



2016  
**Christmas Alert**

# Christmas Alert 2016

(5th Edition)

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman World. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you; you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." When the angel had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. (Luke 2:1-2:12)

**Kairos Palestine**  
Advent and Christmas Alert 2016



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“

## WHAT IS THE MEANING OF HOPE?

*“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 the 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)*

”

# Introduction:

## A Generation under Siege: The Plight of Palestinian Children

By Rifat Odeh Kassir

Palestinian children are like other children anywhere; they have rights and needs. What distinguishes them from others, however, is the situation they face every day: they are living under military occupation which affects all aspects of their lives and them enjoying their rights. Their most important need is for these rights to be fulfilled: the right to life, the right to freedom (including freedom from violence and discrimination), the right to adequate health care and education, etc.

Israeli violations of Palestinians and of Palestinian children's rights have escalated over the years of occupation and have been accompanied by an escalation of oppressive measures by the Israeli authorities in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. These measures have included extrajudicial killings and injuries of Palestinian children, arrests, unlawful use of force against civilians, building settlements on Palestinian confiscated land, demolishing their homes, and uprooting their trees to name a few.

Settler attacks have also escalated in many Palestinian villages, and no one can forget the arson attack, carried out by Israeli Jewish settlers against two houses in the Palestinian village of Duma in which the toddler Ali Dawabshe and both his parents were burnt and killed. Despite the

international criticism from almost all countries to the Israeli settlements' policy, Israel continues to provide security, administrative services, incentives, housing, education, recreational places and medical care for more than 600,000 to 700,000 settlers residing illegally in settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The attacks by Israeli soldiers continue against weekly protests organized by Palestinian civilians in areas under threat of settlement expansion. These attacks are coupled with land confiscation and house demolitions, a frequent reality in Jerusalem and different parts of the West Bank, mainly Area C. Such aggressions have resulted in the arrest of hundreds of Palestinian civilians, including children.

Israeli military forces continue to violently arrest children suspected of, usually, stone-throwing, from their homes at night, interrogating them without the presence of either a family member or a lawyer, and obliging them, in most cases, to sign confessions in Hebrew, a language they do not understand. Almost all Palestinian child prisoners are exposed to at least one form of ill-treatment or torture and it is becoming clear to child rights defenders that ill-treatment of children who come in contact with the military detention system appears to be widespread, systematic and institutionalized throughout the process – from the

moment of arrest until the child's prosecution and eventual conviction and sentencing. The testimonies from child prisoners revealed that the common experience of many children is that they are brought to an interrogation centre tied up and blindfolded, sleep deprived, and in a state of fear. Most of them will be subjected to practices that amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, with some cases amounting to torture, according to

the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention against Torture. The Israeli military detention system is designed to control and suppress Palestinians. The existence of two legal systems based on race and nationality – the military detention system applied to Palestinians and the civil system applied to Israeli citizens – highlights the discriminatory nature of the so-called “justice” system implemented by the Israeli authorities in the



Israeli border policemen arrest a Palestinian child during clashes that erupted on Jerusalem Day Damascus Gate, East Jerusalem, May 8, 2013. Jerusalem Day; is an Israeli holiday which celebrates the capture of East Jerusalem from Jordan in the 1967 war. Though Israel annexed East Jerusalem and considers it part of the State of Israel, the move was never recognized internationally and East Jerusalem is still considered occupied Palestinian territory under international law

West Bank. Whilst settler children are processed through Israel's juvenile justice system and generally released on bail, Palestinian children accused of similar offences are prosecuted in military courts which deny children bail.

It is estimated that approximately 10,000 Palestinian children currently live in Jerusalem unrecognised by the Israeli authorities and without any papers or identification. These children are denied basic rights such as access to education and health care, among other things. According to Israeli law, a Palestinian child does not automatically receive an identity card if he or she only has one parent who is a

resident of East Jerusalem. Instead, the parents will receive a "notification of live birth" for their child, and they must then submit a separate request for registration. In order to be eligible to register their child, Palestinians must prove that their centre of life is in Jerusalem.

Israel's closure of the Gaza Strip has continued to have severe consequences for the civilian population and impeded reconstruction of the 17,000 housing units severely damaged or destroyed during the 2014 war. For Palestinians in Gaza, where 43 percent of the population is under the age of 14, Israeli military offensives are hardly new. In 2006,



two Israeli military operations killed 143 children; in 2008 and 2009, 385 children; in 2012, an additional 33 – a total of 561 children killed in six years. According to DCI-Palestine, Ahmad Tawfiq Ahmad Abu Jami', an eight-year-old boy from Khan Younis, survived five previous Israeli military offensives. In July 2014, Ahmad was murdered in an airstrike that killed 25 members of his family, 18 of whom were children.

