us for justice and who heals us towards wholeness, we join together to live faithfully as disciples of Christ in India today. This involves public confession of our complicity in the sin of casteism, reaffirmation of our faith in a God of justice and a radical commitment to solidarity with those crushed under the weight of the caste system. In line with that tone, if caste is pronounced as sin, occupation in the Palestinian context needs to be pronounced boldly as sin, for we are all called like the prophet Jeremiah, ‘See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to

uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant' (Jeremiah 1:10). May the walls of division in this land be torn down and destroyed so that peace and justice shall flow like an ever-flowing streams. Today we need prophets like Jonah, who after a fish experience proclaimed a fast that challenges the polis of his day, the polity of his day and the prophecy of his day, thereby saving the territory and city of Ninevah. Jonah truly is a first prophet of his kind who has blended Dalit-Palestinian ethos in achieving justice. We as SCMI pledged our support to the Palestinian struggles for justice, when we recently met at our General Committee meetings and wrestled with the theme, 'Blessed are those in the margins, for they shall inherit the land,' drawing parallels from our Dalit/Adivasi experiences.

"May this season inspire us to discover Jesus,
among the weak, the poor, the powerless, the landless, and the occupied;

May this season invite us to recover Jesus,
from the glamour of prosperities and from the armour of pseudo-spiritualities;

May this season initiate us to uncover Jesus,
from the wrappings of exclusivism and from the claims of absolutism."



***Reclaiming the Good News of the Holy Land and the Imperative of
Interfaith Solidarity to Resist Empire:
A Philippine Theological Response to Kairos Palestine***
Ferdinand Anno

Introduction

"The time has come. The moment of truth has arrived." This is kairos time for the churches and faith communities in the Philippines to stand on the side of what is true and just with respect to the Palestinian question.

On the occasion of the Philippine Interfaith Solidarity Consultation Workshop on Kairos Palestine, we met as an interfaith, multisectoral, ecumenical community to theologically reflect -- "from the heart of Palestinian suffering" -- on the realities of our time, our country, and our world.

Our response to Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth (2009) springs from our theologies and spiritualities as formed by our continued participation in the struggles of our people. We have, in the past, "[laid] bare the historical and political roots of the crisis in our world"; we have affirmed "the faith of the poor and the oppressed," "condemned the sin of those who oppress, exploit, persecute and kill people" and called for the "conversion of those who have strayed from the truth of our [respective faith communities] and commitment." Then, we saw ourselves as walking our own "road to Damascus (1989)" -- seizing the moment and seeking conversion. Now we see ourselves as companions to our Palestinian brothers and sisters as they live this moment: their kairos, their appointed time. Now, too, is the time for churches and faith communities all over the globe to be as one with the Palestinian people in their struggle for justice, freedom and the fuller life.

1. Palestine, the Empire, and Our People's Struggles

- 1.1 The realities in Palestine reflect the extent to which the empire is at work in our world today. [By "empire" we mean "the combined economic, military, political, and cultural domination by a powerful state, assisted by satellite states and aided by local elites of dominated countries, to advance its own interests on a global scale. United States military dominance, conjointly with transnational corporate power, makes up the heart of today's empire."]
- 1.2 The prolonged Palestinian crisis demonstrates the sophistication with which the empire has been casting its deathly shadow on every nook and cranny of this planet. This includes the empire's cooptation of religious language; its forming a theological language for conquest and occupation; and its ability to build a religious consensus for silence if not outright support for a crusader religious discourse. For many decades now, the occupation has thrived on the

perverted militancy and neo-crusader ethos of right-wing Christianity, and on the macabre silence of many of the world's religions.

- 1.3 Secondly, the Palestinian situation mirrors the many faces of suffering in our world today. The tentacles of the empire move unrestrainedly, causing much destitution and death from Palestine to the Sulu Isles. Empire-sponsored occupation of other people's lands is known by other names in other areas. Among them are "neo-colonialism," "strong republic," "national security state," "democratisation," etc.
- 1.4 Thirdly, the Palestinian people's struggle amplifies the faith, hope, and love of resisting peoples and nations of the world. The peoples of the world are resisting all forms of aggression and domination. Palestine -- being at the centre of the world, historically, culturally, and geopolitically -- is central to the many narratives of national liberation. For this reason, solidarity around the Palestinian people's struggle is crucial to the formation of a truly global network for emancipatory politics.

2. The Good News of the Holy Land

- 1.1 Since the Nakba and the subsequent creation of the Jewish state on Palestinian land, darkness has descended not only upon the land but upon the global community as well. In its indifference and apathy if not outright culpability, the international community has participated in this colossal post-war crime. In particular, the faith communities and the churches are doubly culpable for their silence and even rationalisation and direct support of the Zionist cause.
- 1.2 The holy land was promised as a sanctuary for the poor and the oppressed. The injustices of occupation and apartheid being inflicted by the Jewish state upon the people of Palestine defy divine mandate as well as defile the divine historic economy of the holy land.
- 1.3 Moreover, biblical Israel's appointment was to become a blessing and light to the nations. Its historic mission is to proclaim the gospel of liberation and to spread the cause of freedom and peace in the world. That is the only real connection between ancient Israel and that of present-day Israel and the Church. The continuing occupation and oppression of Palestinian land and people are antithetical to the theology and missiology, the history and tradition of the "promised land."
- 1.4 Tragically, the Zionists' invocation of this ancient promise has been done in the same spirit and ways that roused the wrath of the Hebrew prophets and Jesus. The Palestinian resistance now stands in this prophetic tradition of reminding us how to live with justice and righteousness in the land -- how to celebrate the "holiness" and the gospel of the "promised land."

- 1.5 The only reality that hallows what is traditionally and historically the “holy land,” in religious geography, is the Palestinian people’s resistance movement. It is the sole signifier that faith, hope, and love are still alive in that pit of darkness called Israeli-occupied Palestine.

3. Theologies of Occupation

- 1.1 Is there any possible religious and theological justification for the Israeli occupation of Palestine? All the Jewish, Christian, and other theologies rationalising the occupation are built around ideologies and theopolitics of conquest and empire-building. These are theologies and gospels that preach faith in walls and nuclear arsenals, hope in the sustainability of Zionist-Western colonial-imperial ethos, and genocidal walled-in “love.” Succinctly put, there is nothing theological, Christian, Jewish, or Islamic about the Israeli government’s defilement of the world’s religious capital. God-logic means loving both God and neighbour. The praxis of occupation ought to be the object of our Judaeo-Christian and Islamic theological wrath. Imperial discourses masquerading as “theologies” and “gospels” must be exposed for what they are: theologies and gospels that feast on death.
- 1.2 Christian fundamentalism’s crusader theology allied with Zionist interests must be exposed for what it is: an anti-biblical, anti-Christian theology that does nothing but instigate and perpetuate a theo-praxis of unrestrained genocidal violence. Christian fundamentalism continues to construct among its vast constituency a god-logic that easily buys into the crusader idea of a clash of civilisations -- and the need for it to take place in “Megiddo,” including the latter’s spatial appropriations in places like Muslim Mindanao. It has not been unusual for fundamentalist Christians in the Philippines to lump Palestinians together with the “Moros” of Southern Philippines. In the perverted god-logic and crusader ideology of fundamentalist Christians, both Moros and Palestinians should be impaled on sharpened Christian crosses.
- 1.3 Today, Christian pilgrimages to the holy land are often used as occasions to indoctrinate pilgrims into embracing Christian Zionism. Through these pilgrimages, Zionist Christians are actively involved in the formation of crusader theological consciousness among participants/pilgrims. Tragically, the spiritual directors, theologians, and chaplains of these crusader theology-forming pilgrimages are our priests, pastors, and lay leaders.]
- 1.4 Not unlike the ancient Israelites who were too often rebuked by the prophets for failing to write the law in their hearts, most of contemporary Christianity has failed to grasp what is at the heart of Judaeo-Christianity and of the “Abrahamic” faith. We have walked unashamedly with an oppressive empire, heartlessly walked past the victims of the violent politics of occupation, and consented to

injustice with our silence. We have failed to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God.

4. Resistance Theology for Palestinians

- 1.1 The God we worship is the God who hears people's cries and sees their afflictions. This is the gospel of the Old Testament. It is the same Gospel the Mosaic law laboured to institutionalise, and the same gospel the prophets proclaimed when the former slaves, in violation of their divine and historic mandate, became the oppressors of another people.
- 1.2 In the fullness of time, God in Jesus Christ empowered the suffering and the afflicted. The healing of the sick and the lame, the giving of sight to the blind, the release of prisoners, the proclamation of God's reign, are all acts of empowerment -- of liberation -- so that the afflicted may become people again, reflecting the image of God in themselves and in their life together.
- 1.3 The act of resistance is an act of humanisation. It, too, is a process in Jewish conversion, in Christianisation and Islamisation. Submission to God's will in the Jewish, Christian and Islamic faiths is not an empty ritualisation; rather, it is an experience of death and resurrection to fuller life and living.
- 1.4 Resisting occupation is an act against violence. It is an affirmation of humanity and a celebration of freedom. It is a life-affirming and life-pursuing struggle that touches on the heart of divinity -- in all its facets, revelations, and historico-cultural incarnations.
- 1.5 In the Holy Spirit, God empowers and emboldens the poor and oppressed to rise against injustice, enabling them to creatively seek ways to realise genuine peace and freedom in their lands.
- 1.6 The history and continued reality of conquest, colonisation and occupation in Palestine and other parts of the globe have already terminated the theological, ethical, and moral ground of any conquistador/missionary reading of sacred scriptures. These missionary readings include the previously dominant "promised land" theology and consciousness of the North American Christian right; the colonial missiology of still-unreconstructed fundamentalist Islamophobic and racist evangelicals; and the triumphalist readings of the establishment church. Biblical hermeneutics and theological reflections need to proceed from where the heart of divinity lies, from where the heart of Yahweh/Al-lah lies: from the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalised.
- 1.7 The sacred scriptures can no longer be invoked to justify occupation, national security states, anti-terror campaigns, or strong republics. This heresy and apostasy of using God's name in vain must come to an end.

5. Kairos for the Church Ecumenical and Global Community

- 1.1 Founded by the many theologies of Kairos from the time of its first appearance in South Africa during the struggle against apartheid, and especially as the word is now defined and celebrated by the resisting peoples of Palestine, we understand and reaffirm kairos in this interfaith solidarity workshop as a moment of realisation that our silence on the Palestinian question must now end; that the Palestinians are our neighbours; and that their struggle to resist occupation and regain their full humanity is our struggle, too.
- 1.2 For us, Kairos means the appointed time to take a stand for the truth, for justice, and for peace on the Palestinian crisis.
- 1.3 Together with the peoples of Palestine, we affirm that occupation is a sin -- and that the peoples of the world need to struggle as one against this sin and the vast network of evil that is being built around it.
- 1.4 We affirm with the peoples of Palestine that so much of our Judaeo-Christian theological heritage has been corrupted to form anti-biblical, anti-Christian imperial and occupation theologies -- and that we need to expose and combat these religious ideologies and imperial theologies in our churches and faith communities.
- 1.5 We affirm with the peoples of Palestine that resistance is their only way out, and that the other name for resistance is the peoples' "faith," "hope" and "love" at work in their condition.
- 1.6 Finally, Kairos means, for us, the resolve to commit ourselves to accompanying the Palestinian people in their struggle. This act of accompaniment, of breaking bread together with our Palestinian sisters and brothers, is our leituorgia, a sacramental moment of realisation of our at-one-ment with the merciful God of Justice -- bringing us enlightenment with respect to the demands of truth, justice, and discipleship in the world in these critical times.

Kairos Europe and North America

***The British Churches:
Initial Responses to Kairos Palestine***
Warren Bardsley

It is a huge privilege to attend the Kairos for Global Justice Conference, together with sisters and brothers from around the world and with veterans of the struggle for Palestinian freedom and self-determination, and I want to thank Kairos Palestine for inviting me. Although I am not officially representing the Methodist Church of Great Britain in attending this conference, I am an ordained minister of this church, the only major Christian denomination in Britain that has openly endorsed the Kairos document.

When I first visited Jerusalem and Bethlehem in 2005 with Amos Trust¹⁹, I experienced a conversion. Our group went to the office of Sabeel²⁰, which at that time was located in Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem. Dr. Naim Ateek, founder and director of Sabeel, addressed us, and I recall asking the question “Which Biblical event best describes the experience of the Palestinian people?” I don’t know what sort of answer I was expecting, but without hesitation, Naim replied, “Naboth’s vineyard.” He went on to describe the story of the dispossession of the Palestinian people from 1947-8 through the present day. For me, it was a moment of truth – a metanoia, a kairos experience. By the end of that week, I was committed to the cause of a just peace in this land. When, three years later, I worked in East Jerusalem as an accompanier with the World Council of Churches programme, that commitment deepened and intensified. It literally changed my life. My advocacy for the programme began in the immediate aftermath of Operation Cast Lead; in July of that year, the British Methodist Conference set up (as a matter of urgency) a working group to generate a major report on the Methodist position regarding the conflict and bring it to the Methodist Conference of 2010.

I was invited to be a member of the group and was responsible for drafting the central section of the report, “The Face of the Occupation.” This is where the Kairos Document comes in. Its launch in Bethlehem in 2009, as we were beginning our work, gave us great encouragement. It was also significant that the President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference had responded to an invitation from the Joint Inter-Faith Council and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme to visit the country as their guests in February 2010. Both were deeply moved by what they saw and heard, conveying this impact in letters posted on their blog. Knowing how crucial 2010 would be, we asked the President (Rev. David Gamble) if he would invite Naim Ateek to address the Conference that year. Naim’s powerful speech to the ministerial session and his address in a well-attended fringe meeting a day or so later, was, I believe, a major factor in preparing the ground for the debate on the report, “Justice for Palestine and Israel,” which took place on July 5. The outcome was an overwhelming majority vote in favour of the report and its resolutions.

Strong opposition to some aspects of the report had been mounted prior to the debate by the Jewish Board of Deputies and the Chief Rabbi’s office, and it was important that we were

¹⁹ www.amostrust.org

²⁰ www.sabeel.org

able to cite the Kairos Document and say, “This is what our Palestinian Christian sisters and brothers are saying to us now.” A summary of the document was included in the body of our report. We also referred to Kairos in a number of the resolutions, especially those which referred to “engaging with the witness of Palestinian Christians” and support for the boycott of Israeli goods from illegal settlements.

Here it must be said that this was further than any major UK denomination had gone up to that point. Our hope was (and still is) that other churches might be encouraged to follow our lead. Earlier this year, the Quakers indicated their support for BDS at their national gathering; apart from that, the general response has been muted.

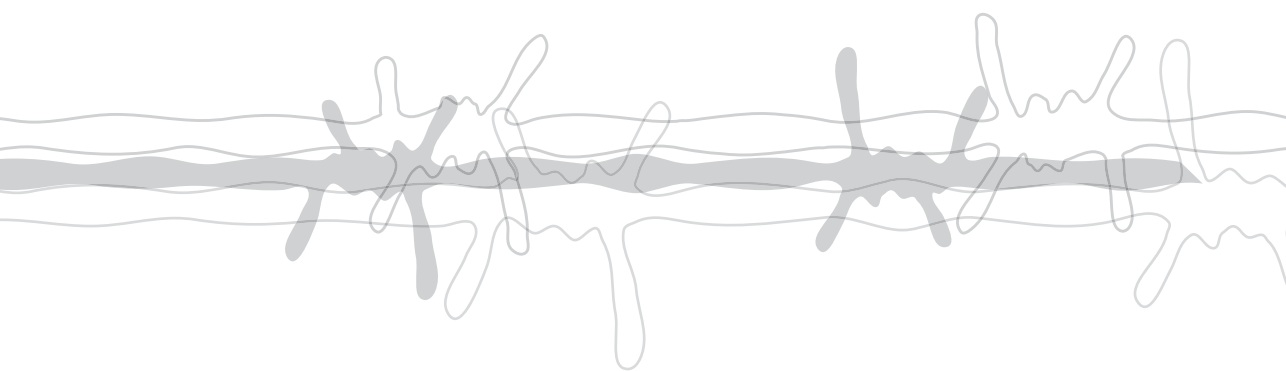
You will know, however, that passing resolutions is only one part of the story! It has (largely) been left to a small group within the Methodist Church to push hard for the implementation of the Conference Resolutions in the Districts and Circuits across the country. Strong support has come from Friends of Sabeel, who have been active for a number of years in awareness-raising among churches in the UK. Over the past fifteen months, I have made it the major focus of my advocacy. In consultation with others, I have devised a two-hour Kairos Palestine workshop for use with groups as small as twelve and as large as forty, drawing on my experience as an accompanier to describe the present reality -- and always allotting no less than half an hour at the end to address the question, “What can/must we do now?” Each person is offered a sheet containing a number of possible responses and inviting commitment. No one can do everything, but everyone can do something. We also try to identify at least two actions the group (whether a congregation or a local Churches Together/inter-faith group) can take.

We stress the urgency of such action. If not now, when? If not us, who? Indeed, in the words of Alice Walker, “We are the ones we have been waiting for.”

We have seen some encouraging results. Two churches have agreed to become “Just Peace congregations.” One ecumenical group committed to twinning with a Palestinian village; another persuaded their Church Council make Palestine a priority on the agenda of their next meeting, which resulted in the decision to open a regular outlet for the sale of Palestinian goods. We have distributed over 500 copies of the Kairos Document. These are small but important steps. One of the Kairos Document’s achievements is in challenging Christians to engage with politics and political action for change as an expression of faith. This applies particularly to BDS, but also, for example, to my own local context: regular vigils/demonstrations outside an Israeli-owned factory that manufactures engines for drones. I have made my abovementioned Kairos workshop available on request. Miranda Pinch (a former Ecumenical Accompanier (EA)) has produced a PowerPoint presentation on Kairos, which is also available.

In May 2012, Three former EAs organised a Kairos week in May 2012 on the Scottish island of Iona, involving around a hundred people, for which the speakers were Dr. Mark Braverman and Dr. Naim Ateek. This event was planned in hopes that a British Kairos network would emerge from it.

We thank God for the inspiration and challenge generated by the Kairos for Global Justice Conference, firing us up with fresh urgency for the continued struggle. Always, our hope and prayer is that there will be many more moments of metanoia, moments creating that “Kairos consciousness” so vividly described by Stiaan van der Merwe and the South African representatives in the messages they have shared.



