



Easter Alert ***2022***

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

Kairos Palestine Document -
A Moment of Truth, Chapter 9.5

Foreword

Jesus Weeps

Jesus Christ of Nazareth weeps (Luke 19:41). The miracle worker, the one who was raised the dead, whose followers included both the high and the low, to whom all of Jerusalem shouted, “Hosanna, save us, O Awaited King”—he weeps.

Strange, he weeps after his triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem. Wouldn't he have rejoiced in the people of Jerusalem welcoming him? Wouldn't he have rejoiced over the multitudes that came out and shouted his name, identifying him as the king who came in the name of the Lord?

Or maybe this is why Jesus cries! Maybe he cries because the people of Jerusalem do not know what they are asking. The holy city of Jerusalem is visited by Christ as Redeemer, but they are seeking a redemption achieved by a national political liberator. They recognize that he has come to set them free, but it means for them—they want of him—a king who will rule by the sword, who will take revenge with the sword. The people see in Jesus one who would nourish them with bread and meat, not realizing that humankind does not live by bread alone. Jerusalem sought strength, not meekness.

Jesus weeps. Through his tears, he says, “If you had only recognized today the things that make for peace! But now it has been hidden from your eyes.” (Luke 19:42) Jerusalem



does not know what makes for its peace.

Jerusalem and all the capitols of the world seek the logic of force, not the logic of the cross. Thus, when Jerusalem realizes what Christ's message really is and his purpose in entering—when he reveals that the meek and those who hunger for justice will inherit the earth—the people shout,
«Crucify him, crucify him.»

Were Jesus to come to Jerusalem today, he would find a lot of religiosities. But would he find faith? Imagine Christ standing in front of the separation wall, traveling to Gaza, walking the streets of the Old City of Jerusalem. Surely, he would be weeping over the racism and hatred that spreads in its streets. He would be weeping over the rule of the military and the injustice it inflicts upon its original inhabitants.

Today, residents of the occupied territories are not allowed to enter Jerusalem, not even to pray. We Palestinians are separated by the Israeli ID cards that limit our travel from one area to another, affecting the choices we are able to make regarding education, relationships and employment opportunities. In East Jerusalem, families are evicted from their homes to make way for Jewish occupants. Those nonviolently seeking justice are met with violence. Jerusalem still does not know what makes for peace: our Lord Jesus, the President of Peace!



My brothers and sisters, when Christ weeps, we must stop and weep with him. We must lament the state of our land, first in our fervent prayers.

But remember, Christ's tears were not the last word. His last word in Jerusalem was the Resurrection! The cross is not the last stop. There is an empty tomb yet to come. Yes, we cry with Christ over the state of our land. We are crucified with Him, so that we may live the Resurrected life with him—in this life as well as the next. We will not give up! Our God is a God of peace, a God of Justice and Mercy. Even as the season of our sufferings is prolonged, the dawn of the Resurrection will come.



To weep with Christ, then, does not mean self-pity, despair or surrender. Our calling is here because our land is here, and therefore our message is here. Let us pray, work, and keep hope in the God of New Life.

Grant us faith, O Lord—the weakness of our faith which is our strength. Let Christ be the centerpiece of our lives and the cornerstone of our homes and families.

Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac is a Palestinian Christian pastor, theologian, writer, speaker, blogger and, more importantly, a husband and a father. He now pastors Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem and is the Academic Dean of Bethlehem Bible College. He is also the director of the highly acclaimed and influential Christ at the Checkpoint conferences and is a board



member of Kairos Palestine. Munther is passionate about issues related to Palestinians and Palestinian Christians. He speaks locally and internationally on issues related to the theology of the land, Palestinian Christians, and Palestinian theology. He is the author of *From Land to Lands, from Eden to the Renewed Earth: A Christ-Centered Biblical Theology of the Promised Land*. Munther plays the guitar and the flute. He is also an avid sports fan, specially football (aka soccer) and basketball (NBA). Munther originally studied civil engineering in Birzeit. Realizing that numbers and construction sites are not his thing, he obtained a Master's in Biblical Studies from Westminster Theological Seminary and a PhD from the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies.

Munther is married to Rudaina, an architect. Together they have two boys, Karam (9) and Zaid (7).



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

Kairos Palestine Document—A Moment of Truth,
Chapter 1.1.8



***“The Lord looked down from his sanctuary on high,
from heaven he viewed the earth,
to hear the groans of the prisoners.
to release those condemned to death.”***

Psalm 101/102:19-20

Let us pray to the Lord... Lord have mercy.

O Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, Redeemer and Teacher, who accepted the crucifixion for our salvation and redemption, today we celebrate your glorious three-day resurrection.

You did not remain hanging on the cross, nor did you remain dead in the grave, but on the third day the light of resurrection dawned to dispel the darkness of this world. The city that witnessed your redeeming sufferings and your glorious resurrection, experiences now only groan of pain, aches and torments.