Palestinian children living in the occupied Palestinian territory have constant feelings of insecurity. When heavily armed Israeli troops invade Palestinian villages in the middle of the night, children's feelings of safety and security are replaced with a sense of fear and isolation. This traumatic experience betrays the guiding principle of acting in the child's best interests as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The plight of Palestinian children is a crisis of particular urgency within the range of human rights violations characterizing life under occupation. It is not enough to understand the current situation and the various policies that shape and determine the life of the Palestinian children today, but we need to work and struggle hard to change it. By changing the situation of Palestinian children, improving their present and giving them hope for the future, we might help finding a peaceful solution to this prolonged occupation and conflict.

Dr. Jad Isaac, director of ARIJ, and myself wrote in the introduction to Kairos Christmas Alert in 2012: "However, there is still a chance to solve this conflict peacefully: if, and only if, the international

community courageously stands for just peace." And as we wrote in the Kairos document, in chapter 6.1: *"Our question to our brothers and sisters in the Churches today is: Are you willing and able to work with us to restore our freedom? Our freedom will be the only sustainable foundation for both Palestinians and Israelis to live in love, justice, peace and security."*

**From Bethlehem where peace was announced, I wish you all a Merry Christmas.**

\* Rifat Kassis is the current Defense for Children International (DCI) General Commissioner in MENA region. He has also served as Former World President of DCI International Executive Council in Geneva and is the Former General Director of DCI Palestine Section. He is a co-author of the Kairos Document and previous General Coordinator of Kairos Palestine.

# First Sunday in Advent

“So Joseph also departed from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to the City of David which is called Bethlehem, in Judea, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be taxed with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child.”

(Luke 2:4-5)

# Prayer on Christmas

H.B. Patriarch Michel Sabbah

*“Let the heaven rejoice, let the earth be glad,  
For unto us a Savior is born. “*

Thank you, O Lord, for coming among us.  
Humbly, you wanted to become our companion on earth,  
The earth rejoiced, and the angels chanted in the sky:  
Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth for all people of peace.  
Thank you, Lord, for coming among us in our land.

Yet, Lord, we are in war.  
Save us from the spirit of war and death,  
Lord, we rejoice in the day of your Nativity,  
We rejoice because you came to live with us.  
To you we raise our prayers. Take away war from your land.

To you O Lord, on this Christmas day, we raise our prayers for our children.  
Grant them peace and fill them with the joy of Christmas, and Peace.  
Lord, keep them away from death prevailing in our land.

Death is part of their life too. They too are killed.  
O Lord, have mercy on them and fill them with your love.  
O Lord, remove war and death from the hearts of their jailors and those who kill them.  
Fill the hearts of those also with the joy of Christmas. Renew their hearts and the face of our land.

O Lord, you said: Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them,  
Do not put death in their life, do not deprive them of love.  
Protect their childhood and innocence. Keep them among us as angels of peace,  
Angels who love and do not hate.

Though war killed them also, destroyed their humanity, and filled their hearts with war, death and hatred.  
No one incites them. No one speaks to them about war.  
Yet their daily life is full with war.

Their daily bread is war.  
In their parent's eyes they see pain and war, a war imposed upon them.  
In the absence of loved ones: a father, a brother or sister, they knew death.

You came to give us and give them love and abundant life,  
Life with light and joy, free of darkness and hate.  
Lord, give us the joy of life and love.  
Give the joy of life and love  
to those who obstinately want us to remain in war, death, under occupation and humiliation.

H.B. Patriarch Michel Sabbah,  
Bethlehem – Christmas  
Prayer in 2016

H.B. Patriarch Michel Sabbah served as the Latin (Roman Catholic) Patriarch of Jerusalem from 1987 to 2008. He made higher studies and obtained a PHD in Arabic philology. After having taught Arabic language, and after several pastoral works, he was appointed President of Bethlehem University. In 1987, Pope John Paul II appointed him Patriarch of Jerusalem. Since 1999, Patriarch Sabbah has been the International President of Pax Christi, a Catholic organization promoting peace. Patriarch Sabbah is a co-author of the Kairos Palestine Document and believes in pluralism and equality in order to preserve the dignity of human beings.

# “Power politics and empire: its brunt on the occupied and oppressed people”

By Sam Bahour

In Palestine, our struggle for freedom and independence continues to this day, but the accumulative pain does not disappear with new deaths and new rounds of destruction. Just the opposite is true. With every new layer of dispossession, with every additional day of Israeli military occupation and with every new form of discrimination against our people, the resolve for more justice – more absolute justice – increases.