Our Frame: Words and Images of Hope

Gied ten Berge

My objective is to put on the agenda the importance of analysing the modern communication techniques of framing and reframing, using them to examine the ways in which the conflict in the Middle East is “reframed” in the Netherlands today. “Framing” can be described as a technique to convince people of a point of view -- not through arguments, but just by utilising the words and images to which people are most susceptible. “Reframing” can be described as a method of changing the meaning of something and, by means of framing, thereby changing people’s minds. Both are techniques that are skilfully implemented by the Dutch populist politician Geert Wilders, notorious for his provocative and humiliating language. I will begin by discussing how Dutch politics are working today, in order to clarify why framing and reframing should be a subject of theological reflection and analysis.

It is important to know that the present right-wing Dutch minority government depends on the support of a populist party in parliament. The government is effectively held hostage by this party, and the opposition has no method for answering their provocations. Under the influence of the populists, our minister of Foreign Affairs, Uri Rosenthal (my first example of reframing), has been transformed from a moderate, liberal senator into a right-wing Likud-style politician. Through populist means, he consistently reframes and condemns all human rights activities within Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories as “Israel-bashing.”

In 2011, Wilders, the leader of the Dutch populists, was received as the special guest of Ariele Eldad, resident of the Israeli settlement Kfar Adumim and reserve general in the IDF. At the time, Eldad strongly objected to Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Eldad and his Dutch admirer oppose any capitulation of Israeli sovereignty to the Palestinians over the West Bank. They share the view that the Palestinians ought to have the right to settle in Jordan: “the Palestinian state,” as Wilders has said, “which already exists.” The Jordanian government reacted furiously. In defence, our government stated that the official Dutch view still promoted the desirability of a two-state solution and declared that Wilders’ remark expressed his view alone. But Wilders retorted without batting an eye that he, too, was recognising the two-state solution! This incident provides us with a second example of reframing and how it confuses Dutch politics today.

Wilders then made another reframing remark about the role of Israel: “Israel is not guilty for this situation [in the Middle East], but [rather] Islam.” This second gesture of reframing has a deep theological impact: it amplifies the problem to a worldwide clash of religious civilisations, transforming the state of Israel from a historical “safe haven” for Jews facing discrimination across the world into a stronghold against Islam, defended by Jews. In Wilders’s view, Islam itself is tantamount to fascism.

This third example clearly demonstrates what is at stake with respect to the abuse of framing and reframing in Dutch politics. Various Dutch populists have already been using Islam and Muslims as a national scapegoat. By reframing Islam as an equivalent of European fascism, the national-socialists have managed to associate an entire religion -- not merely sectarian

extremists -- with the extermination of the Jewish people. This is a deeply malicious attack on the values and ethos of a religion in its entirety and of a religious people as such. As a Christian who seeks to foster better relations with Jews and Muslims, I cannot help but wonder: who will be next?

The gravity and toxicity of this situation begs other questions about the nature of reframing itself: when is it appropriate and when is it abusive? Indeed, framing and reframing are important and normal activities within the theological profession; theologians are familiar with critically rethinking and reinterpreting texts, words, even dogmas. But I suppose the moment has come also in which, even within the theological practice, framing and reframing -- when rendered a vicious language-game -- must become an object of serious reflection and critical investigation. I make these remarks in part because I want raise the question of how to react to framing and reframing as a humiliating activity. On the other hand, I also want to discuss which kinds of reframing deserve our critical dedication -- when enacted in order to preserve the true intentions behind words and concepts we hold dear. Let me explain what I mean.

At the Kairos conference in Amsterdam in September 2011, Naim Ateek made an important remark on the so-called "unbreakable bond with Israel": a well-known notion in the Dutch Protestant Church, dating from the sixties. At that time, it was an understandable and even necessary concept because of the experience of European Jews in the Holocaust and the feelings of collective responsibility and humility that followed. It expressed the fact that, after this genocide, Dutch Christians could never again renounce their special ties with Jews and Judaism. Even more: for the first time, Dutch Protestants (as well as Catholics) realised and acknowledged their ties to living, contemporary Judaism. But Naim Ateek rightly emphasised that, in the present day, this concept of "the unbreakable bond" is increasingly appearing in Protestant discussions as a condensed theology, even as a new improper dogma. A dogma that is dividing Protestantism, because it doesn't provide any new contextual answers to problems both old and new. For instance, the current use of this concept tends to ignore:

- The unsolved questions of the difference between Judaism and the state of Israel;
- The urgency of social and democratic renewal -- including within Israeli society -- in the fast-changing context of the Middle East;
- The inevitable common future of the peoples of Israel and the occupied Palestine territories, "living apart together." Who are they?
- The suffering of many peoples, and of our Christian brothers and sisters in particular;
- The challenge of interreligious encounters and dialogues with Jews, but also with the Muslims in the region of the Middle East and in Europe; and
- The fundamental theological question: to whom does the Promised Land belong?

After hearing Naim Ateek's words, and after my recent readings on framing and reframing, I have become more aware of the fact that, without any review and actualisation, the condensed concept of the "unbreakable bond" may also run the risk of being recycled into the resentful, rhetorical speech-frame of populist politicians and publicists.

Speaking (as our unchurched populists constantly do) about a supposed, exclusive "Judeo-Christian culture" points in that direction. Described this way as an exclusive connection, this concept may be interpreted by Jews as a rather hypocritical denial of a long European history of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism. But it also gives the floor to those people who want to reframe the state of Israel as such: changing it from a safe haven for European Jews into an anti-Islamic bastion and outpost of the West. So, if there was any intention of Christian-Jewish reconciliation at work in using this concept, it has already been reframed into a fatal context of political, irreligious rancour.

I wonder why this reframing by populist politicians is so successful today. We probably have to seek answers in three directions:

1. For Europeans, Islam is no longer so far away. Because of old image-formation, illustrated with a flood of negative news, Islam is often presented as a violent, primitive culture. Therefore, many people nowadays only have access to negative images. They no longer see the truth, the beauty and the goodness in the other, and they are blind to signs of hope and change.
2. The success of blunt reframing in our society may be partly an effect of the very unsettling financial and economic crisis existing in Europe today. Concepts of "self-interest," "no-nonsense" and exclusion are commonly deployed and therefore poison the political idiom in our country.
3. The populist success may also arise from a crisis of values, together with the acceleration of the process of secularisation. Around the year 1900, 2% of Dutch citizens were unchurched. By 1960, the percentage had risen to 18%; as the time of this writing, in 2011, it is around 50%. It is a *Mene Tekel* that the number of people supporting populism and exclusivism in areas which recently became unchurched, especially in the originally Catholic south, is relatively high. The political sphere is frequented by a discourse that speaks to a moral crisis: "Development aid must return to zero," the right-wing populists in my country demand. "Economic interests and not international human rights are the core business of our department of Foreign Affairs," our minister of Foreign Affairs repeated. The fact that this is the official Dutch sentiment at work today is, I fear, a typical consequence of the churches' declining moral voice.

Once there was a time when Christians, in the footsteps of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, tried to interpret this process of secularisation as a greater appreciation of the world in the

light of Christian faith. They also followed Max Weber's sociological interpretation that secularisation meant an inevitable disenchantment with the world. Today, however, we also witness the blunt effects of the individual's apparent autonomy within a consumer-society that is itself in crisis. We see many angry people characterised by an amazing political and religious ignorance, people lacking clear identity or strong values of solidarity and compassion, people who are easily manipulated. We also hear some talk about fear within the weakening churches of objecting to these developments, and reports of some young pastors speaking in favour of right-wing populism: probably shepherds following the flock, because there are too many lost sheep...

And what, in the face of these changes and challenges, can we do?

As a Kairos group (as Kairos Palestine-Netherlands, and in cooperation with other Kairos groups) we have to initiate public debate and participate in it. We must help people to overcome their negativity: for instance, the automatic accusation of anti-Semitism levied against people who are only and specifically questioning the politics of the state of Israel. Therefore, we also need to empower people in our congregations in order to make them less vulnerable to such attacks and to the mental influence of false, populist prophets.

We must also ask churches and theologians to focus on the problem of the erroneous framing and reframing of our realities -- helping people instead to resist the hopelessness of our times by evoking a prophetic hope that may open people's hearts to the images of the Kingdom of God.

I want to believe that it should be possible today, coming from various religious cultures across our world, to follow a steady course together towards an intended universality. In his last pastoral letter, Patriarch Michel Sabbah wrote: "The Holy Land is a land with a universal vocation. God wanted it thus, since he wanted to manifest himself here not only to one people, but to the whole of humankind. Still today, this land certainly belongs to all its inhabitants, but also to the whole of humankind." In my opinion, these words express the deep meaning of truly Christian, truly global thinking and reframing. We need to cultivate such words and images of hope as our frame for our lifetime and that of the next generations.

Canadian Realities and Responses

Barbara Lloyd

My name is Barbara Lloyd, and I am the Coordinator of Public Witness for the national office of the United Church of Canada (UCC), the largest Protestant denomination in Canada. In this role, I work with others on national and international advocacy issues and campaigns. Such efforts include sending letters and statements to our own and other governments, facilitating letter-writing campaigns, and organising delegations and meetings between global partners and government officials. I also contribute to the work of building congregational capacity for justice-making within our three thousand congregations.

In attending the Kairos for Global Justice Conference, my colleague Peter Lougheed and I value the opportunity to help develop strategic advocacy plans for living out the goals of the Kairos Palestine document. In alliance with KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, a coalition of churches and religious organisations united in faithful action for human rights, we come as representatives of our denomination and as ecumenical partners with other mainline Canadian denominations, civil society organisations, and partner churches around the world, all concerned with the urgent issue of achieving a just peace in Palestine/Israel.

As background for the achievement of this goal and for our own solidarity efforts, I want to give you an outline of our Canadian political context, civil society context, denominational climate and relevant UCC policies, and strategic advocacy actions.

Canadian Political Context

Canada is now Israel's new "best friend." The Conservative majority government seems to be taking on similar policies and practices as our neighbour, the United States. We are hearing about a proposed "Ottawa Protocol" which uses a definition of anti-Semitism that includes criticism of Israel. The Department of Foreign Affairs is launching an "Office of Religious Freedom," with an unclear -- yet worrying -- purpose and powers. All this, even though Canada has already signed every UN Human Rights declaration in which religious freedom is emphasised.

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), a government funding agency that works with civil society organisations and churches to co-fund international development projects and partnerships, recently cut funding for a church coalition to which the UCC, as well as 11 other churches and church organisations, belong. After little in the way of official explanations was offered, many concluded that the motive behind the defunding was the Kairos stand on a just peace for Palestine/Israel. One cabinet minister bragged about this new hard-line approach in support of Israel at a meeting he attended in Jerusalem.

On other issues, Canada is presently wriggling out of its commitment to the Kyoto Protocol, ignoring calls for ethical practices and accountability to be applied to Canadian mining companies working internationally, and virtually ignoring the major issue of aboriginal rights and sovereignty that has been dragging on for years and continues to marginalise

and disempower aboriginal peoples in our country. I struggle to recognise my own country. I tell Americans that their habit of using baggage tags bearing the Canadian flag is no longer going to work for them -- or for us -- as a way of currying favour with the global community! I am sad to say that we have become a much more mean-spirited, self-centred and business-focused nation.

Civil Society

Canadian civil society contains a strong right-wing Jewish lobby that remains active through several organisations and media outlets. Canadians are likewise influenced by numerous and readily available American Christian Zionist television programs and internet sites. However, there are also many strong progressive Jewish voices and activists across the country. I believe that the general public shows growing sympathy for the Palestinian cause. Undoubtedly, confusion and misconceptions abound, but several battles about using the term "Israeli Apartheid" have been fought and won. Israeli Apartheid Week, for instance, is staged yearly at many universities across Canada.

Unlike the US, Canada is a largely secular country with a significant multi-religious sector that has grown through the continuous immigration of peoples from all parts of the world. Church and state really are separate in politics, although ideologies influenced by the Christian right certainly come into play.

The United Church of Canada

Within our denomination, certain internal politics and constraints sometimes prevent us from being as bold and prophetic as we might otherwise be. Most of the time, the issue seems to revolve around fear of conflict and public criticism for taking any kind of courageous stand on ending the illegal occupation of Palestine. Attacks come from right-wing, pro-Israel media waiting to pounce, as well as from right-wing Jewish groups quick to cry foul, defend Israel as the victim, and demand a more "balanced" approach.

Our 13 regional church jurisdictions across the country, however, include networks and committees with good energy and motivation that are pushing impatiently for stronger UCC policy and action on Palestine/Israel.

UCC Policies

Over the years, the UCC has adopted several strong policies seeking to end the illegal occupation of Palestine and speaking in solidarity with Palestinians. Of course, these policies are lived out in various ways, and not all parts of our church implement them effectively. The UCC has formal partnerships with several organisations in Palestine and Israel including Kairos Palestine and the Middle East Council of Churches. We also work with statements, analysis and materials of the World Council of Churches, all of which help buttress our own positions.

Below are some of our main policies regarding Palestine/Israel:

2003 Paths to Peace in Israel and Palestine

- Recognised the state of Palestine
- Called for the dismantling of settlements
- Urged withdrawal of Israeli Defence Forces to pre-1967 borders
- Demanded the guarantee of citizenship rights for Israeli Arabs

2006 Ethical Investment for Peace in Palestine and Israel

- Recommended a pro-investment policy
- Urged advocacy with the Canadian government toward the establishment of a just peace

2009 Implementation of Measures toward Peace in the Middle East

- Urged a humanitarian response for Gaza
- Called for government advocacy
- Provided strong support for and engagement with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI)
- Urged and committed to follow-through on the Amman Call
- Engaged in solidarity and research with partners
- Put forth strategic actions, such as Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS), to be considered and acted upon by congregations and other courts of the church as they chose
- Encouraged financial commitments, solidarity and ecumenical accompaniment with partners in Palestine/Israel

2010 Kairos Palestine Document 2010

- Received the Kairos Palestine document as an authentic voice of Palestinian Christians and offered it to the courts of the church for use in ongoing prayer, education and action.

Present and Future Strategic Actions

- Preparing for our August 2012 UCC General Council in hopes that, through strong regional proposals made to that court, a clear, bold denominational commitment will be made to the BDS campaign with resources and tools to follow
- Organising (February 2012) a national networking event for supporters already onboard and seeking greater church participation in advocacy
- Continued support for participants in the EAPPI program
- Commitment to and leadership for the World Week of Peace for Palestine and Israel Working Group
- Promotion of alternative tourism
- Published three-session study guide on “A Moment of Truth” for congregations, modelled on the Presbyterian USA booklet
- Continued advocacy with Members of Parliament

- Covenanting for Life program with congregations, working to move them to challenge empire in various ways and make connections locally and globally
- “What We Can Do Toward a Just Peace in Palestine and Israel” pamphlet created.

Allies

In Canada we work with many allies, including the abovementioned KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives; Canadian Friends of Sabeel; Canadian Forum on Palestine/Israel with mainline denominations; and civil society partners such as World Vision.

We work with the following partners on the global level:

Middle East Council of Churches

An ecumenical body of 27 churches throughout the Middle East.

Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center

Coordinates programs for diverse groups focusing on non-violent Christian approaches to justice-seeking in Palestine.

Jerusalem Interchurch Centre

Represents the Middle East Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, and the 13 Heads of Churches of Jerusalem to provide a gathering place in Jerusalem for Christian and inter-faith groups committed to peace and justice. It receives study tours and delegations from many countries.

Jerusalem Center for Women

Works to empower Palestinian women and advocate for human rights.

Bat Shalom

Brings together Jewish and Palestinian Israeli women working together for a genuine peace grounded in a just resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Jerusalem Link

Brings together the Palestinian and Israeli women's groups above to dialogue about ways they can work together.

Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum

Supported by the World Council of Churches, this forum brings churches and church-related organisations together to work for a just peace in Palestine and Israel.

Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees

Supports Palestinian refugees in five areas of the Middle East: the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel.

Conclusion

Despite the challenges, the United Church and its partners hope to seize this kairos moment to challenge our present government with respect to its complicity in Israel's human rights violations and its intransigence regarding the continued oppression of Palestinians. We need to speak out boldly before our own government and act assertively against the Israeli government, through BDS and other measures, in order to bring about the just peace that we believe our God so desires in Palestine/Israel.

Theological and Contextual Perspectives: Communities of Resistance and Solidarity

Pauline Coffman

It is a privilege to participate in the Kairos for Global Justice Conference. Our delegation comes from a broad cross-section of Christian groups in the US: our roots are in Presbyterian (PC USA, and, more specifically, from the Israel/Palestine Mission Network), Episcopalian (from the Episcopal Peace Fellowship's Palestine/Israel Network), United Methodist, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Evangelical, Peace Fellowship, and Bread for the World communities. It is important to us that we reach out to as many Christian groups and perspectives as possible.

As we met during the conference, some for the first time, we from Kairos USA shared questions and concerns about our presence here. Although there is great interest within our network in the Kairos movement, we were uncertain about how to define our work as part of it. In fact, as friends got word that I would be attending the Kairos conference, I began receiving long e-mails expressing doubt about our participation. As one comment put it:

America is "Rome." American churches are part of the "Empire." We are not suffering! We are affluent, privileged, we arise from the world's dominant power. We aren't sure we are willing to sacrifice for the suffering. How can we make a meaningful contribution?

We want you to know that we have the grace to be embarrassed and even sickened when we see the rest of the world supporting Palestine, with only the US and Israel allied in isolated on the other side. We also want to mention that we aren't certain that "Kairos USA" is the right label for us. Should it be, instead, Kairos USA for Palestine? What is our focus?, we are asking ourselves. Do we take on all issues of "empire"? What we do know, however, is that the intention of our presence at this conference is to listen to you and hear what you would have us do.

Bearing all this in mind, we have witnessed the emergence of communities that are willing to take on "empire" and what it represents; these past incidents inform our present. In 2004, the Presbyterian Church's General Assembly passed an overture that became known as our "divestment" action. This initiative was prompted by a Christian Peacemaker Trip to Israel and Palestine. On the bus, after an especially difficult visit to Hebron, the discussion became heated: What can we do? The resulting overture called for several things to happen: an end to the occupation, an end to home demolitions, and an end to the construction of the wall. If these events did not come about, the overture stated, then we should divest from all companies that are profiting from the occupation.

The overture passed with the help of an international guest, the Reverend Mitri Raheb, who spoke to the assembly. The resulting backlash led by American Jewish leaders made sure that the whole world knew about our action. On a travelling seminar to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Palestine later that year, we were surprised to hear "Thank you!" from the

communities we were visiting. We were told that Christians were safer in these countries because of the action; that it showed their neighbours that not all Christians were the same.