Jerusalem is the city of our faith and the city of peace. Now we see that its peace is lost due to the injustices committed within it.

Sanctuaries and other holy places are targeted and desecrated. Jerusalemites are treated like strangers in their own city, both inside the walls of the Old City and in neighbourhoods beyond, especially Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan, Jabal Al-Mukaber and others.



On the Great Day of Resurrection, we glorify you and praise your resurrection and give thanks for your victory over death. We pray fervently for the city of suffering and resurrection, so that the suffering will be lifted, and its children may enjoy the resurrection.

All Palestinians, and especially Jerusalemites, deserve to live a better life under the umbrella of respect for the eternal values of human dignity, freedom and inalienable rights.

O Lord Jesus Christ, we pray fervently before you in order that you remember your oppressed people and your crucified and suffering city. Do not leave your people alone to fight the executioners of this era. Do not leave our Palestinian people to live in boundless pain and sorrow. We depend on you, the source of our hope and true faith.



Be a supporter of the oppressed everywhere, especially in Palestine, for you are the one who taught us to always be on the side of every needy and suffering person.

Lord, protect your city and your people and relieve them of the grievances that they have been suffering for many years. This people deserve to live freely like the rest of the peoples of the world.

In the glorious days of resurrection, we place before you, O Lord, the pain, sorrow and suffering of our people, asking you for mercy. How much we need and long for your mercy and help now and in all times of trial and hardship.

Christ is Risen... He is Risen indeed!

Archbishop Atallah Hanna was born in Al Rama in the Upper Galilee. After high school, he joined the Orthodox Seminary in Jerusalem in 1983. In 1984, went to Thessaloniki where he studied Greek and then joined, then graduated the College of Theology at the Thessaloniki University. Archbishop Hanna was ordained a monk in 1990 at the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem.



Over the years, he has helped develop the unified curriculum for Christian religion taught in Palestinian schools, played a role in the Christian-Muslim dialogue, participated in local, regional and international conferences, and advocated for the Palestinian question in all forums. He is a member of several Christian and ecumenical institutions. In 2005, he was unanimously elected the Archbishop of Sebastia for the Greek Orthodox.

Hope within us means first and foremost our faith in God and secondly our expectation, despite everything, for a better future. Thirdly, it means not chasing after illusions - we realize that release is not close at hand. Hope is the capacity to see God in the midst of trouble, and to be co-workers with the Holy Spirit who is dwelling in us. From this vision derives the strength to be steadfast, remain firm and work to change the reality in which we find ourselves. Hope means not giving in to evil but rather standing up to it and continuing to resist it. We see nothing in the present or future except ruin and destruction. We see the upper hand of the strong, the growing orientation towards racist separation and the imposition of laws that deny our existence and our dignity. We see confusion and division in the Palestinian position. If, despite all this, we do resist this reality today and work hard, perhaps the destruction that looms on the horizon may not come upon us.

Kairos Palestine Document—A Moment of Truth,
Chapter 3.2



Easter Message 2022

***“God has leaned down from the heights of his
sanctuary,
has looked down at earth from heaven,
to hear the sighing of the captive,
and to set free those doomed to die.”
Psalm 102:19-20***

Christ is risen! Indeed he is risen! Let us rejoice. Yes, the Resurrection of the Lord is the cause of our joy, and the call to a new life. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ renewed humankind. The former died, and a new being rose with Christ. This is why we rejoice and rejoice. “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. The old things have passed away, and everything has become new!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

But in Jerusalem, the city of the Resurrection, “old things” still prevail. The old human being is still there. Old sin—old in assaulting brothers and sisters, old in assaulting another people. The glory of the Resurrection encompassed the city, and from it a new glory emerged for the whole world. But here, where the Sun of Justice shone with a new glory, too many are still buried in evil intentions for their brothers and sisters.

Death in Jerusalem is easy, daily. In Jerusalem, families are still evicted from their homes, which are then inhabited by others. A family home, home for God’s children, the fruit of a

life' efforts, demolished by order of an unjust law. Homes are still raided, soldiers enter Palestinian bouses and wreak havoc, often taking a child from his bed in the middle of the night. All of Jerusalem today is transformed, not from weakness to glory, but from sin to sin, in which one people deprives another people of their rights and even their presence in the land—by the will of a ruler, not according to the laws of God.

This isn't the divine call of Jerusalem. Rather, the Holy City's is a call to glory and the fullness of life, to a human being aware of one's humanity and the humanity of one's brothers and sisters. Only in this awareness will a person and a community find one's way to life, security and tranquility. All the people of Jerusalem, Palestinians and Israelis, are called to the same tranquility. Jerusalem is called to be a place of life for all its inhabitants.

But when will this human being arise in Jerusalem, the one for whom Christ rose from the dead, conquering death and sin, a humanity capable of love? The people look. The rulers of the people look. They know what they have to do. They know what is right and just for the Palestinians and what is right and just for the Israelis. Yet they they stand and watch, not daring to do what they know it is their duty to do.