Children pay the ultimate price in any conflict. All children pay the price, children on the receiving end of violence just as much as the children on the perpetrating end of violence.

Since I have written for decades about how Israel's prolonged military occupation and endless violations of international-law let alone their blatant disregard for their very own self-interests – would get us to this very point, fresh analysis and fresh vantage points are difficult to find. The only words I can muster now, while the images of the carnage in Gaza (as well as Syria and Iraq) are freshly etched into my mind, are the words that may have come from one of the child victims whose life was cut short by a U.S. supplied Israeli F-16 fighter jet missile.

Below is the imagined letter from the victim:

*Dear Humankind,*

*Hi. My name is Eman; it means faith in Arabic. I doubt you will have seen or remember me; only particular photos make it to your TV screen; those are the ones you will remember. I'm a Palestinian child from Gaza. I was told that many of you are crying for me, but please don't cry for me. I just arrived to this place and wanted to write to let you know that I'm OK. Really, I'm fine. I just miss Mommy.*

*There are a lot of people here, Palestinians, Iraqis, Syrians, and Afghans, just like back home in Gaza. Lots of Palestinian kids too, some have been here for a very long time. Why would you want to cry for only me?*

*My neighbor arrived a few months ago from the Yarmouk Refugee Camp in Syria, he shares a room with someone who came from a different refugee camp in South Lebanon called Sabra who arrived in September 1982. I really don't know what a refugee camp is, even though Mommy told me that's where we live too.*

*Down the road I saw a really older girl, maybe 13 years old. Her name is also Iman. She came here in October 2004. She told me she was walking home from school, not far from my house in Gaza, when an Israeli soldier emptied his magazine into her after she was wounded and laying on the ground. She says he was caught on radio communications saying he was “confirming the kill.” I don't really know what that means, either.*



There are a lot of old people here, too: mommies and daddies. Some have their kids with them and some are alone. I actually saw a sign on one house that said the person arrived from Kafr Qasim in 1948 (that's a long time ago!). I think Kafr Qasim is not far from Gaza, but I really don't know since Daddy never took us on trips far away.

See, I'm in good company, so please, don't cry for me.

I am exactly 8 years and 23 days old; pretty big girl, wouldn't you say? I have one baby sister and two older brothers, or at least Mommy tells me that I have two brothers. I've only seen one; the other, Mommy says, lives in an Israeli prison and has been there for a very long time. Even though I never saw him, I still love him.

It is true that I was born in Gaza, but Grandpa told me when I was very young that our real home is in a place called al-Majdal. He still has the key to his house there. It's all rusted but I think it may still work. I bet you don't know where al-Majdal is located, but you may know a place called Ashkelon. I understand how this can happen, it happens all the time. Those people who made Grandma and Grandpa come to Gaza keep changing the names of everything, even their own names. They not only changed the name of al-Majdal, they changed the name of many cities and villages too. Daddy told me that one Israeli organization called Zochrot goes around and puts signs up with the original names where Palestinian towns and villages were wiped off the face of the earth. This way no one will forget. You really don't need to worry, because here they must have a very big computer, as all the names are what they used to be, nothing is forgotten. So please, don't cry for me.

Let me tell you what happen to me last month. It was the beginning of Ramadan. I love Ramadan because at

the end of the month there is a big feast and Daddy takes us all to the marketplace and we each are allowed to buy two toys. A few days before the end of Ramadan, Mommy takes us to buy new clothes and shoes. This is the happiest time of the year for me and my brother and sister. But this year, Mommy was sad. She stayed sitting in my room crying while she nursed my baby sister. When I asked her why she was crying she said that we would not be able to buy new clothes this year because all the stores were closed. I understood (I am almost 9 years old, you know) so I surprised her. I went to my closet and pulled out my dress from last year's Ramadan and I dusted off the pink paddy leather shoes Mommy bought me on my last birthday and I told her she can stop crying because I don't mind wearing old clothes, even if they don't match. But she cried even more. I think I know why she was crying. The neighbors were playing with fireworks all night and day, even though Ramadan was only in its first week. Usually fireworks happen only at the end of Ramadan and they are scary, especially at night. I'm glad there are no fireworks here.

Anyway, just as I was putting my Eid clothes back in the closet something happened. I felt like I was swimming, but I wasn't. The water did not feel like the bathtub, it was warm and sticky. When I glanced down I think it was red too. The last thing I remember is looking up and seeing the light fixture in my room. It was falling, coming straight at me. I know this is not making sense, because ceilings don't fall, but I swear that was what it looked like.

“Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.” (Psalm 8:2)

Next thing I knew, I was brought to this nice place. I love it here, but I really miss Mommy and my baby sister. I wonder why they did not come here with me. Mom would love it. We have electricity all day and night and the stores never close. Really, I'm not joking. In my home here, I can drink water right out of the faucet any time I'm thirsty. One of my friends told me that when I get a little older we can even go on trips far, far away, even to Jerusalem. I'm not sure where that is, but I'm sure I'll be able to ride a plane for the first time ever to get there.

I want to tell you so much more, but I'll have to write again later because I need to go now. My two newest friends, Hadar and Issa, are bringing their bikes to take turns in giving me a ride. Can you tell Mommy to send me my bike? I also forgot my toothbrush in the rush to get here so I need that too. Tell her not to send me my Eid dress and shoes. I want my baby sister to wear them for Ramadan next year, because I doubt the stores will

*"Yes, we shall return though expelled from our homeland. We shall return to family, home and place of birth in order to recollect memories of happier times, of times before the military incursions that destroyed our homes and transformed us into refugees."*

*Shaima' Abu Turki, 14 years, Hebron*

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open anytime soon. One more thing, please: tell Mommy to empty my piggybank, and send all my savings to The Palestine Children Relief Fund because I'm sure that many of my friends who did not come with me are going to need a lot of help.

After going for the bike ride I'm coming back home to take a nap. I was so happy that I found the CD here with the same exact song that Mommy use to sing to me every night at bedtime. It's this one.

So see, I'm fine. Really, don't cry for me. Cry for yourselves.

Love,  
Eman

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# “Checkpoints, street closures and fragmentation of the community”

*Back-to-school in Tel Rumeida, a closed military zone*

By: DCI



BETHLEHEM, OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES - AUGUST 17, 2012: Palestinian men seeking access to Jerusalem pass through the steel cage of the pedestrian terminal at the Bethlehem checkpoint on the last Friday of Ramadan.

**Ramallah, August 30, 2016**—Palestinian children in Tel Rumeida, Hebron, located in the southern part of the West Bank, returned to school on August 28 with no end to the Israeli-enforced military closure of their neighborhood in sight.

Despite rays of hope last May, when the military

order closing the area lapsed, Tel Rumeida neighborhood has remained functionally closed to non-residents since November 1, 2015. Residents must register in order to enter via checkpoint. Each is assigned an individual number, separate from their standard-issued ID. Closed military zones pose staffing problems for schools and risks for children,

who are forced to live in constant proximity to armed Israeli soldiers.

“Each child should have the chance to succeed at school,” said Ayed Abu Eqtaish, Accountability Program Director at Defense for Children International - Palestine. “Before children in Tel Rumeida even reach their school, their academic potential is threatened by Israeli military installments restricting their movements, and by Israeli settlers who often target them.”

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Cordoba School, located inside Tel Rumeida, has been hit hard by the restrictions. Much of the school’s staff and students must enter through checkpoint 56, which separates the Israeli-controlled H2 section of Hebron from H1. The principal of the Cordoba school, Noora Nasser, told DCIP that she has had to cancel school on many occasions as a result of political unrest and Israeli military and settler activities.

The H2 section alone has approximately 17 internal Israeli military checkpoints, primarily installed next



Israeli soldiers try to arrest a Palestinian boy, as he was taking photographs during a weekly demonstration against the occupation and separation wall in the West Bank village of Al Ma'sara, November 9, 2012. The Israeli separation wall, if built as planned, would cut off the village from its agricultural lands.

to illegal Jewish settlements. The section is home to over 120 blockages and closures, all making school attendance no small feat.

“Children are tremendously affected by the constant harassment of soldiers, and the constant military presence in their neighborhoods,” she said. “Closing the schools and sending the children home obviously impacts their education.”

Even when the school is open, settler violence may prevent children from attending school. Rama H., a 10-year-old student at Cordoba, told DCIP, “Sometimes the settlers stand in our way and won’t let us get into our schools,” she said. “They even throw rocks at us.”

Israel, a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), is legally obligated to uphold Palestinian children’s access to education. Under Article 28(e) of the CRC, Israel is responsible to, “Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.”

Across the West Bank, settler violence and checkpoints, which are often hot spots for intimidation, assaults, or arbitrary arrest, impede Palestinian children’s right to education. From March through May of 2016, DCIP documented three cases where West Bank schools were raided, damaged or disrupted by Israeli military and settler activities. The tense atmosphere takes an emotional toll on children, Abed S., a schoolteacher and resident of Tel Rumeida, told DCIP. “When a child living here is asked to draw something, the first thing he or she draws is a soldier with a gun,” Abed said. “The children living here think that this is normal. It’s the only thing they know, and it’s what they grew up with.”