The action also led the church to establish a network of concerned Presbyterians who would monitor the situation in Israel and Palestine. Since then, the Israel/Palestine Mission Network has produced several educational tools, including *Cradle of our Faith*; *Steadfast Hope: The Palestinian Quest for Just Peace* and a three-week study guide to *Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth*. (You can find these resources on our website, www.TheIPMN.org.) Other denominations have formed similar networks and are working on divestment actions to be considered at national meetings occurring in the summer of 2012. We are also offering several trips to Israel and Palestine in answer to Kairos Palestine's call to "Come and See."

Of course, numerous obstacles remain in the US. One area of major concern at home is Christian Zionist activity: millions of evangelical Christians in the US have been misled by men who believe they are helping to bring about the second coming of Jesus Christ by supporting Israel. They work together with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) to sway Congress with money and religious zeal. Fortunately, some important advocacy work is being carried out in response: several evangelical leaders (among them Gary Burge, Don Wagner, and John Hubers) work with the UK's Stephen Sizer, vicar of Christ Church, to expose Christian Zionist activity as a perversion of the Bible. (See www.christianzionism.org for a sample of their work.) In any case, in the face of the obstacles posed by this kind of misinformation and manipulation, it is more important than ever that we encourage church people to use Palestinian tour guides and acquire a more balanced understanding of Palestinian reality.

At the time of this writing, we are in the season of Advent, and once again I hear the words of Isaiah 64:1: "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down...to make your name known to the adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence." I want the problem solved with one powerful action!, says this passage. But it doesn't work that way, does it? Even the writer of Isaiah knew that our own actions are key to making things right.

As representatives from other countries delivered their statements about why chose to attend the Kairos for Global Justice Conference, I repeatedly heard the words "solidarity with our sisters and brothers." I will repeat them, too: Christians in the US can offer solidarity. It makes me think of a favourite, worn-out book on my shelves at home, a book called *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: a Feminist Liberation Theology*, by Sharon Welch.²¹ In the book, Welch writes about the difficulty of making change. The hegemonic veil that covers us is very thick. The best we can hope for is that "communities of resistance and solidarity" can band together to poke holes in that veil and let the light of change come in. In fact, it is the light of hope in God's promises that shows us the way. With God's help, we can do this! We can make big things happen.

²¹ Welch's book has been updated and reprinted. It is now called *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Ethic of Risk*. 2000. Fortress Press

Kairos Palestine

Kairos Palestine: Contextual Perspectives

Nora Kort

At the time of this writing (the transition between 2011 and 2012), people's movements for justice are being met with unprecedented global militarisation. All over the world, people are demanding democracy and social justice while being attacked with tear gas and pepper spray, rubber bullets and live ammunition.

Militarisation is not new, nor is police and army brutality a recent phenomenon. Poor and disadvantaged communities have long faced the violence of systems of power. Police brutality, racial profiling, surveillance of communities, control over the media and means of communication are all connected to the global militarisation we presently witness in places where people are fighting for freedom and their just rights. What we are witnessing today is an illumination of these acts of violence as thousands stand united in defiance of such assaults.

The Arab Spring has been spreading through several countries of the Middle East since January 2011. The nonviolent revolts have brought down dictatorial regimes and given people hope for a better future. Citizens are giving up their lives for freedom, fighting for social justice, pushing for democracy -- but, sadly enough, they are met with excessive force. Although encouraged by these occurrences in other Arab countries, the Arab Spring takes a different form in the Palestinian areas due to the protracted Israeli occupation and the Palestinian people's corresponding priority: to end occupation.

The Arab Spring in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) is found in acts of nonviolent resistance and peaceful demonstrations against the occupation, the Separation Wall, home demolitions, land expropriation and appropriation for settlement purposes, denial of residency rights (over 140,000), unemployment, impoverishment, and imprisonment -- yet these peaceful protests, too, are met with brutal military measures, often culminating in the loss of lives. Palestinian youths are partaking in the development, building-up and strengthening of their public and community institutions; at the same time, they are working to resist the occupation, despite the Empire's hegemonic efforts to crush them and their hard labour.

For 64 years, the Palestinian people have experienced displacement and dispossession; the state of Israel wants land with no people. Palestinians have been calling for their inalienable rights of self-determination and national independence, but their attempts have not succeeded in securing them a state in spite of the solidarity expressed by most UN member countries that believe in a two-state solution.

Over the last two decades of the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, the number of settlements has multiplied, and the population of Israeli settlers in Jerusalem and the West Bank has nearly tripled (from 200,000 to almost 600,000). Today's news confirms that 734 dunam of land are to be confiscated in the Mount Scopus area for the construction of a national park -- a first step toward establishing a settlement in Jerusalem with the plan of preventing the development of the Al-Isawiya and Abu Tor neighbourhoods. The Empire is

racing against time!

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip live in an odd and oppressive limbo. They have no nation, no citizenship and no ultimate power over their own lives. They are humiliated and subjected to all sorts of discriminatory, fascist laws that separate husbands from wives and mothers from children. Israeli officials have recently announced a plan to displace 20 Bedouin communities from their homes between Jerusalem and Jericho, relocating 2,300 to a site along the Jerusalem municipal garbage dump. People's movement is restricted and often curtailed, their economy strangled and their opportunities scarce. Even their tax money -- which, according to the Paris Agreement signed between the Israelis and the Palestinians, should be channelled to the Palestinian Authority -- is denied and bargained for by the right-wing government of Israel.

Since 1967, when Israel conquered the final 22 percent of mandatory Palestine, all Palestinians have experienced life under the yoke of the Israeli military occupation. In some areas, Israel has allowed a Palestinian "autonomous" entity to take on such municipal functions as education, health care, infrastructure and policing, but it retains overall power.

Israel and international law

According to international law, an occupying power is responsible for the protection of the civilian population living under its control. Israel, however, ignores this requirement, routinely committing violations of the Geneva Conventions, a set of principles instituted after World War II to ensure that civilians would never again suffer as they had suffered under Nazi occupation. Today, Israel is one of the leading violators of these conventions. Particularly significant instances of these violations are the siege referred to as "Operation Cast Lead" in Gaza; the protracted blockade of the Gaza Strip since 2006; the attempts realised by the Freedom Flotilla to break the siege; the construction of illegal settlements in Jerusalem; and the rapid, systematic Judaisation of the Holy City. All such transgressions of human rights and international law are carried out with the support of the US and the allies of the Zionist agenda in the name of so-called peace and peace negotiations.

Facts to remember

Over 11.5 million people live in historic Palestine on 27,000 kilometres of land. Israelis comprise approximately 49.4% of the total population but use over 85% of the land. During the British Mandate, prior to 1948, Jews were living on 1,682 square kilometres; that is, 6.2% of the total land.

In contrast, Arabs comprise 47.9% of the total population and utilise less than 15% of the land.

The utilised land amounts to approximately 20.7% of Palestine, while forests and green areas comprise 9.7% of total agricultural lands. Construction is found on 5% of the land, but the larger portion, constituting 63.9%, is open land used mainly for military purposes or defined

as closed military zones (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2010).

Resistance through peaceful means

The Kairos Palestine document stipulates that the Israeli occupation of Palestine is a sin against God and humanity because it deprives the Palestinians of their basic rights as granted by God. As Palestinian Christians are part and parcel of the Palestinian nation, though a minority, they have to act, speak out and say enough is enough.

The Kairos Palestine message of faith, hope and love has come at the key time for local Christians to ask their Christian brothers and sisters around the world to stand in solidarity with them and help them connect with and inform the global community about their situation, struggles, hopes and aspirations toward ending the occupation through peaceful means. As the Philippine Theological Response to Kairos Palestine reminds us, interfaith solidarity is vital for the resistance of Empire.

In its first year, Kairos Palestine gained momentum in both the local and international arena, garnering strong and positive responses from officials and ordinary citizens, Christians and Muslims, religious and secular individuals and communities, churches and laity, political parties and apolitical groups, faith-based coalitions, and numerous civil society networks and organisations. It has had, and continues to have, tremendous impact.

Kairos Palestine's calls for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) of Israel until it ends its military occupation have also proven effective; Israeli officials feel its pangs and have recently formed Counter BDS campaigns to minimise its effects. The Buy Israel Week, for example, is rooted in a frantic attempt to sidetrack attention from deteriorating international tolerance for the crimes perpetrated by the Israeli army in the oPt. Buy Israel Week's initiators claim that those who work to undermine Israel do so by boycotting its very right to exist (as Kairos South Africa has described). Simultaneously, members of Israeli Divestment Campaigns (IDC) in several parts of the globe, especially in Europe and the US, are working hard to target Israeli academics, firms and businesses that benefit and/or profit from Israeli violations of human rights, international law and UN resolutions (examples include Caterpillar, Elbit and Veola).

Prospects for a peaceful settlement

The prospects for meaningful progress on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the 2012 US presidential campaign appear dim. Dr. Rashid Khalidi, professor of Arab Studies at Columbia University in New York, notes the resignation of Dennis Ross, Chief White House Adviser on Middle East, saying that Ross was a central figure in a "disastrous approach" that favoured "interminable negotiations" over deal-making. "If prospects for a two-state solution are dimming," he says, "at least part of the blame should be assigned to Ross" and his colleagues at the White House.

Kairos Palestine calls upon sister churches and communities to stand united in helping the

poor and oppressed walk toward justice in the footsteps of South Africa and Martin Luther King. Together, we are the power to change and transform.

Concluding thoughts

Faith

The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble (Psalm 9:9).

He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; He will crush the oppressor (Psalm 72:4).

Hope

Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy (Proverbs 31:9).

Love

Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth (John 3:17-18).

We must act and strategise with all these truths in mind.



The Russell Tribunal on Palestine

Luleka Nyhila

The Russell Tribunal on Palestine (RToP) is an international citizen-based tribunal of conscience that was created in response to the demands of civil society: NGOs, charities, unions, faith-based organisations, and so forth. Its objective is to inform and mobilise public opinion and put pressure on decision-makers toward the achievement of justice with respect to Palestine.

It is based on these grounds that the RToP was organised in Cape Town, held for the third time on 5-6 November 2011, as a platform to ascertain whether Israel's practices against the Palestinian people constitute a breach of the prohibition of apartheid under international law. The Tribunal proceedings encompass a number of sessions; for reasons of space, I will not discuss them all in detail here.

The Tribunal was both a hectic and a deeply fulfilling experience from start to finish. The gathering was blessed by the presence of His Grace Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, who gave an astounding opening address; also humbling was the presence and ministry of His Grace Thabo Magoba (the Bishop of Cape Town and the Metropolitan).

I would like to discuss a few features of the Tribunal's terms of references and specific proceedings during the session. First of all, the Tribunal operates with the established fact that certain aspects of Israel's behaviour have already been characterised as violations of international law by a number of international bodies, including the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly and the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

It is based on this fact that, at the Cape Town session in November, the International Organising Committee (IOC) submitted two fundamental questions to the RToP about Israel's policy and particular practices affecting the Palestinian population, both those Palestinians residing in Israeli territory and those in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel. The questions were:

- 1) Do these policies and practices amount to a breach of the international legal prohibition of apartheid?
- 2) Do they constitute persecution as a crime against humanity?

These inquiries were subsequently submitted by the IOC to a range of experts selected on the basis of their familiarity with the facts of the situation. The ensuing session proceeded in a form of an oral stage, in which the Tribunal heard statements presented by the experts and witnesses that had been called by the IOC. Below are brief summaries (in alphabetical order) of the individuals heard:

- **Jazi Abu Kaf**, member of the regional council for the 45 unrecognised Bedouin villages of the Naqab Desert
- Marianne Blume, classical philologist with ten years of professional experience in

Gaza

- **Allan Boesak**, South African Dutch Reformed Church cleric, politician and anti-apartheid activist
- **Luciana Coconi**, author of several essays and articles on human rights and international conflict in Afghanistan, the Middle East, the Western Sahara and other regions
- **Francois Dubuisson**, professor of international law at the Free University of Brussels and author of several articles on legal aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- **John Dugard**, South African professor of international law and former Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Palestinian Occupied Territories
- **Max Du Plessis**, Associate Professor of International Law of KwaZulu Natal in Durban, South Africa
- **Ran Greenstein**, associate professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa
- **Jeff Halper**, founder and director of the Jerusalem-based Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions
- **Mahmoud Hassan**, Palestinian lawyer with Addameer, a Jerusalem-based prisoner support and human rights organisation
- **Shawqi Issa**, human rights lawyer and general director of the Ensan Centre for Human Rights in Bethlehem
- **Shawarinan Jab**, veteran human rights activists and director of Al-Haq
- **Ingrid Jaradat**, founding member of BADIL and an Executive Committee member of the Boycott National Committee in Palestine
- **Jamal Juma'a**, coordinator of the Palestinian organisation Stop the Wall
- **David Keane**, lecturer in law at Middlesex University, London
- **Mohammed Khatib**, member of the Bil'in Popular Committee Against the Wall and coordinator of the Popular Struggle Coordination Committee
- **Emily Schaeffer**, American-Israeli human rights lawyer and activist based in Tel-Aviv
- **Joseph Schechla**, coordinator of the Habitat International Coalition's Housing and Land Rights Network
- **Raji Sourani**, Palestinian human rights lawyer and director of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights in Gaza
- **Lea Tsemel**, Israeli lawyer, legal adviser and board member of the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel
- **Zwelinzima Vavi**, General Secretary of Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and Vice-Chairperson of the Millennium Labour Council
- **Rafeef Ziadah**, Palestinian human rights activist, trade unionist and spoken word artist
- **Haneen Zoabi**, member of the Knesset representing the Balad party.

I should mention that on the second day of the Tribunal (Sunday, 6 November 2011), a group of Zionists demonstrated outside the Tribunal venue (the District Six Museum). They claimed on their demonstration signs that the Tribunal was a biased and illegal kangaroo court. But the action did not shake us: the Tribunal went smoothly and according to plan, and their demonstration did not hinder the proceedings.

A few remarks by way of conclusion. I would not be doing justice to the IOC if I didn't mention how hard they worked during the Tribunal: their synergy was evident in its fine organisation and smooth operation. The Committee, affectionately nicknamed "Vitamin People," was applauded both nationally and internationally for their job well done. Moreover, the dedication and determination of the volunteers from different organisations and communities must not go unrecognised. Synergic efforts produced synergic results.

The concrete results of the Tribunal itself, meanwhile, were telling. After hearing the testimonies from the abovementioned experts and witnesses, the Tribunal determined that "Israel does indeed practice and is guilty of the crime of apartheid." Our in-house legal experts will continue to engage with us about these findings, as well as about the next steps to be taken in order to hold Israel accountable.

Comrades, I will end by reminding us all that the struggle is still on. It is not yet uhuru ("freedom" in Swahili) as long as Palestine remains unliberated. There is a great deal of work ahead of us, and we will need a lot of energy to carry on with the struggle. I know that one day we shall overcome: if South Africa did, Palestine will.

Amandla amandla amandla ("power, power, power")
Mayibuye iPalestine mayibuye ("May Palestine return.")

***To Hold the Sky and Identify with Jesus:
Abstracts from A Gender Analysis of the Kairos Palestine Document***
Susanne Grimheden

*Let us love the holiness of our souls and bodies
because apart from this, no one will see the Lord.*

Melania the Younger (383-439 A.C.)
to her sisters at the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem²²

Introduction by Jean Zaru

It seems to me that the Kairos Palestine Document does not deal with women's issues. The pain of sexism is eclipsed by the lack of national liberation. I think it's crucial to remember, however, that all structures of violence and domination are tightly interwoven. We cannot become free if women are not free.

Some women think that they are adequately involved in society by means of the services they offer within their homes, churches, and communities. But is it truly enough to serve without becoming an active part of the decision-making processes at work in the church and in the society as a whole? When it comes to their own rights, many women's consciousness hasn't yet been awakened, which is why they continue participating in and reinforcing the structures of injustice.

Moreover, we still live within a patriarchal system, a fact that is experienced in the church and society on a daily basis. Very few women speak up in the presence of leaders -- who are, by and large, male. Many struggle very hard to put bread on the table for their families. Certainly, women do a great deal; often, they hold the whole sky, not just half of it.

The lack of equality, and the lack of equal opportunities, should be recognised in all spheres of life. Both men and women must work together to transform our societies and secure justice for all.

Indeed, we are struggling on so many fronts. There are times when I feel drained, even exhausted -- but, for the sake of us all, I will not give up.

Responses

The above introduction was written after the Palestinian Quaker leader Jean Zaru met with a group of other Palestinian women. She wanted to gather and record other women's reflections on the Kairos Document. Therefore, her introduction transmits not only her own words, but also conveys the collective thinking of Palestinian women who have studied the Kairos Document together.

²² Gerontius, Life of Melania the Younger, § 45, <http://cuapress.cua.edu/books/frontmatter/MIWE.pdf>

The theologian Rosemary Radford Reuther responded to Rev. Zaru's introduction as follows:

This is a very beautiful statement by Jean Zaru on the Kairos Document and its failure to mention sexism. As always, Jean states her views clearly and courageously, but also persuasively and in a way that calls on the best of the Christian tradition of universal inclusiveness of all in the image of God.²³

The operation UNSCR 1325 board member Ragnhild Greek likewise comments on Rev. Zaru's introduction:

It is hard to imagine a clearer analysis than the one written by Jean Zaru -- on the women made invisible in the Kairos Palestine Document. In addition, she makes a brilliant association to UN Resolution 1325. Jean Zaru describes the structures of (domestic) violence and (political) domination as interrelated: "We cannot become free if women are not free. In addition, Jean Zaru writes: "Men and women should work together to transform our societies and [secure] justice [for] all" -- this is what UNSCR 1325 aims at; to stop discrimination, protect girls and women, and -- what is more -- empower women, include more women at all levels in conflict management and peace building. "Participation is protection." UNSCR 1325 gives a perfect image of how the Kairos Document should be from a gender perspective.²⁴

In the gender analysis written with a mandate from the World Council of Churches (WCC), the theologian Kwok Pui-lan remarks on the concluding analysis of Palestinian theologian Niveen Sarras as follows:

Palestinian women's struggle for gender equality should be at the forefront of the fight for justice and peace in the Middle East. Living under Israeli occupation and in a patriarchal society, Palestinian women are the oppressed among the oppressed. The Christian Church should be a beacon of hope and not an instrument of oppression. I call upon the Church worldwide to stand in solidarity with Palestinian women in Palestine and in the Diaspora in their long and torturous struggle for human dignity and freedom. The Kairos Palestinian Document should include an astute gender analysis.²⁵

The response of the WCC, written during the conference in Bethlehem in December 2010, ended with four questions. Below, then, are the four questions we feel warrant further discussion.