People and rulers who believe in the Resurrection and its meaning for all of humanity—those who celebrate Easter, raise their prayers to God the Most High, the Almighty, the Lover of Humankind—do nothing to obey the light of the Resurrection or to contribute to the birth of the new



human being. The current ways of restoring Jerusalem are not the ways of God. They know that the ways of war and oppression are not the ways that bring forth the new humanity and create the new Jerusalem.

The responsible rulers of the world know and remain silent. They may compensate with money, with good words, and also with friendship. But all this does not lead to the resurrection of the New Jerusalem, nor to ending the demolition of homes and the replacing of the Palestinian population with Jewish residents, nor to the resurrection of the new man and the new women in the city.

In Jerusalem, the ongoing tragedy needs someone to end it, someone who brings truth, friendship and humanity for both sides. Someone who will do justice to the oppressed so that they may stay in their homes, their city and holy places. Someone to do justice to the oppressors so that they can see that their current ways distance them from their fellow human beings as well as themselves. Someone who will take the two sides by the hand and walk with them in the right way, to build the new Jerusalem.

“Send forth your spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth.” (Psalm 104:30) And renew our minds, so that we see your glorious Resurrection and, in its light, recover our dignity and freedom.

“We are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness will be at home” (2 Peter 3:13): when every person will see Jerusalem,



holy; when every person will see God and all one's brothers and sisters as children of God, each with their God-given dignity; when no one humiliates another; when no one is taken from one's home and no one is afraid in the City of God and Humankind.

Christ is risen. Indeed, he is risen. Let us rejoice. This is our message on Easter this year, to all our brothers and sisters in faith: we want your prayer, we want a word of truth followed by your action. We need people who can secure a people in their homes and safekeep those who pray in their holy places. We need people who dare to act for justice and peace, a definitive peace for both peoples in this Holy Land, so that everyone will enjoy peace and security. Thus, the face of Jerusalem will be renewed through the renewal of the hearts of all its children.



We need rulers, both here and throughout the world, who look with God upon Jerusalem and who hear the sighing of the captives, that the prisoners will be set free to build again their houses, so the light of God will encompass Jerusalem and all its inhabitants.

**Christ is risen. Indeed he is risen.
Happy and holy Easter.**

+ Patriarch Emeritus Michel Sabbah served as the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem from 1988-2008. He served the parish and the Palestinian nation locally and internationally. He is the president of the Palestinian Christian Initiative, Kairos Palestine, and one of the authors of the Kairos Palestine document, "A Moment of Truth.". He currently works in the field of interfaith dialogue and believes in pluralism, equality and preserving human dignity.



Kairos Palestine urges you to:

1. Find ways in your faith community's worship to share the Alert's two reflections and Archbishop Hanna's prayer.
2. Share this Alert with congregations, regions, conferences, presbyteries and dioceses across your country as a way to educate your community about the suffering of your Palestinian family living under Israeli occupation,.
3. Read Kairos Palestine and its partners' "Cry for Hope: A Call to Decisive Action." Sign the Cry by visiting the website (cryforhope.org) and support the implementation of its seven recommendations:
 - a. Initiate processes at local, denominational and ecumenical levels that lead to decisive action regarding the denial of Palestinian rights.
 - b. Confront theologies and understandings of the Bible that justify the oppression of the Palestinian people.
 - c. Demand that governments and world bodies employ political, diplomatic and economic means to stop Israel's violations of human rights and international law.
 - d. Oppose equating criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism.
 - e. Support initiatives between Israelis and Palestinians and interfaith partnerships that oppose apartheid and create opportunities to work together for justice and equality.
 - f. Support Palestinian resistance, including Boycott Divestment (BDS) and Sanctions and direct political advocacy



4. Read one of the many recent reports from globally respected human rights organizations documenting Israel's laws, policies and practices as apartheid: Israel's B'Tselem; Human Rights Watch; Amnesty International; and the United Nations report released by the UN's Special Rapporteur.

5. Visit the BDS toolkit website, launched in 2020 and developed by the Global Kairos for Justice coalition, a network that emerged from the 2018 Kairos Palestine conference held in Bethlehem, which was a follow-up to the 2009 groundbreaking document, Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth. Share the BDS toolkit website widely on your social media and with congregations, regions, conferences, presbyteries and dioceses across your country.

6. Come and see the reality in the Holy Land and to stand in solidarity with grassroots initiatives for a just peace.

7. Send letters of solidarity and support for justice in Palestine/Israel to the Israeli embassies in your own country. For further information, see www.allembassies.com/israeli_embassies.htm

8. Inform your Palestinian brothers and sisters about the ways you have been involved with the Easter Alert by writing us at this email address: kairos@kairospalestine.ps. Contact us for any other reason, too. Our strength and courage are emboldened by our contacts with you.