*“I dream of giving birth to a child who will ask, ‘Mother, what was war?’”*

*Eve Merriam*

\* Defense for Children International – Palestine is an independent, local Palestinian child rights organization dedicated to defending and promoting the rights of children living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. For 25 years, we have investigated, documented and exposed grave human rights violations against children; held Israeli and Palestinian authorities accountable to universal human rights principles; and advocated at the international and national levels to advance access to justice and protection for children. We also provide direct legal aid to children in distress.

“

“We say to our Christian brothers and sisters: This is a time for repentance. Repentance brings us back into the communion of love with everyone who suffers, the prisoners, the wounded, those afflicted with temporary or permanent handicaps, the children who cannot live their childhood and each one who mourns a dear one.”

*Kairos Palestine Document – A Moment of Truth, Chapter 5.2*

”

# Second Sunday in Advent

“She gave birth to her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in strips of cloth, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

(Luke 2:7)

# Born in a Manger

Jean Zaru

## No Room?

Every day in Palestine and throughout the Middle East, we hear about the plight of our children. We worry and we ponder their future, as millions have become children of war and children of a prolonged, cruel military occupation. They are denied education and adequate medical care; they are imprisoned, tortured, homeless and left vulnerable to a host of social problems. Over one-third of the Arab World is under 14 years of age and nearly half of the world's refugees are children.

Our children wonder why we, their parents, cannot protect them. They wonder why such atrocities are allowed to take place. Do Middle Eastern children belong to a different God than the rest of the world?

Clearly, the facts are well known. Indeed, there is an abundance of research and reports issued on the status of Palestinian children. What is needed now is not more information; rather it is the will to respond with meaningful action and to do so with urgency. The world need not produce one more infographic or fact sheet. We cannot wait any longer. Our children cannot wait longer; soon their childhood will be gone. At this juncture, what is required of us is a determined will to take effective action.

Facts should be charged with concern, and with compassion. To know and then to feel moved, must lead to a response. If knowledge does not touch our hearts, if we don't feel connected to these suffering

children, if we don't grieve for their damaged lives, we will have no stake in what the knowledge reveals. There are surely grave consequences to our inaction. We must own up to our responsibility to transform the lives of these vulnerable children. Our own lives, as well, just might be transformed in the process.

Are we tired and weary? Yes, we are! Fatigue saturates our daily living. We are bombarded with one crisis after another. Yet, one thing we can and must do is to find sources of strength to renew our spirits – lest we perish.

## What can we do?

1. Get involved in shaping the character of society. Stop violence against children. Because children feel powerless to end a military occupation which is older than they are, they sometimes fall into becoming part of a destructive pattern of passing violence on from one to another. We must stop this cycle.
2. Demonstrate justice and nonviolence in the church. Raise children in a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere. The church can and must model this, more intentionally and in all they do.
3. Organize institutions to meet immediate human need AND stop militarism. No amount of



A Palestinian youth runs away from a tear gas canister, during the weekly protest against the occupation, in the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh, August 15, 2014.

humanitarian aid will revive Palestine or Syria unless we end militarism, occupation, and the military destruction of infrastructure, lives and livelihoods.

## Salvation

We are told that with Jesus' birth a Savior is born; we are told that Jesus saves. To save or to have salvation is not only a religious slogan. It has concrete meaning in our everyday living. It means "to be wide, to be spacious" – physically, intellectually, and spiritually. Jesus' salvation rescues people from danger and misfortune. This salvation liberates those who are confined, offers freedom

to people to be themselves as children of God – all of whom are created equally. Sometimes we act in exclusive rather than inclusive ways and close ourselves off, rather than open ourselves to liberation. However, no one is free who does not work for the freedom of others.

In our work for salvation, we must always remember the thundering denunciation of injustices by the prophets who could remain silent no longer.

Indeed, if you visit Palestine today, you will hear the cry of every Palestinian man, woman and child. A cry from the heart, a cry demanding justice. The words of the prophets calling for justice could be our own words. They seem to be exact descriptions

of our situations and our lives; and in the wilderness of occupation, oppression and exile, we need more than ever the prophets of justice to proclaim the coming of the Prince of Peace.

## Change makers

It is essential that we continue the struggle on all fronts. To resist is to be human, but only through nonviolence can we bring about transformation. As Palestinians, we are either perceived as victims or as terrorists. Why are we not considered people in a genuine quest of a deserved freedom? Why have we endured repeated tragedies and ongoing trauma?