The Questions of the WCC Conference

23 Comment by Rosemary Radford Reuther to Susanne Grimheden via email in November 2011.

24 Comment made by Ragnhild Greek to Susanne Grimheden via email in November 2011.

25 Comment by Kwok Pui-lan to Susanne Grimheden via email in December 2011.

(a) What is life in abundance for Palestinian women of today, both in Palestine and in the Diaspora, according to the Kairos Document and according to you?

(b) How can nonviolent resistance be practiced in homes (and in society) according to the Kairos Document and according to you?

(c) What does “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female” (Galatians 3:28) mean in the local context for Palestinian Christian women and men (and for each of us in our contexts) according to the Kairos Document and according to you?

(d) How can the churches assist women and men so that they ask questions about a just equality in its legal, political, economic and social dimensions, an equality that is not only between one people and another, but also between women and men, according to the Kairos Document and according to you?

A Palestinian Agape

The prayers below, written by Rula Salsa and Abeer Aweis,²⁶ are the fruits of having met with the Samaritan woman, Mary, Huldah, and the Excluded God. These prayers can be summoned at a simple agape meal, like the meal in which everyone shared what they had -- or didn't have -- in the earliest church in the Middle East at the end of service. This agape, this sharing of love, seeks to provide an inclusive sharing space for everyone in any place, home and church alike. It consists of pita bread, olive oil, and zaatar²⁷ -- the common meal eaten in the Bethlehem area during the time of closures in the Second Intifada²⁸ -- thus commemorating this specific exclusion. Additionally, this is an act of solidarity with every secluded person and creation throughout history.

Text in Bold = All

The five prayers not written in boldface are led by different participants. Alternatively, half of the people gathered pray the boldface text and the other half pray the non-boldface text. This simple meal is shared in complete and attentive silence. Afterwards, why not conclude the prayer with a liberating song?

I stretch out my hands and sanctify you:

For the extension of my hands is the sign of you:

26 The concluding sentences in italics, “Recognizing the divine...” derive from a comment in the gender analysis realized by Jean Zaru.

27 To make this herbal mixture, take 500 grams of thyme and add 50 grams of caraway, 50 grams of cumin, 50 grams of coriander, 50 grams of dill seeds, 250 grams of roasted wheat, 150 grams of sumac, 500 grams of sesame seeds, and salt to taste.

28 September 2000 to February 2005.

And my expansion is the upright tree.²⁹

I love you and long for you.30

*Open our minds to see each other
as equal humans,
and help us to achieve the love
you try so hard to explain to us,
to reach a peaceful life.*

*Help us to see the benefit
of the differences of your creation
not as borders to keep us apart,
but to bring us together creating a better world.*

I love you and long for you.

*Give us the strength of faith
and ability to understand your will
as the prophet Huldah has.*

I love you and long for you.

*As you kept your promise
and sent us Jesus the first time:
Assist us to keep hope
that you will fulfil
your promises
about eternal life
and Jesus coming back.*

I love you and long for you.

*Give us the power
to spread your words
over the world.*

*Give us the wisdom
to be able to act wisely,
to see that living
is not only the way of eating and dressing.*

29 Ode 27 made into a prayer. The human body makes a cross when a person stands erect in prayer with his/her arms outstretched. The Odes of Solomon.

30 A prayer by Thecla, The Acts of Paul and Thecla, ch. 10, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/maps/primary/thecla.html>

*We wish to accomplish
your vision on this earth.*

I love you and long for you.

SHARING OF AGAPE MEAL IN SILENCE

I love you and long for you.

*Recognizing the divine in myself
leads me to recognize the divine
in all other peoples and creations.*

*Equality and human dignity
empowers us
to resist,
and resist non-violently.*

**May the Excluded God
who longs for everyone,
and the creation as a whole,
to feel included and loved
be with us all.
Amen.**

An Islamic Response to Kairos Palestine

Farid Esack, Representing Peace for Life³¹

Preface

“An Islamic Response to Kairos Palestine” is an initiative led by the Muslim members of Peace for Life (PFL), a global solidarity network of peace advocates rooted in faith communities that are engaged in various forms of resistance to state terrorism and Empire. PFL is committed to interfaith, South-South and South-North solidarity, as well as progressive faith-based responses to the urgent calls of justice and peace.

As we know, Kairos Palestine’s “A Moment of Truth” is a declaration issued in 2009 and signed by most Palestinian Christian leaders. The document, drawn up after “prayer, reflection and an exchange of opinion,” is described by its signatories as a

[...] cry 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.

Kairos Palestine’s message -- a heartfelt call from our oppressed Palestinian Christian brothers and sisters for the world to act in the face of their daily humiliation and dispossession -- has resonated across the globe, and numerous communities and religious leaders have responded to it. PFL is deeply committed to intensifying the solidarity of the global religious community against Israeli Apartheid, and PFL’s Muslim members feel particularly called to respond to Kairos Palestine from an Islamic perspective. We want to say to our Christian sisters and brothers in Palestine: “We have heard your cries; you are not alone. We need each other now more than ever before and we undertake to walk the journey side by side towards freedom and justice in Palestine for all its inhabitants.”

In responding to Kairos Palestine, we seek to express the Islamic imperative to identify with the oppressed and the marginalised. We do so in a manner that a) acknowledges our inadequacies as Muslims in any/all instances of mistreating others within our societies b) rejects any and all attempts to co-opt our faith for the agenda of Empire and c) offers a vision of Islam that is just and compassionate, one that recognises the sacredness of all humankind, along with a particular partiality for those whom the Qur’an describes as the marginalised upon the earth (mustad’afun fi’l-ard).

Muslims across the globe are invited to sign this document.

31 This document was signed by a number of Muslim scholars.

An Islamic Response to Kairos Palestine **In the Name of Allah, the Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace**

O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in upholding equity, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of God even it be against your own selves [...] Do not, then, follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice: for if you distort [the truth], behold, God is indeed aware of all that you do! (Al-Nisa, ayah 135)

We are Muslims – religious leaders, scholars, activists and ordinary believers struggling to live out our faith in fidelity to our tradition and the demands of justice. We hail from different parts of the world and come from diverse tendencies within the House of Islam.

For decades now we have witnessed the systematic dispossession of the Palestinians -- Muslims, Christians and others of no particular religious persuasion -- from their land and seen them stripped of their human rights. We have regularly lamented this and protested against the ongoing persecution and marginalisation of the Palestinians. We acknowledge the limitations of our responses and have often not inadequately articulated the Islamic imperative to stand in solidarity with the oppressed.

“Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth” is a document -- first issued by a group of Christian leaders in 2009 and endorsed by almost all of the heads and leaders of Christian churches in Palestine -- described as “a word of faith, hope and love from the heart of the Palestinian suffering.” Kairos Palestine has awakened in us a keenness to speak the truth to power – even if that power may reside within us. In the words of the Qur’an, ‘wa law ‘ala anfuskim” (“even though it be against your own selves”), Al-Nisa, ayah 34).

Our statement in response to Kairos Palestine document is addressed to a) our own people, the Muslim Ummah, (global community) b) the Christians of Palestine, c) the Jewish community and d) the international community.

Our Message to the Muslim Ummah

We stand in humility in front of Allah for our collective and individual failure to foreground the struggle of the Palestinians and for carrying on with life as normal in the face of daily injustices visited upon them. Our efforts have often been inadequate and the rulers and governments in many of our countries have offered half-hearted public condemnation of Zionism and the occupation, on the one hand, while actively collaborating with the Israeli regime on the other to contain their own populations’ ability to act in solidarity with the Palestinians. We are proud of many parts of the ummah who have in the recent past compelled their rulers to yield to their cries for freedom and justice. We call upon our people to be vigilant to ensure that their victories not be usurped by those Western powers who have been deeply complicit in the oppression of the Palestinians.

We live in a time when many incessantly demand that as Muslims we proclaim our belief in

peace and harmony before all else. We acknowledge our responsibility to work for peace. We, however, do not do so in response to the demands of imperialists who insist that Muslims must play dead as these powers roll over our bodies and lands in pursuit of oil and other natural resources. We struggle for peace in response to the call of the Almighty: “and Allah invites you to the abode of peace” (Yunus, ayah 25). This “abode of peace” bears no resemblance to the ‘peace’ of the Empire. Theirs is one of silence and acquiescence in the face of dispossession and occupation. Theirs is a peace that trades in death.

The peace that the Qur’an calls us to is one of life, of justice and of dignity. We are mindful of the Qur’anic obligation to disturb the established order (even if presented as “peace”) if it is based on injustice and dispossession, as is so evidently the case in Palestine.

“[F]or, God has created the heavens and the earth in accordance with [an inner] truth; and [has therefore willed] that every human being shall be recompensed for what he has earned and none shall be wronged” (Al-Jathiyah, ayah 22). This ayah, as well as Al-Zumar, ayah 69, equates justice with truth and in Al-Imran, ayah 18, “there is no deity save Him, the Upholder of Equity.” The Qur’an exhorts the faithful to uphold justice as an act of witness unto Him (Al-Nisa, ayah 135 and Al-Mai’idah ayah 8) and those who sacrifice their lives in the path of establishing justice are equated with those who achieved martyrdom in “the path of God” (Al Imran, ayah 20).

The Most Gracious has imparted this Qur’an [unto man]. He has created man: He has imparted unto him articulate thought and speech. [At His behest] the sun and the moon run their appointed courses; [before Him] prostrate themselves the stars and the trees. And the skies has He raised high; and has devised [for all things] a measure, so that you [too, O men,] might never transgress the measure [of what is right: weigh, therefore, [your deeds] with equity, and cut not the measure short! (Al Rahman, ayat 1-10)

The Qur’an places humankind and the task of doing justice within the context of their responsibility to the Creator, on the one hand, and the order that runs through the cosmos on the other. It is within this overall context that humans are being warned against “transgressing the measure” and exhorted to “weigh, therefore, [your deeds] with equity” (Al-Rahman 7-9). “[...] We send forth Our apostles with all evidence of [this] truth,; and through them We bestowed revelation from on high, [...] so that men may behave with equity [...]” (Al-Hadid, ayah 25).

The Qur’an postulates the idea of a universe created with justice as its basis. The natural order, according to the Qur’an, is one rooted in justice; deviation from it is disorder (fitnah). The status quo in a particular social order, irrespective of how long it has survived or how stable it has become, does not enjoy an intrinsic legitimacy in Islam. Injustice is a deviation from the natural order: though it may stabilise over decades by establishing new facts on the ground and the persistent building of illegal settlements, it is, nonetheless, regarded as a disturbance in “the balance.” In the Qur’anic paradigm, justice and the natural order based on it are values to be upheld, while socio-political stability per se is not. When confronted with

this disturbance in the natural order through the systematic erosion of human rights, the Qur'an imposes an obligation on the faithful to challenge such a system until it is eliminated and the order once again is restored to its natural state, i.e., one of justice.

The Qur'an offers itself as an inspiration and guide for comprehensive insurrection against an unjust status quo. It, furthermore, asks to be read through the eyes of a commitment to the destruction of oppression and aggression and the establishment of justice. In a situation of injustice, the Qur'an, by its own admission, must become an inspiration for comprehensive insurrection against oppression in all its manifestations.

We call on Muslims to deepen and intensify their resistance to all forms of oppression and to strengthen their solidarity with the Palestinians.

Our Message to the Christians of Palestine

Our dear Brothers and Sisters. We salute your courage and your steadfastness in resisting the occupation and the dispossession of your homes, olive groves and lands. We are deeply humbled at your persistent refusal to succumb to the divide and rule games of the occupiers. Your religious leaders' commitment to freedom and their prophetic voices such as those reflected in Kairos Palestine is nothing short of inspirational. You bear witness to the same oppression and indignity suffered by your Muslim compatriots. In many cases you have provided leadership in saying "No" to injustice. Your role in articulating the truth that this is not a battle between Jews and Muslims but one between occupier and occupier cannot be said by any of us with the kind of integrity as you have done.

We acknowledge that we, the Muslim ummah, have often been indifferent to your presence in Palestine – a presence that pre-dates the coming of Islam. We have not been adequately mindful of the absolute centrality of Palestine as sacred space in the Christian tradition, the place that Christ (May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him and upon his pure Mother) was born and ended his sojourn on earth. Above all, many of us have been ignorant of your sacrifices for freedom and justice.

Kairos Palestine correctly conveys the 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."

We acknowledge that we have frequently articulated a vision for a post-apartheid Palestine that appears to be one where one form of ideological domination -- Zionism -- will be supplanted by another one -- Islamic domination. Often in our resistance to the ideological domination of Zionism we have come across as wanting to repeat the same; to become the evil that we abhor -- this time with us, the Muslims, being the sole ideologues. In doing so we have been unfaithful to the pluralism of our faith and the Qur'anic vision of a single people. Addressing all the Prophets, the Qur'an declares: "Oh Prophets, consume of the good, and [remember] that these, your people, are a single people" (Surah al-Muminun, ayat 51-52).

We support your call for the post-apartheid Palestinian state to be one for “all 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.”

We will work towards challenging our co-religionist Palestinians to create a society wherein everyone, regardless of religious or sectarian affiliation – or the absence of any – will be equal. A second-class citizenship for any Palestinian, we believe, will diminish the worth of all Palestinians and will be a betrayal of your sacrifices. Our call to Muslims to ensure justice is not only about justice for Muslims but for all.

A Message to our Jewish Brothers and Sisters

“Our dear Brothers and Sisters, we are ashamed of our co-religionists who routinely engage in the blanket rubbishing of you and your religion. With regards to all Jews, on the whole, contemporary Muslims have little to be proud of. Much of our rhetoric is racist and anti-Semitic and we far too often fail in distinguishing between the diverse tendencies that you comprise. This is in conflict with the Qur’anic principle “No one shall bear the burden of [the crimes committed by] another.” We are aware that, on the whole, historically Jews have fared much better when they lived in Muslim majority societies than what they did in others. We are also aware that anti-Semitism has accelerated in the Muslim world after the Nakba (Catastrophe) visited upon the Palestinians by the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. We acknowledge that, notwithstanding the contribution that many of you have made to Muslim societies wherein they lived, by contemporary standards of universal human rights, the way in which we have at times restricted your rights in our societies often left much to be desired. Our religious and textual tradition similarly requires critical scrutiny and we must find new ways of reading our texts as we struggle together to deepen our sense of the interconnectedness of all human beings – indeed all forms of life – and the requirements of justice.

We, the signatories of this document, pledge ourselves to work against all forms of racism and discrimination – including anti-Semitism.

A few among you have at great personal cost stood up against injustice towards the Palestinians, while others have called for and engaged in ethnic cleansing. You have insisted that these crimes against humanity cannot be committed in your name. Your solidarity continues to inspire us and your presence in the trenches of justice is a significant factor in ensuring that the Palestinian struggle for justice is not reduced to an anti-Jewish one.

Some of you – a small minority -- have lived in this part of the world for centuries, pre-dating even the Christians; others recently arrived from Cape Town, New York or Moscow. In the broader sense of all us being a part of the human family, we are all brothers and sisters. In the sense of many of you arriving in a land that you only have an ideological attachment to, your arrival has led to the displacement of others who have inhabited the land for centuries. Given this history, it is impossible to regard you as anything but usurpers.

You have premised the idea of your entitlement to the land of Israel on a supposed unbroken conversation between God and the Jews and a “perpetual enlistment in the divine army” (Akenson 1992, 13). Regardless of the intensity of Zionist belief in the chosenness of the Jewish people, the historical truth is that other communities have also laid claims to chosenness; there is nothing unique about this claim. For example, all Afrikaner children who grew up under Apartheid will recall The Song of the Flag and its refrain “die land uitgegee op gesag van die Hoogste se hand” (the land given to us on the authority of the Almighty).

Allahu Akbar – God is greater than; the eternally greater than. God is greater than our or your attempts to reduce God to a tribal chief. We cannot reduce the Eternally Transcendent and Almighty God to a dishonest realtor who parcels out land to His favourites nor our sacred texts to title deeds of land ownership.

For many of you the State of Israel was also the product of a Jewish struggle for self-determination and emancipation from the very real discrimination that most Jews experienced -- primarily in Christian Europe and also in Muslim North Africa and the Middle East. The tragedy of unspeakable horror visited upon the Jews in Nazi Germany must not be allowed to be forgotten, nor the ongoing attempts to manipulate this tragedy for narrow racist and ideological ends that create new victims. This is not unlike the case of the Afrikaners who were genuine victims of British imperialism when more than one-sixth of the entire Afrikaner population perished in British concentration camps. Why must the Palestinians pay the price for Jewish “liberation”?

An injury inflicted on others invariably comes back to haunt those doing the inflicting. It is not possible to tear at another’s skin and not have one’s humanity also diminished in the process. To defend the Palestinians against the daily humiliation by Israeli settlers and colonists is to defend the best in what the Jews have to offer the world. An injury to one is an injury to all. “It is no longer possible,” as Marc Ellis, the distinguished Jewish liberation theologian writes, “to raise the banner of revolution for one people only.” You cannot build your security on the insecurity of others. In the freedom of and justice for the Palestinians are the seeds of your own freedom and security.

A Message to the Global Community

We are astonished at how ordinary decent people whose “hearts are in the right place” equivocate when it comes to the State of Israel and the dispossession and suffering of the Palestinians. Do “objectivity,” “moderation,” and “both sides” not have contexts? Is “moderation” in matters of manifest injustice really a virtue? Do both parties deserve an “equal hearing” in a situation of domestic violence where a woman gets beaten up by a male who was abused by his father some time ago because “the victim, too, is a victim”? Why must someone else suffer because the husband was abused by some other male yesterday? Whose story are we really tuned into and whose interest do we serve by opting for an illusory neutrality? As Muslims we call upon you to seriously consider the Qur’anic idea of a God of all people (rabb

al-nas) who does not flinch from also saying that “But it was Our will to bestow Our favour upon those [very people] who were deemed [so] utterly low in the land [...]” (Surah al-Qasas, ayah 5).

You seek refuge in “both sides have a story to tell” as a way of dodging your own complicity. Rather than merely hallowing the abuser with the mantel of respectability, your silence draws us all into a web of complicity. However small a minority they may have been, only those who refused to turn a blind eye to the persecution of the Jews by the Nazis and refused to be silent were civilised. All others had Jewish blood on their hands. Talking about the “Jewish-German conflict” or the “black-white situation” or “marital problems” in the face of the Holocaust, apartheid or of domestic abuse is no great virtue; it is the path of acquiescence and, ultimately, complicity.

We call upon you to identify with the growing international Palestine solidarity movement. Ordinary people throughout the world were able to contribute in numerous ways, big and small, to the struggle to end South African apartheid. We can do the same with Israeli Apartheid. We call on you to hold your lawmakers to account for the way they spend your taxes and to ensure that none of it goes to support the oppression of the Palestinians and the occupation of their land; ask your local grocer about the origins of the products that they sell; monitor the foreign policies of your countries and demand that ethics and morality be inserted in your country’s choices of economic partnerships; visit Palestine and make a choice through which eyes you want to see the land; choose to see it through the eyes of the least [the marginalised], the broken and the dispossessed -- the courageous and resisting.

We call on you to hold the Palestinians in your prayers and seek concrete ways to act in solidarity with them.

Wa ma tawfiq illa billah
("My welfare is only in Allah.")

Towards Justice: Formulating an Action Plan

*The Arab Re-Awakening and the Hopes for a Palestinian State*³²

Hind Khoury

The Political Impasse

In 1988, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), serving as the representative of the Palestinian people, unveiled the Palestinian Peace Initiative, which would have established a state on 22% of historic Palestine -- their own country, from which they were expelled in 1948. The initiative, a major historical compromise that ultimately took the Palestinian people years to absorb, promised that Palestine would live in peace and security next to Israel. In response, Israel did not only refuse the deal, but also sought to pursue construction of illegal settlements even more aggressively in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) that had been defined by the 1967 occupation. Current public opinion polls show that 60-70% of Palestinians continue to support this peace initiative.

Fourteen years later, in 2002, at the height of the Second Intifada, the Arab League countries made another peace offer called the Arab Peace Initiative, which was reaffirmed in 2007. This initiative states that all Arab countries are prepared to recognise Israel and normalise their relations with it, conditional upon Israel's withdrawal from the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967.

One would imagine these as tempting offers to Israel, as opportunities to end the conflict with the Palestinians in addition to establishing regional peace. Israel's actions demonstrate otherwise, however, especially through its expanding colonialism in the oPt. Clearly a resolution is not on Israel's agenda, as it continues its settlement expansion and systematic violence, which includes wars, bombardment of civilians, sieges, exploitation of water resources, economic and social strangulation due to checkpoints and the construction of the segregation wall -- all in flagrant violation of international law and without regard for the humanity of the Palestinian people.

Even the United States' peace-building efforts are conducted in order to pursue its own strategic and security interests -- a position explicitly stated by President Barack Obama in his Cairo speech of 2009. The US has been seeking a serious resumption of meaningful negotiations, starting with a freeze of settlement expansion in Occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank. These efforts were not only rebuked by Israel but were also met with the adamant and increasing expansion of illegal settlements, consequently emptying the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP), including all United Nations resolutions and signed agreements, of its content and rendering it an exercise in futility.

A political paradigm shift was clearly imperative in order to render the MEPP credible,

³² A note on the title and the use of the word "Re-Awakening": The Arab Awakening, a book by Arab historian George Antonios, refers to the evolution of an Arab national identity that took root, in the 19th century, among the Arab-speaking populations of the Ottoman Empire; during World War I, this evolution developed into a full-fledged revolutionary movement, one in which intellectuals, rather than politicians, were at the forefront.

meaningful and fruitful. Neither the US nor the Quartet could assert its position as an objective broker. It thus became necessary to approach the UN as the body in charge of peace and security around the world and as the legal reference which, in 1947, determined the creation of two states in historic Palestine -- one Israeli and the other Palestinian (UNGA Resolution 181).

The Palestinian Introduction of Game-Changers

The Arab revolutions, especially in Egypt and Tunisia, were massive, nonviolent, pluralistic and secular. They were conducted by a middle class mainly trying to regain a sense of dignity and justice for the people. While popular demands were mainly socioeconomic and political, they also included substantial signs of support for Palestinians, infused with a deep sense of anger at the injustice and humiliation inflicted upon them through a continuing Nakba -- a process of dispossession and expulsion that is still ongoing.

By toppling autocratic regimes that were incapable of responding to the people's most basic needs and aspirations, these popular uprisings emboldened the Palestinian leadership to change the rules of a futile political game. They were supported in this initiative by a reinvigorated Arab League and Arab governments that became more politically and diplomatically proactive -- because they had to be, or because they had to show signs of being more responsive to their people's agenda.

In spite of slow US and European reaction to these massive uprisings, they eventually issued clear statements in support of the people. Soon after, a number of EU foreign ministers explicitly acknowledged that, while the region's stability remains a prime objective for Europe, this stability cannot be maintained any longer by tolerating autocracies; rather, it must be generated by the emergence of sustainable democracies. It still remains to be seen whether Europe will concretely support the rise of democracies in the region and establish equal partnerships that truly recognise the Arab people's needs and aspirations.

New Environment for Palestinian Initiatives

This new environment created conditions allowing the Palestinian leadership to move ahead with two important political initiatives that are responsive to Palestinian public opinion: initiatives that could likewise assuage popular frustration with the Israeli occupation and end the divide between the current political leadership of the West Bank and Gaza.

The Palestinian leadership wisely adopted a two-pronged approach, creating new momentum for a two-state solution and the Arab Peace Initiative. These initiatives also aimed to avert the risk of violence erupting as a way to fill the political vacuum, or as a response to Israel's never-ending and increasingly brutal treatment of Palestinians and its continued appropriation of Palestinian land and resources.

Palestinian Unity: Speaking in One Voice

By May 2011, a reconciliation agreement sponsored and supported by Egypt had already been signed by the two main Palestinian factions (Fatah and Hamas) in order to reunify Gaza and the West Bank and to agree on a single political program. This development was induced mainly by the needs of the Egyptian leadership to move ahead with a meaningful political process -- a necessity not only for its own national security but also to satisfy the Muslim Brotherhood, which is becoming the most important political force in Egypt. The Palestinian faction Hamas, which had belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood, is still suffering an almost hermetic siege in the Gaza Strip. As political Islam comes to power it is showing signs of moderation, accepting political pluralism and democracy, in addition to readiness for dialogue with the West. This moderation will mainly be exhibited by maintaining the peace agreements signed with Israel: first by Egypt at Camp David and then by the Palestinians through the Oslo Accords.

The Palestinian internal reconciliation will take time to be accomplished and may prove complicated after more than four years of total administrative and political division between the West Bank and Gaza. It is, however, achievable with Egypt's support and a more forceful and organised Palestinian public opinion.

This reunification will have to address many challenging issues: making progress on confidence-building measures, agreeing on a joint political program and government, reforming Palestinian institutions (especially the PLO), uniting security forces and reconciling families and individuals.

Reconciliation is further complicated by the total refusal of both the US and Israel to support it. This is a contradictory position for these countries, since Palestinians cannot succeed in any resolution with Israel without internal unity, nor can they reconstruct their democracy -- both of which are objectives that the US government has expressed.

The Bid for UN Membership

This reconciliation may have been a tactic initially pursued by the Palestinian leadership in order to push for resumption of meaningful, serious and credible negotiations that would lead to the creation of a viable, sovereign Palestinian state. But with the Israeli government's adamant refusal to respect its obligations according to the Road Map and other signed agreements and instruments of international legitimacy, combined with US withdrawal from its own policy statements on the matter, the Palestinians found it necessary to pursue full membership in the UN.

When Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas delivered a speech requesting UN membership for Palestine, it was met with multiple standing ovations by the international community in the UN General Assembly. Although the US has rejected this process, the Palestinians will continue to push for membership until it materialises as a reality. UN membership is necessary to finally set clear terms of reference for productive negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, improve the Palestinians' negotiating positions (which

have thus far been subservient to Israeli whims), and provide both the international community and the Palestinians with the means to hold Israel accountable to its obligations under international law.

In the meantime, Palestine was accepted as a full member at UNESCO, with the right to join a few other UN agencies and the capacity to pursue protection of its cultural heritage and education rights in all territories occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem. This step is a significant one, considering that Israel has been trying to erase Palestinian history and identity.

Optimism or Pessimism?

There is no question that the region is undergoing major transformations with unclear outcomes. But it is safe to say that two important changes have emerged: first, that Arab public opinion, surely sympathetic to the Palestinian people's struggle for freedom, shall weigh in on the decision-making processes of regional governments and those seeking to maintain their influence on the region. The second change is that moderate political Islam is taking centre stage in the political life in all of the region's countries -- where, soon enough, they will have to distinguish themselves from previous political powers by supporting peoples' needs and aspirations, including the search for freedom, justice and dignity for the Palestinian people. These important changes across the region will bring about shifts and changes in the balance of power in favour of the Palestinian cause.

Clearly, the challenge in the face of a powerful and expansionist Israel is still tremendous. It remains to be seen whether the Arab League countries will be able to develop a concerted and independent framework for security, political and economic cooperation aimed at benefiting the region as a whole -- underlining complementarities and long-term collective interests -- and pursue an intensive political and diplomatic agenda to realise them.

The Middle East Remains a Strategic Region

This may still be an idealistic scenario, for the Middle East remains a highly strategic region that is sitting on important sources of oil and natural gas, as well as on some of the most vital trade routes, especially to Europe and the US; moreover, it is the cradle of civilisation itself. The US and Europe will surely seek to maintain their influence on the region in addition to ensuring the security of Israel.

Such a scenario will better serve those nations by creating tensions in the Arab world on the basis of Dual Containment, a principle of American foreign policy in the region during the last three decades. New sources of tension could be fostered between, for example, a Shi'a axis led by Iran and the Sunni axis led by Turkey. This dynamic will lead the Gulf countries to seek protection for themselves and their resources themselves from Iran's threat rather than working to strengthen a regional Arab agenda.

Further internal tensions between Islamists and liberals will most likely be encouraged in the

Mashreq countries from Egypt to Syria, and perhaps Libya, in order to maintain instability -- but this time due to internal conflict. This development would provide Israel with the opportunity to halt the political process and buy it more time to pursue further settlement-construction in what should be the future Palestinian state, thus essentially terminating the two-state solution.

The Arab countries could be further divided if the Maghreb countries at the southern shores of the Mediterranean succeed in their democratisation experience and establish more stable and prosperous regimes -- signs of which we already see in the making, especially in Tunisia. This dynamic would distance the Maghreb from the unstable Mashreq countries and help create amenable conditions in a sizable part of the Mediterranean for cooperation with Europe, thus ensuring better security, economic exchange and immigration control.

So, an important question still remains: how will the Western powers redefine their relationship with the Arab countries, and how much political goodwill do they really have toward appreciating the Arab peoples' decisions?

The People Must Remain Vigilant

The Egyptian masses who returned to Tahrir Square in November gave a strong sign that people will remain vigilant, ensuring that the revolution's gains are maintained and that government officials and the overall leadership are held accountable. The people will not condone privileges for any government or ideology. Theirs is an energy that will influence all Arab peoples, including the Palestinian people.

This will be the true spirit needed if the "Arab Re-Awakening" is to influence the evolution of events across the region. This influence will push Arab governments everywhere to ensure that their country's interests are properly prioritised, and that collective Arab interests throughout the region become the focus of government policies, strategies and action. Such a scenario will ensure regional sustainable development, democracy and prosperity, establishing Arab countries as equal partners to other countries, all serving as positive actors on the world stage.

A geopolitical scenario that carries out both the Arab Peace Initiative and the establishment of a Palestinian state would be for the benefit of peace in the region and the entire world.

Peace is Waning

At this juncture, the possibility of achieving peace based on the two-state solution is waning, a result primarily of the absence of political will within successive Israeli governments.

In addition, we need to acknowledge the disconnect between statements made by the international community, especially the US and the EU, and their actions to ensure that Israel abides by international law, recognises Palestinian rights and proceeds with a meaningful peace process.

It is thus, after 20 years of so-called “investment” in peace, that we Palestinians find ourselves in a straight jacket: stuck with a weak and unsustainable economy (if not with a destroyed formal private sector, as is the case in Gaza); a political impasse; social and physical fragmentation; increased violations of our basic rights; and incessant human suffering, including dramatic poverty and unemployment -- not to mention sieges, political detentions, home demolitions, targeted assassinations, mobility restrictions, and denial of our most fundamental freedoms.

While the Palestinians are the main victims of this tragedy -- though the victims include, indirectly, the rest of the Arab World, and to a certain extent even the Israeli people as well -- it is sad to say that it is also international law and the international governance system that have been sacrificed. Losing credibility, and losing crucial moral, legal and political weight, has damaged the peace and security of the world.

A Call to Action

This is the time for consolidated action by all parties involved: Palestinians, Israelis and the international civil society working for peace, justice, human rights and advocacy. The adoption of Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) and the Kairos Palestine Document is extremely important as a means of directing efforts toward a sustainable and just peace. But there is more one can do:

- Confronting a balance of power hugely in Israel’s favour by leveraging moral and legal prerogatives and encouraging visions for a peaceful future by targeting and lobbying opinion-makers, journalists, parliamentarians, other politicians, judges and the whole political apparatus to weigh in on political decisions.
- Fighting systemic “deformities” that help sustain the occupation and allow it to fester. These deformities take the form of:
 - i. Abusing religious beliefs and manipulating misinterpretations of both the holy books and history, hence fostering clashes between religions and cultures.
 - ii. The use of anti-Semitism to forbid all criticism of the Israeli occupation and dispossession policies.
 - iii. The confusion of legitimate resistance with terrorism.
 - iv. The refusal or inability to determine which parties are truly responsible for inciting war and which are working for peace.

Conclusion

I believe we live in profoundly difficult but interesting times. A new world is evolving right before our eyes. Consolidated and urgent action by an international network of civil society organisations can pressure governments to act responsibly and ensure that all parties, including Israel, abide by their obligations toward peace and justice.

The parameters of this peace are already known; the alternatives are alarming. Opportunities for generating a just peace are constantly presenting themselves: through the communication revolution, the changing balance of power, the global economic and financial crisis, the Arab revolutions, and the coming to power of a new generation.

We must hope that responsibility, ethics, rigor and organisation will be the order of the new day, and that collective determination, especially that found in civil society, will work tirelessly to ensure that it will be so.

Pursuing Global Justice

The Way Forward:
From Kairos Palestine to a Kairos Movement for Global Justice
Mitri Raheb

I would like to discuss the topic of “the way forward”: a moment of truth, a time for action. In exploring these ideas and what they mean for us together, I will share five principles that, for me personally, reflect the spirit and the essence of the Kairos document. Indeed, whenever I think of the Kairos document, these are the five principles that first come to mind. Recalling and discussing them will, I hope, help us to move forward into the decisions to come.

1. I call the first principle from Kairos Palestine to a Kairos movement for global justice. After all, Kairos Palestine means more than Palestine. This principle helps me articulate the true nature of the conflict facing us and what has been at stake -- as well as what has been manipulated and misunderstood -- in the struggle for its resolution.

First of all, this conflict could have been resolved easily and a long time ago if it were a conflict only between Israelis and Palestinians. Unfortunately, there are many other parties. In reality, it is subsidised by the international community; without it, the conflict could not go on. Israel receives a staggering amount of money to carry out its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and this money takes many forms. For example, it's the US aid dispensed annually for many years. It's the soft loans Israel receives. It's the German submarines Israel acquires, mostly for free. It's the high-tech industry that provides Israel military software. It's all of these things and many others.

So, when I say that Kairos Palestine is actually about much more than Palestine, I mean that it's really about the military cooperation that Israel has with many nations: not only northern countries, but southern ones, too. For example, Malaysia doesn't have any diplomatic relations with Israel, but Israel conducts all of Malaysia's military maintenance. Further, Israel is the fourth-largest weapon exporter in the world, especially in the security sector; imagine all the countries that pay Israel for arms. African countries, Latin American countries, many others -- all the governments that cooperate militarily with Israel. This is what keeps the engine of occupation running, and what enables Israel to continue waging this military race in the Middle East. (“The Middle East” is a term I actually don't like very much -- the middle of where and the east of what?) Anyway, Eurocentric terminology aside, the Middle East is the world's largest regional importer of military equipment and weaponry. Yet, at the same time, this region has an illiteracy rate of 34 percent and the highest rate of unemployment. This is why the masses are on the streets.

What's clear is that the international community is part of the problem and not yet part of the solution. Kairos Palestine, then, is the call for this to change. In this sense, too, Kairos Palestine is more than Palestine.

Sometimes I meet friends who visit our country and I sense that they really came to help. My question is, to help whom? To help us, the Palestinians, one might think -- which is great! But I think all of us ultimately also want to help ourselves, in the sense that we are all searching for our true identities. I think this is really what's at stake. What's at stake, essentially, are the

American values I personally cherish: liberty, freedom, and so forth. And so I think that our Americans are here (in Palestine in general, or at the Kairos for Global Justice Encounter in particular) because they want to be true to the values on which their country was established and because they see its politics contradicting those values. In this way, these friends are searching for their true identity.

This holds true for our German friends as well. I'm sorry to say this, but when I look at the German context and see politicians, church leaders, and many others who cannot speak up for the Palestinian people -- because they are afraid of harming their careers, being labelled anti-Semitic, etc. -- I worry that the mechanism that was active during the Hitler regime is, when it comes to these people who say they love Israel, still at work somehow. I say the same mechanism because they are yet not ready to pay a price for standing in solidarity with the oppressed. When these people tell me, "We learned from our history," I tell them, "Actually, as far as I can tell, you didn't learn anything. Today you want to protect the ones you thought you wanted to protect 60 years ago; as for those who need protection today, you aren't really looking at them." So our German friends, too, are in search of their identity.

We are all searching. Our Jewish friend Mark Braverman is in search of true Jewish values because he refuses to accept that the State of Israel truly represents them. He wants to do justice to the values themselves. Doing justice: this is what Kairos Palestine is all about. It is in this sense, too, that Kairos Palestine is about more than Palestine alone -- and this is what the shift from Kairos Palestine to a Kairos movement for global justice means to me.

I can now see three circles that are becoming very important. First, there is the local Palestinian Kairos circle: our local engagement in Palestine is crucial because we need to have our own people on board. Second, the regional circle: in October, in light of the recent changes wrought by the Arab Spring, we started a Middle East Kairos. We are asking ourselves, what are our contributions as Christians in this region? And third, the global circle, embodied by our Kairos for Global Justice Encounter. Local, regional, international: three interlinked circles, each with its own important dynamic.