Sami Arafat (age 4) and his brother Jilal (8) sit near the ruins of their home, in which their 5-year-old sister Runan was killed when 10 Israeli missiles struck this mostly agricultural area in the Al Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza City, December 2, 2012. The children now suffer from frequent panic attacks at night.

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*“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me....Matthew 18:1-5)*

“The right for love and  
 stability  
 The right to be far from  
 Destruction  
 The right to fight the harm  
 of evil  
 The right to a home, like any  
 other child  
 Though homes destroyed,  
 though orphaned  
 Full of resolve they remain  
 Beware , beware of their  
 anger.”

*Takrim Harb, 16 yrs, Yaffa Cultural Center, Balata  
 Refugee Camp, Nablus*

Of course, there is a need to cry, to be sad, to express anger, to condemn. Yet, we should not stop there. We should create alternatives to what currently exists. We must stir our collective imagination, spur new energies and creative powers in such a way that all are inspired to act and build new communities embedded in health and equality. And we must do so urgently, for the sake of our children.

To celebrate the advent of the Prince of Peace, the greatest gift we can give to the children of war and occupation is the creation of an environment that will foster their expression, their learning, growing, and ultimately their sense of empowerment to be change makers.

Let us pray that our efforts will create the conditions that empower children to move from victims to shapers of their own future.

*“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” (Romans 15:13)*

\* Jean Zaru: Presiding Clerk, Ramallah Friends Meeting Quakers. Palestinian Quaker who was a founding member of Sabeel, an ecumenical Palestinian Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem, and was instrumental in the establishment of the Friends International Center in Ramallah.

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

*Kairos Palestine Document – A Moment of Truth, Chapter 4.2.3*

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# Child Registration in East Jerusalem

*“Not registered, non-existent”*

“My name is M. However, I do not know who I am, do not ask me who I a(M) because I really do not know, and I really want to know who I am”.

-Child beneficiary of St.Yves, unable to obtain a status

It is no secret that Israel has put Palestine’s future generation under direct attack. Palestinian children face all types of violations on a daily basis, from killing, to detention, to physical assault and harassment, to impeding their rights to education, health and family, among many others. Whenever the situation of children in Palestine is brought up, the first things that come to mind are violations associated with physical violence. However, we often tend to forget about the Israeli violations that constitute psychological violence, a total destruction of a child’s childhood and future. Israeli child registration policies are at the heart of the issue here, and complete the puzzle of the Israeli systematic discrimination against Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

One of the instruments that the Israeli occupation uses to dilute the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem is maintaining an extremely rigid residency scheme, essentially in family unification and child registration. Simply put: Under Israeli law, the child of an Israeli citizen is entitled to citizenship by virtue of his parentage, but a child of an East Jerusalem resident is denied any such birth right. There exists no automatic right to residency, and an East Jerusalem resident child, even if born and

raised in Jerusalem, cannot “inherit” his parent’s status. While a child born to an Israeli parent will receive Israeli citizenship even if the child never set foot on Israeli soil, the child of an East Jerusalem resident parent will only receive residency if the parent goes through a draining, complicated set of bureaucratic procedures – which can last for years, and, many times, to no avail at the end, meaning: an unregistered child.

Rather than highlighting the grave violations that such Israeli policies constitute under international law, we will focus on demonstrating the devastating effects of an “unregistered” child. It would suffice to present the case of (M), who is a living translation of the Israeli policies in child registration, an example of the human child cost of this systematic discrimination. (M) has turned 21 years old, and is still unable to obtain an ID from the Israeli Ministry of Interior. He was born to a Palestinian mother from the West Bank and a Jerusalemite father.

Caught in this maze of procedures, (M)’s family have applied several times for the Israeli authorities to have (M) registered, and after many years, all his 4 other siblings were able to obtain a residency status, and he remains without one.



Israeli soldiers arrest a child during the weekly demonstration in Kfer Qaddum, a West bank village located east of Qalqiliya, on January 25, 2013. There have been regular demonstrations in Kfer Qaddum since July, 2011, protesting the blocking of the main road east of the village which used to link it to Nablus. The child was later released

“Upon my return home after a harsh, cold and long winter, here I am facing the beauty of tears, tears of joy of my mom flowing like a river filled with hope. She hugged me, she embraced my clothes and filled the city with joy.”