2. I call the second principle from theological confinement to branding our narrative. Once, I was talking with an American friend of mine about the whole situation here, the conflict. At one point in the conversation she said, very genuinely, "I don't understand why Israel isn't listening to what the Bible is saying. God told them to be nice to the strangers!" I replied, "Here is the problem. Who is the stranger?"

I'm not the stranger: my family has been here for centuries, if not millennia. I have no problem with God telling me to be nice to the Israelis who come to this country as strangers -- but I resist being defined as the stranger, because I'm not. In this sense I think we have to re-examine the way we've been reading our Bible. There is a book called *The Invention of History* that tracks how theology has developed during the last hundred years and how this wild shift took place: suddenly we indigenous people were seen as the strangers and immigrants from Russia were seen as returning home! This is not theology. This has to do with something totally different.

For me -- and I'm not writing this in the name of Kairos, but in my name only -- "Israel" is the "Biblical Rome." If we really want to understand what the New Testament is saying, we should replace the word "Romans" whenever we hear it with "Israelis": this is still the occupation of Palestine that continues to go on and on and on. I would even say that you cannot truly understand Jesus's words unless you read it with the lens of the Palestinian people.

But, strange as it is, we became the strangers, the blacks became the strangers, the Native Americans became the strangers. The aboriginals, the Dalits, the landless, the indigenous women: we all became the strangers. And, unfortunately, I think we theologians spent far too long dancing to the tunes of 19th century European pipe organs! It's high time to lift ourselves up, to unpack our drums, and to write our own narratives. Once we start writing, we'll see that those who are with us are much greater in number than those who are against us. All the communities I just mentioned, all these clouds of witnesses: we are the 90%.

The problem is that we are not yet organised; somehow, we are still isolated. When Rev. Masanga, joining us from Swaziland, spoke on the second day of the conference, I could deeply identify with his words: how isolating it feels that no one really knows what's going on in his country. This, too, is theological confinement. So, Kairos is a call to organise, to organise in a new way. Part of what I want to propose is that we organise the Kairos movement for global justice in a membership-based way -- not to complicate things, because we don't want that, but in such a way that people can say, "I'm a member of the Kairos movement for global justice."

Moreover, we should actually create logos and pens that would designate a Kairos theologian. I visited an Asian-American church in San Francisco and, without anyone having told them to do this, they were already referring to themselves in terms of Kairos: "We are a Kairos congregation," the United Methodist told me. I think this is where branding can come in. We can start to brand the term "Kairos organisation" and "Kairos group"; we could propose a "Kairos Sunday," which every church worldwide could be conscious of and mark in its own way; we could promote "Kairos pilgrimages." On this subject, I call upon the Alternative Tourism Group (ATG), Diyar, and all other Palestinian organisations that work with pilgrims, to call all such pilgrimages Kairos so that this will become a kind of brand, a kind of seal. I also hope that we can launch a new book series called Kairos Narratives so that we can tell our stories in our own words; hopefully Diyar's publishing house will be interested in working with us.

3. I call the third principle I draw from the Kairos document from reacting to creative resistance. What I hear the document saying is, "Stop being so occupied by the Empire." We need to analyse very carefully where the Empire is at work, but we should resist being too occupied by its forces. Often, when I listen to people, I hear them talking more about the Empire than about the kingdom of God. Many people direct all their energy toward reacting: for example, Israel has done this or that, so we're sending out an email. But reactions aren't enough. Kairos calls for a plan of action; a plan for creative resistance. I have three proposals associated with this plan:

- 1) During the conference, many groups discussed boycott. What I suggest is selecting one to three items to focus on as a Kairos movement rather than trying to tackle everything; otherwise we won't feel the impact. The items could be cultural, or academic, or a single product -- but, in any case, we should highlight perhaps one point of focus to emphasise as a Kairos movement in our plan.
- 2) We need to start to more actively monitor who among the pastors and seminaries is participating in, for example, free trips to Israel with El Al and not visiting Palestine at all. We need, in other words, "watchdogs" of some sort -- ones who will listen carefully to the sermons!
- 3) Most importantly, we should start highlighting all the different models of creative resistance we already have. There are really excellent things going on in many contexts, and there are groups who are doing a truly wonderful job. We need to highlight these stories; we need to promote and emulate these models of creative resistance; we need to lift these people up.

4. As for the fourth principle I see in the Kairos Palestine document, I call it from mourning the dead to cultivating a culture of life. Sometimes I feel that our greatest temptation is to submit to what I think of as "liturgies of death." During the Second Intifada, I was very disturbed to see our young people, so many of them unemployed in Gaza and all over the West Bank, and think of what they were seeing. Another Palestinian victim of the conflict was buried almost every day. I felt disturbed because I didn't want these young people to think that this -- participating on a daily basis in liturgies of death --- was normal. To mourn the victim as if we were living in a pre-resurrection era.

I think one of the Kairos document's most powerful passages is when it speaks of a culture of life. A culture of life that says, He is not here; he is risen; stop the weeping; stop the mourning; go and proclaim a risen Lord. I always tell our parishioners to imagine what would have happened if, after the crucifixion of Jesus, the first disciples 2000 years had gone everywhere talking only about how Rome killed their Master. They probably would have received lots of sympathy, and maybe a few donations. But they understood exactly what they had to do and why: they knew that our role is not to proclaim a victim, but rather to proclaim the crucified as a risen Lord.

To me, it is this power, this Spirit, this spirituality, that we would like our people to grow in. And so I want to propose that Kairos identify, create, and invest in initiatives that highlight the culture of life. I feel that this should be also a central feature of a Kairos pilgrimage: to see all the bad things that are happening, yes, but also to focus on this culture of life. Without it, we cannot continue the struggle; without the power of resurrection, we cannot go on. We need to be nurtured through this culture of life, and we need to keep living.

5. The fifth and last principle I would like to highlight is what I call from optimism to hope. The Kairos document has a whole section about hope, and for me this is the most powerful one. And I think that part of what this passage aims to get across -- I will describe in my own

words -- is that there is a big difference between optimism and hope. I didn't expect anyone leaving our conference to leave with optimism. I'm not optimistic at all! In fact, my political analysis says that we are heading towards the most sophisticated apartheid system that has ever existed in modern history. Let's not kid ourselves -- we know where we are headed! The West Bank will look more and more like a piece of Swiss cheese, where the Israelis will get the cheese while the Palestinians are pushed into the holes. The facts are plain.

Yet, even so, the Kairos document tells us that we can and should have hope, which is not optimism. Optimism has to do with optics; it means seeing that things are going to improve. "The Quartet will bring the peace process few steps forward" -- this is optimism. Optimism means lying back in your chair and thinking that Obama will fix it; relax, wait, and watch for the new Jerusalem to come down from heaven. There is no reason for optimism. But hope is something else altogether, and I think maybe Martin Luther described it best when he said something like this: Even if I knew that the world were coming to an end tomorrow; even if I knew that we were heading towards the most sophisticated apartheid system in modern history; even if we knew that the international community would not change tomorrow because of Kairos; even if we knew all this, we would have only one option. We would go out today -- not tomorrow, because tomorrow it would be too late -- we would go out today, into the garden, into our world, into our societies, and we would plant olive trees.

I think this is what Kairos is truly about: planting olive trees when people think you're crazy. Who would plant an olive tree knowing the world might come to an end tomorrow? But I tell you, sisters and brothers, a crazy world like ours needs crazy people like us. Because imagine what would become of our world if we left it to the real crazy people -- and there are many of them out there. Unless we plant these olive trees today, there will be no shade for our kids to play in the day after tomorrow. There will be no oil to heal all these wounded Israelis, Palestinians, and everyone else. And there will be no branches to wave when peace comes.

This is the spirit of the Kairos document. It's a document that breathes hope, and what we are saying is that this hope springs from the resurrection in a culture of life, in a Lord that is risen. Optimism is what we see, but hope is what we do. With the Kairos document, we are saying that we are hopeful because all of us, every one of you, is doing maybe more than we could imagine; we are saying that these are the signs of hope, that you are our signs of hope.

I want to share one last story with you. I had two very good American friends: one was a devoted Republican, and when Bush Jr. was elected, he thought he would be the Messiah; he would fix everything! I tried arguing with him, but without much success. Later I had another friend, a devoted Democrat, who told me, "You know that crazy Bush. Now Obama is coming!" And I told both of them, you know what? Thank God that our Messiah came 2000 years ago, and we know it for a fact because he came to this town, said what needed to be said, did what needed to be done, and now the ball is in our court -- either we pick it up or we leave it."

Hope is to pick up that ball and say, Yes, we will do it. In this sense, dear sisters and brothers, it is indeed the moment of truth. It is the time for action.

Kairos Movement for Global Justice

Eilert L. Rostrup

I would like to take this opportunity to respond, in brief, to the challenges presented to the Kairos encounter by Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb. In his discussion, Dr. Raheb focused specifically on five challenges:

- Kairos is more than Palestine, and it challenges us all to search for our true identity: local, regional and global.
- Kairos brings us out of our theological confinement, allowing us to clearly state and thus take ownership of our own narrative.
- Kairos moves us from being reactive Christians to becoming creative Christians: it challenges us to engage in creative resistance.
- Kairos liberates us from mourning death to cultivating a culture of life.
- Kairos is not about optimism, but rather about hope.

In my very brief response, and as final challenge to the participants, I would like to elaborate further on some of Dr. Raheb's points.

Our Kairos Identity

We are not searching for any particular identity, nor are we trying only to describe whatever identity we might have, individually or collectively. Rather, are intentionally seeking to develop our Kairos identity. This has been one of our primary tasks during the Kairos for Global Justice Conference: through sharing narratives from all corners of the world; through analysing and discussing local and global issues; and through reflecting on and praying for the capacity to identify the liberating power of our faith. Through political and theological study, the search for a Kairos identity challenges us intellectually. But the development of a Kairos identity is also an emotional process. I don't want us to underestimate the importance of having a heart that beats for justice, for universal dignity, for unconditionally siding with the oppressed and marginalised, for struggle against domination, for the commitment to building a different tomorrow for all.

The Kairos Logo

In 2010, the Norwegian artist Kjellaug Hatlen Lunde, inspired by a presentation of the Palestinian Kairos document, created a picture called "A Moment of Truth." Two of the picture's most central symbols are the hourglass and the heart. Time is running out -- for those who cling to a doomed and unjust occupation and to violations of human and social rights, as well as for those who are afraid to stand up for justice and truth. Yet the time for injustice is also running out because there are some -- many, in the thousands -- who are willing to follow the truth of their beating hearts. The painting depicts a stream of blood, of life, of hope, of energy and power, running from one heart to another heart. There is co-

living, sharing, interdependence and solidarity between those powers and those people who choose to stand for life and truth. And their togetherness, their joint life-stream, becomes the power that brings the time of oppression and injustice to an end. This is the Kairos. The time is now for letting heart meet heart, letting life be strengthened by life, coming together in one strong current of energy that brings justice into being.

The Creative Kairos

Kairos would not become an identity and a beating heart if actions for justice were dependent on the Palestinians, or on other people living in dehumanised conditions, to come forward and develop fancy, flashy, marketable methodologies for solidarity campaigns and sell them among people of good intentions. If we make our Kairos life contingent on the initiative of the victims, this becomes a way of avoiding being transformed ourselves: we are then victimising them again. Furthermore, such an attitude reveals a complete lack of political analysis and understanding of global realities. Oppression and human rights violations cannot be viewed as an incidental local issue, relevant only to conditions in that particular reality. In most cases, injustices and inhumane living conditions are conditioned, defined and controlled by global injustice and global systems of domination. The modern imperial reality, different and more sophisticated than most empires known to us through history, is the reality in which we all live -- whether we share living conditions with the victims or with the perpetrators. As a result, struggling against this unjust reality is not primarily the task of the most oppressed and victimised. Rather, it is the task that belongs to all of us who live securely in our comfortable spaces: enjoying the benefits of the dominators, allowing ourselves to camouflage our symbols of domination with the pleasant trappings of compassion and good intentions. We are the ones who are challenged to creativity. To take new and courageous initiatives for justice and resistance. To be active companions who truly dare a costly solidarity with those who invariably pay all the costs themselves. True Kairos means not waiting for others to take the initiatives: it means being creative and leading the way. True Kairos means constantly searching for new opportunities to transform injustice within its own immediate reality, so that more humanity and dignity can be gained for those who are victimised by this injustice.

The Celebrating Kairos

Kairos is the struggle and steadfastness against all evil and all injustice. This is true. But Kairos is also a celebration of hope and life. Indeed, Kairos is fundamentally a celebration, a way to honour all those who -- in their lives, their suffering and their struggle -- are the signs of the Kairos. The changing time. The truth against power. Dignity against dehumanisation. Hope and life against death and destruction. We celebrate you! People of all nations around the world who are paying the cost of those few who need to dominate, oppress and strip others of their rights in order to safeguard their own privileges, exclusivity and elitism. Kairos will always celebrate the transformative and rebellious actions of persevering against the powers of destruction and domination.

For me, as a person of faith, this transformative and rebellious energy is the incarnation of the living Christ in our world today. And I see the resurrected and living Christ coming to me

in unexpected people and surprising situations.

I celebrate Kairos and the living Christ by sharing the story of how I met Um-Aiman.

She was a widow in her mid-thirties, and she had eight children. Her husband had been killed when the settler Baruch Goldstein slaughtered 24 people praying in the Ibrahim mosque in Hebron. Her son, Aiman, had been there with his father. He was hit, severely wounded for life.

Um-Aiman received and welcomed us, a group of four or five Europeans, into her home. Salam. Peace. Be welcome. Warm, sad eyes in a face testifying to a life of hard work and struggle. A Palestinian woman in traditional Palestinian clothes and a colourful headscarf. She told her story. She shared her faith and hope. With God's help she thought she would still be able to be both mother and father for her eight children. With God's help they would get their meals, their education, their future. Her five-year-old daughter came forward and starting singing a song for us. "This is my address! The land is my home!" A Hamas song, in the sense that hamas literally means zeal: an ardent song, a galvanising one. An aspiration. An identity. A beating heart. Hope.

Then Um-Aiman left the room and came back with a loaf of freshly baked bread, straight from the oven, carried gently on a familiar red-checked kitchen towel. Without a word, she brought it around to all of us and invited us to break a piece of the bread and eat. Then she gave us a glass of water from the well of the house. Not a word. None needed. It was life. Hope. Prayer. Struggle. Warmth. Challenge. A calling.

As we left she smiled and said: As-salamu aleikum.

A Kairos woman. A Kairos moment.



I wrote a song for this woman. I told the story of the Kairos moment in her sacred home.

Um-Aiman

Words & music: Eilert L. Rostrup

Refr: Pass the bread, dear sister, Um-Aiman
Pass the water, we are thirsty, Um-Aiman, Um-Aiman

1. One has come near us! Silent – without words
This is a holy place, on barren earth
Here the wounds are felt on a little boy
Here daddy is gone, he has been shot

Refr: Pass the bread, dear sister, Um-Aiman
Pass the water, we are thirsty, Um-Aiman, Um-Aiman

2. One has come near us! With gentle song.
This is a plea towards power's crude game!
Here is the girl's song – she is only five
This is my address – the land is my home!

Refr: Pass the bread, dear sister, Um-Aiman
Pass the water, we are thirsty, Um-Aiman, Um-Aiman

3. One has come near us! Dreams behind a veil.
This is an empty grave with an open door!
Here are the words of the widow, she believe that miracles happen
Salam Allah Maakum, she says no more....

Refr: Pass the bread, dear sister, Um-Aiman
Pass the water, we are thirsty, Um-Aiman, Um-Aiman

Where is Our Consciousness?
The Need to Search for a Moment of Truth
Samuel Jayakumar

In India, I was taught in school, church, and my neighbourhood about the majesty of the State of Israel and its great victory in 1967 during the war against Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq. The Christians in India are proud of the Christian–Jewish connection, and they believe that the establishment of the modern state of Israel is the fulfilment of biblical prophecy. Right-wing Christian evangelicals promote the idea that the Jews are the “chosen people” and that Arab Muslims are the enemies of Christianity. We have developed the syndrome of going on “Holy Land tours” without understanding the socio-political realities of the region or the fact that the Palestinian land is occupied land; further, we often do not even realise that Christian Arabs also live in the West Bank and Gaza! Bishops, church leaders and ordinary pilgrims accept the hospitality of the Israeli state as it goes all out to promote tourism. In the process, Christians are unwittingly made to believe that everything the state of Israel does is legitimate, while the truth is otherwise: in reality, they have occupied the lands of its original inhabitants, the Palestinians, and have broken many international agreements and protocols regarding both the land itself and Palestinian rights.

I have had to unlearn some of the stories and myths taught to me by the media, the state and the church. We have not been provided with whole truth when it comes to Palestine. I personally have had to search on my own for this “moment of truth.” This search is not and should not be limited to me: many young people, as well as Christian and political leaders in India, should also seek a moment of truth on the Palestinian issue. We are grateful to the Kairos document produced by Palestinian Christians, and to the Kairos movement that accompanies it, for awakening our consciousness and challenging us.

When a religion is involved in a conflict, the conflict becomes intensely complicated, and we tend to lose our focus on what really matters -- that is, the humanity of the people in the midst of the conflict. We keep holding on to our longstanding beliefs and refuse to recognise the real victims. The region of Palestine/Israel is important to the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. However, what has happened throughout this region’s history is that these religious beliefs have been manipulated to disregard the value of human rights and freedom; this misuse has sought to justify the continuing violence and the illegal occupation at work in the Holy Land.

I have witnessed with my own eyes the great injustice done to the Palestinians and the humiliation they face on a daily basis. We were shocked to learn that Palestinians are living in prison-like conditions in their own country. India has never faced this type of discrimination, even in the colonial period. Palestinians are controlled by the Israeli intelligence and are watched everywhere, even in their places of worship. They continue to live at gunpoint. There are no words to adequately convey the terror and the horror that is being meted out to the Palestinians.

The separation wall (built for “Israeli defence”), right in the middle of Palestinian territory,

came as a shock to me. This wall makes it difficult for Palestinians to move from one place to other -- to their places of work, business, education and worship. We saw huge settlements built (some of them very recently) for new Jewish settlers. Protective walls create a fort around these settlements, but they keep encroaching onto Palestinian lands, claiming that it is their biblically sanctioned right to do so. We observed that many of the houses in settlements are vacant -- perhaps they are kept ready for new settlers. The settlers have access to the natural resources of water and land and are unwilling to share them with the Palestinians, who now live with just 17% of available water resources. We also saw the extent of the humiliation Palestinians experience every day when they try to cross checkpoints in their own country.

At the same time, I can relate some of these realities to my own realities in India. I cannot see the Palestine issue in isolation: rather, I see links with many other forms of oppression and domination in the world and especially in India. Examples of such links with the Indian context include the following:

- We have an act called the Armed Forces Special Powers Act of 1958, which has been operative in the northeastern states and in Jammu and Kashmir. This draconian law gives unlimited powers to the army anywhere that they can claim to be a "disturbed area" in this part of the country.
- Tribal and Adivasi peoples are displaced in many parts of India in the name of "economic development." All over the country there are communities struggling for sovereignty and their right to exist. To give just one example, the Tribals and Dalits in Orissa are fighting there against the Korean-based multinational company Posco.
- In the Jammu and Kashmir (JK) state, where a majority of Muslims live, the military controls the administration. We can see similarities between the existing situation in JK state and that of Palestine. Just like in Palestine, there are military checkpoints all over JK.
- Dalits face institutionalised discrimination at the hands of a religiously sanctioned caste system. Among these, Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims face further discrimination because of their religious identity, treated as second-class citizens in their own country. They are not given affirmative action benefits as enshrined in the Indian constitution.

With these realities in mind, I can relate with and understand your struggle as Palestinians. I can understand your feelings, your pain and your cries. We can and must connect our struggles to your struggles.

I do feel sorry for the state of Israel, for its people, and for the ways in which Zionist ideology has trapped them as well. Observing young Israeli soldiers at the checkpoints, I felt sorry for them, too. When, in other parts of the world, others of his peer group are experiencing the fullness of life, he is wasting his time, filled with fear, at an army post.

Throughout history, we have witnessed the fall of many empires, the demolition of many walls. Still, the Israeli occupation regime continues to build walls and forts. It is unnatural. They will come down. Israelis cannot truly live in peace when their brothers and sisters are

suffering. It pains me that they have not learned lessons from history: they have forgotten that they were once oppressed and cannot recognise that they have become the oppressor. The living God cannot be with them in their oppressive behaviour. God is for everyone; God cannot be selective. We are against anti-Semitism, just as we are against any violation of human rights committed against any human being in any part of the world: our Palestinian brothers and sisters are subjected to exactly this, and it is this injustice that we oppose.

We salute your persistence in your struggles for justice. You have persevered in your struggle despite all the difficulties, both in the past and now. You have lost your land, water, culture and life itself. But you have not given up hope. We admire you.

The oppressors in your country have close links with oppressors in my country. In India we face Hindu nationalism promoted by the values of Brahmanism, and you have Zionism promoted by powerful Jews and Christian Zionists; both have very close working relationships with right-wing Christian fundamentalism in the US and Europe. The commonalities are many: the Hindu nationalists want India to be an exclusively Hindu country and exclude Christians and Muslims; the Zionists do not want to live with Arabs in Palestine. Right-wing Christians feel that only they can reach the Kingdom of God and all others are sinners. These are the dominant groups determining international and national politics, and they work hand in hand for each others' interests. We have to recognise, moreover, that these groups are intertwined with the overarching project of economic globalisation. We will have to expose the unholy alliance of these groups and their impact on the common people in our countries; we have to build an alliance among all those who believe that change is possible, among all those who believe in abundant life for all and universal brotherhood and sisterhood.

And we must remember that even in the midst of a hopeless situation, there are signs of hope.

The recent uprisings across the Middle East have brought down undemocratic rulers in various countries. Now rulers have realised that they are answerable to the people. The people are taking to the streets and demanding real and lasting change. The West has always been opportunistic in exploiting the situation, shifting sides quickly and forming new ruling alliances so as to continue their exploitation -- especially for the most precious commodity, oil.

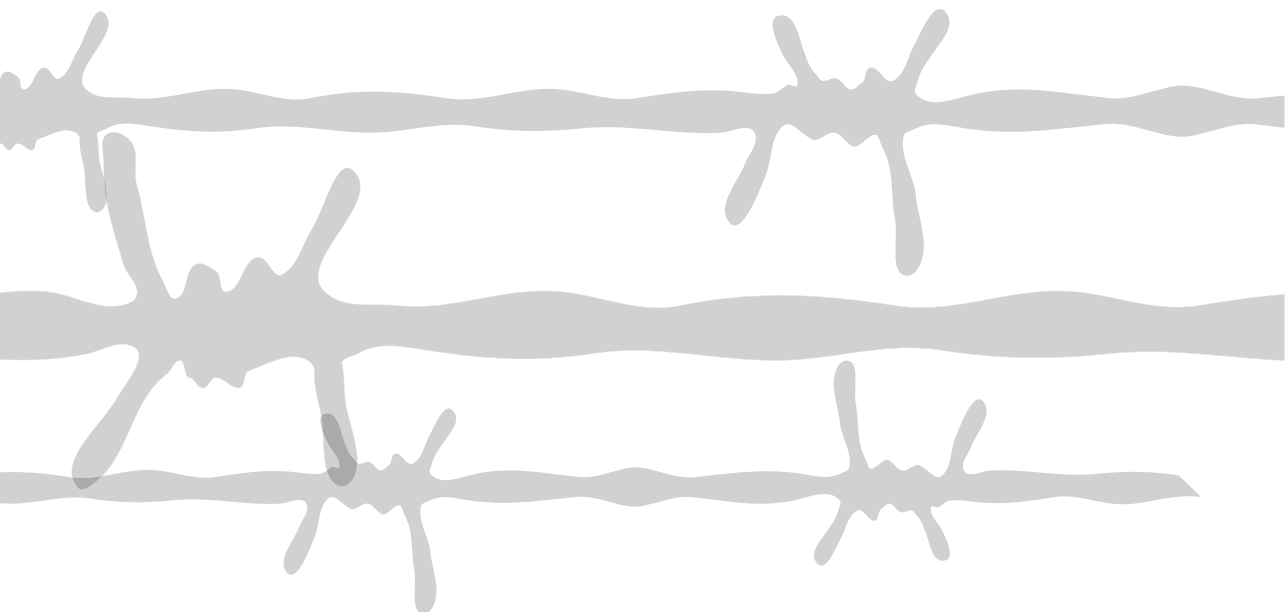
The Occupy Wall Street protests, another example of hope, have embarrassed the Empire. The young people are asking uncomfortable questions of the market and the ruling alliances -- and the Empire does not seem to have an answer. The protests brought the reality of unemployment, of economic inequality to the world's attention, as well as the US government's undue support of the banks and private corporations. These protesters dream of a just society in which 99% of people also share in the resources.

We have a powerful example of hope in India, too. Thirty-nine-year-old Irom Sharmila from Manipur has been undertaking a nonviolent fast for the past 11 years in order to demand the withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. She is willing to fast until her demand is

met, even if it means dying in the process. She is on hunger strike in hopes of liberating her community from the manipulation of the AFSPA and the military.

Finally, the Kairos Movement is yet another sign of hope amid hopelessness. It has been our privilege and duty to participate in the second anniversary of Kairos Palestine. We, the Indian Solidarity Ecumenical Network--Kairos Palestine, represent most of the Christians in India who are committed to the Palestinian cause. Having come to our own moment of truth about Palestine, we will go forth and tell this truth to the Indian churches and society. Even though the government of India has recognised the Palestinian state, this is not enough: indeed, the government continues to secure closer trade relations and other links with Israel. We will demand that the Indian government act in solidarity with the call for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS).

Friends, your liberation is part of my liberation. I cannot be liberated until you have been liberated from the oppression at the hands of the Israeli state. Jesus Christ, born in the city of Bethlehem, is challenging us all to work for our collective liberation.



What Next?

Jamal Khader

Since the launch of Kairos Palestine in December 2009, we have come a long way. History moves quickly in the Middle East and in the world: in the last 12 months, we have witnessed many developments brought about by the Arab Spring, through which many regimes have changed. We still witness acceleration in the colonisation of Palestinian land through the construction of illegal settlements, further damaging any possibility of reaching real peace. It is time to move ahead.

There are things that belong to the past: among them are the attempts to order people and their leaders what to do and what to accept. The recent events in the Arab World show that people discovered their own powers again. We are painfully familiar with the repression and stagnation caused by the so-called “balanced approach” to the Palestinian cause, by which many people insist on blaming both parties, with the idea that “they both bear responsibility.” The reality, however, is that the situation in Palestine is an asymmetrical one; it should be dealt with as a military occupation by the Israel of Palestinian land.

It is no longer acceptable to remain “neutral”: the fact of not making a decision is in itself a decision. It is time to be prophetic and courageous.

It is time to move beyond the first reactions to the Kairos Document. Endorsing the document is a positive step. The question now is: what comes next? How can we take actions that correspond to words already spoken?

Thus, we say:

- To those who accepted the document with reservations and questions: we had a dialogue with many of you and clarified many of the questions you addressed to us. Now, we need to focus on the true, whole message of the Kairos, rather than focusing on sentence here or an affirmation there.
- To those who rejected the document, the question remains: are you on the side of the perpetrators and the oppressors? Do you want the status quo of occupation to continue? If so, you will find yourselves on the wrong side of history. Indeed, history offers us many such examples: the recent case of apartheid in South Africa, for example, and segregation in the United States. Once the situation changes, some find themselves -- and sometimes late -- on the wrong side of such events, judged by history as justice is restored.
- To those who have remained silent: silence is already a position, and it is unacceptable. Those who don't want to take strong positions allow evil to continue. Silence is complicity.

It is time to move from words to actions. For Jesus Christ, words are deeds; they are already actions. It was enough for Jesus to say, “Get up, take your mat with you and go home,” and the paralytic was healed.

We, human beings, tend to separate words from action. Many politicians set bad examples when they do not mean what they say.

Let us mean what we say.

Let us act according to our words.

Let us be ready to pay the price of our commitment.

We are not alone. Our gratitude goes to all those who attended the Kairos for Global Justice Conference, to all those who joined us from around the world. It is a clear sign that, truly, we are not alone, and that justice denied anywhere is justice denied everywhere.

We need to work together. We need to join efforts -- not against anyone, but rather for justice. We are not here to create opponents or enemies; rather, we are here to address everyone and invite them to join our vision, our prophetic vision, a vision of justice. That is why we need a vision and a strategy that are unified, unifying and strong.

Jesus Christ, our Saviour and teacher, addressed the poor and announced deliverance:

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (Luke 4)

The same Lord addressed the rich and the powerful, too, asking them to repent and join him in realising justice.

Our language expresses our anger, but never expresses hate; it may express rage, but never revenge.

We begin with a message of faith, hope and love, and we will continue with the same message, the most powerful one: faith, hope and love.

The Beginning Rifat Kassis

Though the writings collected in this book are diverse in their subjects, their contexts, and the backgrounds of their authors, they are united by a common hope, a common vision. This is a vision not simply of a just future, but also of a just present: the urgency of now.

In this way, the texts also share an understanding that is implicit in the concept of kairos itself: that a speech, or a conference, or even a movement, is a beginning, not a conclusion. Coming together to share insights on and experiences of injustice is crucial; moreover, the very act of coming together is the result of much hard work. But words must be linked with deeds, and we must harness the momentum of our encounters -- of the Kairos for Global Justice Conference and all other like-minded gatherings -- toward more solidarity, more resistance, more action toward peace with justice.

Each text, in its own way, is a reminder of the strength we already possess together: we have, indeed, a true community across the world, ready to be extended and fortified into a global Kairos network. In this sense, each text is also a reminder of the strength of our present, of our now, and of the need to move forward.

Kairos Palestine hopes this book will continue to provide such reminders to its readers. We will keep ensuring that more voices are heard, and that more nows are connected, as we keep building our movement and walking toward justice.

We don't know how long it will take us to get there. But we are patient and determined, and we know it can't be far.

The Bethlehem Call: Here We Stand – Stand With Us

To the reader: Read and interpret this text with a Kairos consciousness and gaze of prophetic anger.

Preamble

How long, O God, will they steal our livelihood? Oppress, imprison and humiliate our people? Deprive our children of their childhood? Indeed, how long, God, will the multitudes of Christians of the world ignore the anguish of our Palestinian sisters and brothers and all of the oppressed?

“Come and see,” said the Christians of Palestine. “Come and see the olive groves, the bulldozers, the ancient terraces, the segregated cities. The situation is worsening.”

More than 60 participants from 15 countries heeded an urgent call by Kairos Palestine. From December 4-10, 2011, they joined Palestinians in the Kairos for Global Justice Conference in Bethlehem.

The aims and objectives of this encounter were to:

- Bring awareness of and share a Kairos consciousness experienced by all groups attending the encounter;
- Strengthen and build ties among Kairos groups to form a committed global network for justice;
- Learn about the urgency of Kairos solidarity from the Palestinian experience and work to end injustice by implementing concrete actions at national, regional and global levels.

On the road to this conference, there was the Amman Call in 2007, which ended 60 years without a unified Christian voice speaking against the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The next milestone was the Berne Perspective in 2008, which is illustrated in the statement: “Enough is enough. No more words without deeds, it is time for action.” The cry for justice in Palestine reached a pivotal moment when, in December 2009, Palestinian Christians launched the Kairos Palestine document, “A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering.”

We now say: “Injustice no more. Here we stand. Stand with us.”

The Current Context

Today, the illegal regime and illegal forms of the Israeli occupation of Palestine assume dimensions of systemic injustice whereby the unthinkable and unimaginable becomes

globally accepted, supported and normalised. This is an example of Empire (global domination) at work. It happens in Palestine as it happens in many other contexts around the world. At the same time, Palestine is clearly a global issue. The government of Israel claims to have and indeed enjoys an exceptional status within the international community. Israel regards itself as above international law and is treated as exempt from it. This status provides the Israeli government with the freedom to occupy Palestine with impunity.

As witnessed with our own eyes, the treacherous conditions imposed by the Israeli occupation on Palestinians and their land have reached a level of almost unimaginable and sophisticated criminality. This includes the slow yet deliberate and systematic ethnic cleansing and genocide of Palestinians and Palestine as well as the strangling of the Palestinian economy. The brutality in the “violence of silence” internationally provides an almost impenetrable shield for the Israeli government to implement its evil designs in blatant disregard for human rights and international law. Silence is an opinion. Inaction is an action. We witness decidedly spineless cowardice in the failure to resist the Israeli government on the part of a majority of governments, political parties, media outlets, businesses, most of organised religion -- including Christianity -- and the silence of prophets worldwide. This makes us accomplices in crimes against humanity, such as the crimes of apartheid and persecution as described in international law.³³

We also witness the resolve and resilience of Palestinians in matching the imbalance of political, economic and military power with unbending steadfastness for their freedom and a just peace.

The de-legitimisation and criminalisation of the Israeli government and its local and international support base is gaining unstoppable momentum. The existence of international boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaigns and other forms of non-violent resistance is an established fact. The government and state of Israel is now regarded as an apartheid regime in terms of international law, with particular reference to the UN Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid and the Rome Statutes of the International Criminal Court. The severity of the Palestinian situation makes comparisons with apartheid in South Africa superfluous and almost irrelevant. The benchmark is international law and not South Africa.

Globally, we observe a context of growing fluidity and volatility. In this context, we are deeply concerned in observing how governments and societies in the West, including churches and ecumenical bodies dominated by the West, are becoming more and more exclusive, supremacist and dictatorial in conserving an unjust status quo. Furthermore, the growing economic and political volatility of world powers in North America and Europe creates a context of uncertainty for precise timelines in dealing with the Israeli/Palestinian situation. However, this fluidity, in addition to the Arab Awakening, holds potential for hope.

The global South, also complicit in regard to the Israeli/Palestinian crisis, possesses the

³³ Relevant international laws include the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (adopted in 1973 and enacted in 1976) and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 7 (1)(h) & (j) and Article 2 (g) & (h) of 1998.

potential to be an untapped source of hope. This potential holds value not only for Palestinians, but also for those societies in the global North where Empire crumbles.

We are also acutely aware of struggles for justice everywhere, including within Israel itself. We have come to ignite, nurture and strengthen a Kairos consciousness for each of these contexts as interconnected and interrelated. We draw inspiration and strength from each other, as well as from progressive peace activists and human rights groups in Israel.

In the deep pain of the Palestinian people in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, of Palestinian refugees and of Israeli Arab citizens, we have witnessed the tears of God. God keeps the flame of faith alive as the darkness of despair closes in. God lives and breathes in the lament of those whose future has been stolen. In the cries of the dispossessed we have sensed the passion of God for right to prevail.

God takes sides for justice against injustice. God does not take kindly to injustice or the perpetrators of injustice: "He has shown the might with His arm. He has scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and has exalted the lowly" (Luke 1:46-55). A spirituality that recognises the face of God in every human being is, therefore, inevitably marked by a bias towards justice for the poor and the oppressed: "One thing God requires of you is only this, to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). This is the true essence of both Testaments. Christ still weeps over Jerusalem.

A Kairos is both the recognition of God's will and the urgency of our response. It is in the awareness of a God of the Now, who is deeply involved in the human predicament. God keeps us steadfast in courage, hope and love as we continue to struggle and resist.

We pray and plead for a radical change of hearts, policies and practices on the part of the Israeli government and those governments that support it. If this does not happen, we pray in trembling and hope, if it is God's will, for these governments to fall.

Some Non-Negotiables: Occupation No More

In the light of the above and with our conviction that Palestine is in an ever-deepening crisis, Kairos Palestine urgently calls us all to move forward boldly and act radically by speaking out with courage, passion and determination. The time for words and diplomatic niceties that obscure reality is over. We affirm the churches' commitment and contributions to decisive action since the Amman Call, as well as in the creation and impact of the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF). Nevertheless, we will strengthen and increase our advocacy initiatives.

Therefore, we:

- Reject the silence of the church, lest we be accomplices in crimes against humanity, such as those of apartheid and persecution. It is imperative to speak up and cry with

the oppressed in demanding justice.