*Ala' 'Ammouri, 17 years, Spaford Center, Shu'fat Refugee Center, Jerusalem*

What this literally means for (M) is that **he lives like a ghost in his city**, that not only his childhood has been robbed, but also any chance for his future: since he has no ID, (M) cannot enroll properly in school, receive health services, try to get any job, or even move freely around the city. He is always terrified that if he walks around, the police may stop him and ask for his ID, and he would have nothing to show, leading to his humiliation and imprisonment, an experience he encountered twice already. (M) loves to play soccer, and cannot even join a soccer team. He cannot obtain the scholarship he was offered to study in Morocco, because he does not have regular school records, and he has no possibility to travel without an ID. Even falling in love is no option for (M) because he feels very insecure about himself and his future, making him an “undesired partner”. In other words, (M), a smart

young man, is destined to be a prisoner in his house, and in a hopeless reality – all because the Israeli Ministry of Interior refused to grant him an ID.

This state of hopelessness leaves (M) extremely resentful. He remains caught in this dim reality, without a glimpse of hope for a change. It made him lose his confidence in his family, because they could not register him; in his society, because it could not protect him from this reality, and essentially in himself. He is anxious and depressed at times, rebellious and aggressive at others. **He lives each day with the knowledge that he may be deported and forever separated from his family.** The envy of his younger resident siblings and the resentment towards his parents is often too much to bear. The question is how many other (M)s do we have and what are the psychological ramifications of an entire generation of children who live with such daily trauma?

\* The Society of St. Yves – Catholic Center for Human Rights has been assisting families attempting to register their children in Jerusalem for the past two decades. St. Yves has represented hundreds of Palestinian families who struggle with the arbitrary procedures of child registration and has succeeded in obtaining status for many of their children.

## Susya's children: Life on the edge of eviction

By: DCI

In 1983, an Israeli settlement - also called Susya - was established on land adjacent to the Palestinian village. That move sparked decades of conflict over ownership of the land, and has seen the Palestinians issued multiple demolition orders for residential and agricultural structures. The most recent legal order from May 2015 has given the Israeli army the green light to demolish what remains of the village.

For Susya's children, uncertainty and instability about the future has an impact on almost every aspect of their life.

"It takes a long time to build the tents and the village," says father-of-seven Mahmoud Mohammad Nawaja. "All of it takes time and energy. Destruction takes seconds; everything is gone in a moment."



Israeli soldiers arrest a Palestinian youth as they invade a village named Al Manatir on land belonging to the West Bank village of Burin, February 2, 2013. The village was established to protest Israeli settlement expansion and settler violence faced by neighboring Palestinian villages.

Mahmoud, whose children range in age from one to 13 years old, lives in a tent set among the main cluster of homes at the center of the village. He sits on a thin mattress on the floor, leaning against the wall surrounded by four of his children.

Now 40, he recalls being evacuated in 1981 when he was 6 years old. The experiences he remembers are the same ones now affecting his own children. "We were threatened with evacuation several times," he says. "The most important thing is to stay on our land. If we are evacuated everything will be destroyed. We will lose everything."

The uncertainty that hangs over the village since the issuing of the demolition order makes life in the makeshift homes all the more challenging and unpredictable. As well as giving the Israeli Civil Administration permission to demolish homes, the order also enables the army to forcibly transfer the population elsewhere. Most of the families have no idea where they will go if the demolitions take place. A grandfather in the village, Ismail Salameh Nawaja, 72, worries how the families will survive if they are evicted. "We gain our living from agriculture here," he says. "If we are evacuated we will lose our livelihoods." Ismail's grandchildren, Dallal, 9, and three-month-old Omar, will face the upheaval that an eviction will bring in terms of losing their home, access to a steady education, and their family's source of income.

These concerns come in addition to the daily challenges faced by Palestinian children living in Susya. Unlike the Israeli children who grow up in the settlement opposite the village, Palestinian children do not have access to basic infrastructure

such as water and electricity networks, or health and education services. An onlooker comparing the communities cannot fail to notice the glaring difference in living standards between the two groups.

This, rights groups and Susya's residents say, is the result of a policy pursued by the Israeli Civil Administration whereby planning permits that would enable the expansion of infrastructure in the village are denied.

The story is a familiar one. Throughout Area C - the areas covering more than 60 percent of the West Bank that lie under full Israeli control - Palestinians are frequently refused permission to build, or to expand upon existing structures. Israeli rights group B'Tselem found in 2013 that 90 percent of all planning requests submitted by Palestinians in Area C were rejected. Between 2007 and 2011, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Civil Administration rejected all plans filed for Palestinian areas without exception.

Meanwhile, Israeli authorities allow the expansion of the settlement's infrastructure, and the Jewish community that neighbors Palestinian Susya continues to grow.