- Refuse to be coerced into accepting financial assistance from any church or organisation that supports the occupation.
- Challenge any church that, either directly or indirectly, invests in companies supporting the occupation. As congregants of a church, we will be alert to church policies and challenge unethical financial investment and spending practices.
- Call the Israeli occupation of Palestine a crime and sin. We reject any theological or political justification for the occupation. We regard such theologies as defying the core of the Gospel.
- Reject any argument aimed at convincing Palestinians and the international community that the problems are caused by Muslims rather than the occupation.
- Demand that churches take bold and courageous positions for justice against injustice. We are appalled at the spiritual and institutional cowardice that refuses to take an unequivocal stand for justice. In this way, victims and perpetrators cannot be put on equal footing in an effort to create the illusion of balance.
- Confirm our obligation to resist the occupation in faith, hope and love. We reject calls to cease advocating and practising BDS or any other form of nonviolent civil resistance that will end the occupation.
- Resist being party to any church or church-related organisation offering tours to the Holy Lands that do not include an encounter with local Palestinians and express our opposition to such initiatives. Alternative tourism groups are now available of which Christians and others can avail themselves.
- Demand that the right of return for all Palestinian refugees be enforced.
- Steadfastly uphold the principle of compassion toward the oppressor. We acknowledge and understand their experiences of oppression, fears and insecurities. Our demands are in the best interests of a better future for all involved.

In love, we rage against injustice and yet refuse to be destroyed by our anger.

Our Vision: Call to Act Now

A shared vision of peace with justice inspires us to respond with committed action at this critical moment. This vision must include affirming voices from the Jewish, Muslim and other faith traditions that express hope for a pluralistic, democratic society here.

The tide is turning. The pain will pass soon if we act now. This calls for a collective willingness to take risks in the cause of justice.

Theology: One Voice for Justice

We commit ourselves to developing contextual biblical theologies and practices of resistance and liberation. We will unmask those theologies in our midst that are harbingers of death for Palestinians and the oppressed worldwide and we will challenge traditional ways of doing theology.

Dismantling Israeli Apartheid

We support and commit ourselves to the dismantling of Israeli apartheid, insist on the enforcement of international law and seek to ensure the fulfilment of Palestinians' legitimate demands. These demands include:

- People living side by side in justice and peace within pre-1967 borders;
- A shared Jerusalem, including open access to all holy sites;
- The right of return for Palestinian refugees;
- An end to all settlement extensions and the dismantling of the settlement system;
- Free access to water and sanitation; and
- The breakdown of the apartheid wall.

We should not accept the argument that the fear of civil unrest between Israeli settlers and Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is a deterrent to achieving Palestinian freedom.

Prophetic Communities that Support Palestine

We commit to:

- Empower people at the community level to be the primary theologians of a Kairos Consciousness;
- Develop effective south-north and south-south coalitions for prophetic action; and
- Agree that Kairos Palestine create a core group to facilitate these coalitions.

Boycott, Divestment, Sanction (BDS): A Creative, Nonviolent "Now"

- We commit to engage in creative, nonviolent resistance in response to the call from our Palestinian sisters and brothers to this end, including BDS; and
- We will actively participate in and lend credibility to popular, nonviolent resistance in Palestine, Israel and internationally, including BDS.

We will oppose, with appropriate means, the policies of our governments that support the occupation.

Holy Lands Tourism and Pilgrimage

We will:

- Promote and participate in alternative tourism and Kairos pilgrimages in the Holy Lands for the purposes of spiritual nurturing, awareness-raising and advocacy;
- Insist that such tours be organised by or in partnership with Palestinian tour operators;
- Utilise those travel agencies that follow "Come and See: A Call from Palestinian

Christians for Ethical Tourism.”³⁴ We will challenge and boycott those that do not; and

- Actively seek to enable target groups to travel to Israel/Palestine.

Conclusion

The Bethlehem Call for a here-we-stand, stand-with-us journey provides each one of us with a joyous blessing and an honour, difficult though the journey may be. We seize this opportune Kairos moment with conviction and hope.

Palestinians and a global community have gathered: here in Bethlehem, breaking barriers between regions and cultures and building bridges of friendship and solidarity, because we have a common dream to see a Palestine and a world free of all forms of injustice. We believe that each one of us was called to Bethlehem for a purpose.

“We are the ones we have been waiting for.” (Alice Walker)

A Franciscan Benediction:

May God bless us with discomfort at easy answers, at half-truths and superficial relationships so that we may live deeply within our hearts. May God bless us with anger at injustice, oppression and exploitation. May God bless us with tears to share for those who suffer in pain, rejection, starvation and war, so that we may reach out our hands to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy. And may God bless us with enough foolishness to believe that we can make a difference in this world so that we can do what others claim cannot be done. And may the blessing of the God of Abraham and Sarah, and Jesus born in Bethlehem of our sister Mary, and of the Holy Spirit, who broods over the world as a mother over her children, be upon us and remain with us always. Amen.

³⁴ Come and See: A Call from Palestinian Christians
A Journey for Peace with Justice
Guidelines for Christians Contemplating a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Biographies

Ferdinand Anno, who belongs to the Bago-Igorot hilltribe of the Cordillera region in the Philippines, is a professor of liturgics and the arts, theology, culture, and development at Union Theological Seminary-Philippines. He is also an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and is active in advocacy work for global justice through Peace for Life-Philippines and the International League of People's Struggles.

Naim Ateek, a retired Palestinian Anglican priest, is the founder and president of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center. Co-author of "A Moment of Truth," the Kairos Palestine document, Rev. Dr. Ateek is best known for his firm stand on peace with justice as articulated in articles, lectures, and two books: *Justice and Only Justice* and *A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation*.

Warren Bardsley is a member of the Iona community and an ordained minister of the British Methodist Church, having served in full-time ministry for forty years. Active with the Methodist Church Overseas Division in Sierra Leone, the anti-apartheid campaign in the 1970's and '80s, and the WCC ecumenical accompaniment programme in East Jerusalem in 2008, he is now retired and living in Lichfield, England, where he is the chair of Friends of Sabeel West Midlands.

Mark Braverman is a Jewish American with deep family roots in the Holy Land. Trained as a clinical psychologist, he now devotes himself full-time to the cause of peace in historic Palestine, focusing on the role of religious beliefs and theology in the struggle for peace and the function of interfaith relations. Dr. Braverman is the author of *Fatal Embrace: Christians, Jews and the Search for Peace in the Holy Land*.

Pauline M. Coffman, Ed.D., is a retired adult educator living in Chicago. She was a founding member of the Israel/Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church, USA (PCUSA) and leads seminar tours to Palestine and Israel for the Middle East Task Force of Chicago Presbytery.

Farid Esack is a South African Muslim scholar, writer, and political activist known for his opposition to apartheid and his work for interreligious dialogue. Among his numerous books is *On Being a Muslim: Finding a Religious Path in the World Today*. He is the primary author of the Islamic response to Kairos Palestine.

Susanne Grimheden is a priest in the Lutheran Church of Sweden.

Samuel Jayakumar is the Executive Secretary of the Commission on Policy, Governance and Public Witness of National Council of Churches in India. He formerly served as the General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement of India.

Rifat Odeh Kassis is the General Coordinator of Kairos Palestine. Born in Beit Sahour, he has long been active in the nonviolent Palestinian struggle, as well as in diverse human rights fields, on both national and international levels. From the YMCA to the WCC in Geneva, he has held several international positions, the most prominent as Director of Defence for Children International at the global level (2005-2011). His most recent book is *Kairos for Palestine*, published in 2011.

Jamal Khader, a co-author of the Kairos Palestine document, is an ordained priest with a doctorate in Dogmatic Theology. A member of the Theological Reflection Committee of the Latin Patriarchate, he also serves on the committee for dialogue with Jews. Fr. Khader is the chairperson of the Department of Religious Studies and the Dean of Arts at Bethlehem University.

Hind Khoury, trained in economics and business management, has worked with multiple international development organisations in the oPt. She has also served as Minister of Jerusalem Affairs with the Palestinian Authority cabinet and as ambassador (Delegate General) of Palestine in France. Currently living in East Jerusalem, Khoury serves on the board of local NGOs such as the Palestine National Theatre, the Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem (ARIJ), the Arab Thought Forum, and Sabeel (presently vice-president).

Nora Kort is a community development consultant and the head of the Welfare Sector of Jerusalem Strategic Multi-Sector Development. She has established, managed and developed the US-based International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) program in Jerusalem, the oPt and Gaza for ten years, expanded institutional capacity-building for local NGOs, and designed and developed diverse projects with local NGOs in the oPt.

Barbara Lloyd is the Program Coordinator for Public Witness in the Partners in Mission Unit of the United Church of Canada's (UCC) General Council offices in Toronto, Canada. A Doctor of Ministry from the International Feminist Doctor of Ministry program of San Francisco Theological Seminary, she previously worked as a high school teacher, an organisational development consultant, in team ministry, and then as Toronto Conference program staff for Christian Formation and Congregational Development. She attends Trinity-St. Paul's United Church in Toronto, where she is a trustee and a member of the Middle East Working Group.

Raj Bharath Patta is a young ordained Dalit pastor from the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church, currently serving the Student Christian Movement of India as its General Secretary.

Mitri Raheb, born in Bethlehem in 1962, earned his doctoral degree in theology from Phillips University in Marburg, Germany. Since 1988, he has been the Senior Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem. In 1995, he founded the International Center of Bethlehem (Dar Annadwa), which has gone on to initiate a model school, a health centre, two cultural centres, a college, and a Palestinian centre for political education. Since 2006, these initiatives have been collectively known as the Diyar Consortium; Rev. Dr. Raheb serves as its president. He is the author of eight books that have been published in 13 languages altogether. Among his several prizes are the Tschelebi Mohammad and the Aachener Peace Award.

Eilert Rostrup is a Lutheran pastor from Norway and the director of the Karibu Foundation. He is committed to and deeply involved in interfaith relations, alternative pilgrimages and building a just peace around the globe.

Zwanini Tshabalala is a member of the Constituent Assembly of Civil Society, Swaziland.

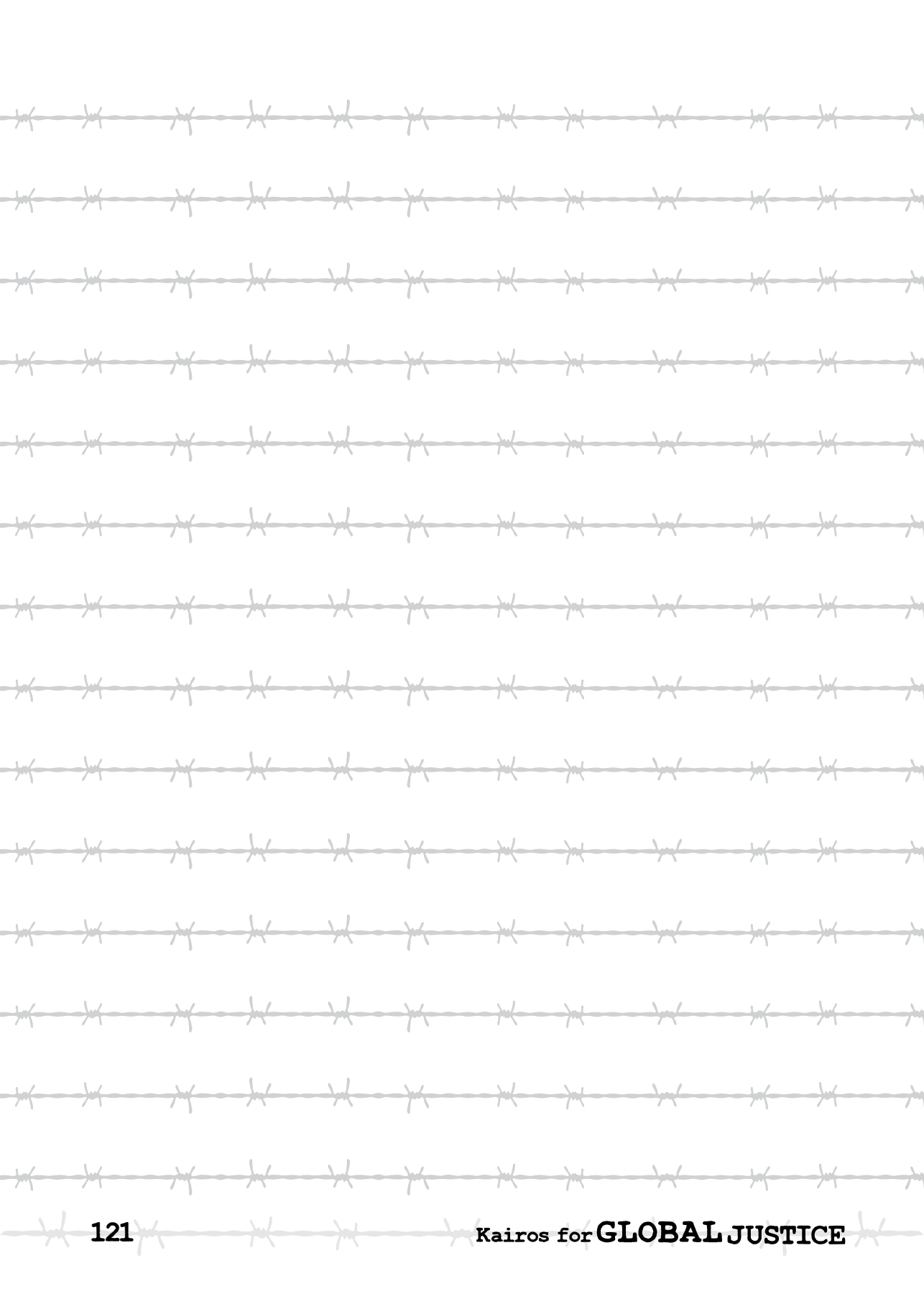
Gied ten Berge has worked at the Polemological Institute of the University of Groningen, the Interchurch Peace Council (IKV) and the peace movement Pax Christi Netherlands; for many years, he was responsible for Peace Week in the Netherlands, for which he edited the book *Jerusalem: City of Peace, Peace for the City*. With an MA in interreligious theology from the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Tilburg, has published a book on theological differences within Christianity, Judaism and Islam about “the Land.” He has served since 2010 as chairman of the Support Committee Israeli Peace and Human Rights Organizations (SIVMO) in the Netherlands and is a co-founder of Kairos Palestine Netherlands.

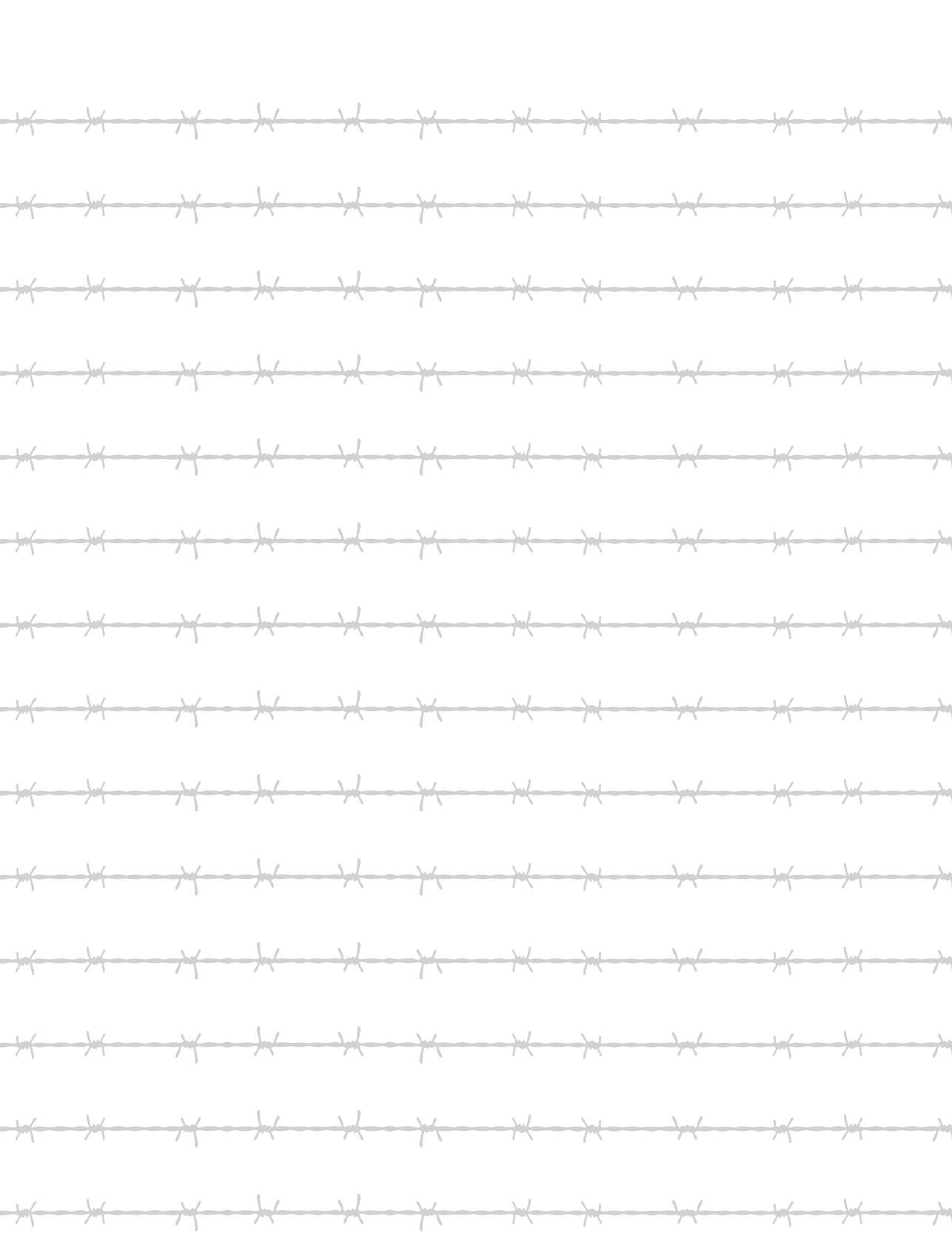
Stiaan van der Merwe has a personal history of involvement in the struggle against apartheid, especially within the then-family of Dutch Reformed Churches and the white Afrikaner community. He is an ordained minister of both the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa and the Reformed Church in Zambia. In South Africa, he has been a research coordinator at the Institute of Contextual Theology, a policy researcher for the Ecumenical Advice Bureau, a founding member of the Ecumenical Service for Socioeconomic Transformation, and a founding CEO of Transparency South Africa. With degrees from the University of Western Cape (D. Th), among others, Dr. van der Merwe currently works as a management consultant and workplace coach, and is part of the leadership group of Kairos Southern Africa (KSA).

For more information about the co-authors who participated in the Kairos for Global Justice Encounter and presented their papers, please visit:

www.kairospalestine.com

Notes





Kairos Palestine

A Moment of Truth

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

We proclaim our word based on our Christian faith
and our sense of Palestinian belonging.

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.

www.kairospalestine.ps