This lack of infrastructure - which so profoundly affects the living standards of Susya's families - has then been cited by Israeli authorities as a reason for the demolition of the village. Human Rights Watch noted that in October 2013, when the Israeli Civil Administration rejected a plan put forward by villagers for the development of Susya, a lack of



appropriate infrastructure was posited as a primary reason for this decision.

When structures are built without planning permission, the Israeli administration issues demolition orders, as in the case of Susya. Demolitions across Area C are frequent, displacing hundreds of people and affecting many more. OCHA found that, in 2014, 496 structures had been demolished across Area C, displacing 969 people, of whom 526 were children.

Children who are affected by demolitions are subject to long periods of instability that can have an impact on education and health.

“Demolitions often happen quickly, suddenly overturning the order and stability of the family home,” says Hassan Faraj, a psychologist working with medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières. “This creates anxiety and stress, which can manifest itself in aggressiveness, particularly in boys. It has a long-term impact on the mental health of children who witness their normal daily routines destroyed.” The children in Susya now live in an environment of instability that many other Palestinian children in Area C will face if past trends of Israeli demolitions continue. For Mahmoud, the repetition of the challenges from his own childhood, now affecting his children, are hard to bear.

“After 35 years, my children and I are facing the same thing again from the same people. Don’t ask me how I imagine my children’s future. The future my father imagined for me failed. I try to imagine a good future in Susya for my children, but I am worried that I too will fail.”

\* Defense for Children International – Palestine is an independent, local Palestinian child rights organization dedicated to defending and promoting the rights of children living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. For 25 years, we have investigated, documented and exposed grave human rights violations against children; held Israeli and Palestinian authorities accountable to universal human rights principles; and advocated at the international and national levels to advance access to justice and protection for children. We also provide direct legal aid to children in distress.

# Third Sunday in Advent

“And in the same area there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And then an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were very afraid. But the angel said to them, “Listen! Do not fear, for I bring you good news of great joy, which will be to all people.”

(Luke 2:8-10)

Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Luke 2: 10-11

Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb

A few weeks ago I was meeting with leaders from the Middle East. Although each one of us came from a different context, nevertheless it was clear that one single theme was in common in all our deliberations: Fear.

In Lebanon, people are fearful that the different parties could not yet agree on the new President; in Iraq, the leaders shared with us the threats they

are confronted with on a regular basis from ISIS; in Syria, people are afraid of the bombings that became a daily reality in their lives; in Egypt, leaders were worried of a growing fundamentalism; and in Palestine, participants were sharing their fear of the Israeli occupation.

One might think that this is a distinct Middle Eastern phenomenon. Yet a closer look shows that



A Palestinian child passes through the midst of an Israeli military patrol in Hebron's old city, West Bank, April 6, 2011. Once a busy marketplace, now many shops have been closed by Israeli military orders.

we are dealing with a global phenomenon: from France to Brussels, from Ferguson to Nigeria. Fear seems to be the mark of our century... even all centuries. The human beings seem to be formed not of clay, but of fear. Fear seems to be the dominant force in the human mind. Almost everywhere you look you see fear.

It is in this human, global and local context that we hear the Gospel: Do not be afraid! I never really understood the power and the truth of this message like in the past weeks. When I met these Middle Eastern leaders sharing the fears, I saw what fear can do to people: it paralyzes them, it leads them to immigration or to fundamentalism or to a life not lived to the fullness. I saw how people in East and West are dying for a life without fear, for peace on earth or paradise here and now. Fear seem to be in control.

Yet at that same meeting was a young Christian woman from Tunisia. She was the only one who did not seem to be fearful, although one thinks that she is the one with a real reason to be afraid for her life. Yet she was sharing the good news, she was focusing on the endless possibilities that are here in the Middle East. In her I saw something I learned here in Palestine in one of the most difficult contexts in the world: that fear is not about reality but about the perspective of that reality.

“Do not be afraid” is not about being courageous, and it doesn’t need the perfect context to live that. Most of the people are wasting their lives waiting for the perfect world to come so that they will know no fear. Yet, the good news heard 2000 years ago here in occupied Palestine, heard here by the

shepherds, the marginalized in that society, opens a new understanding of living without fears although surrounded by fears. In Bethlehem God came to save us from that fear that paralyzes us. He set us free. Fear lost its control over us. Does this mean that we are saved from trouble, from wars, from disease, from worries? Not at all: we will still pass through troubled waters, but when we pass through troubled waters, he will be there with us and for us so that the powerful rivers will not overwhelm us. We will continue to experience fire, yet when we walk through fire the flame shall not consume us. When we go through dark eras, his light will be there guiding us. Because He is there for us and with us we shall not fear. For here is one who is greater than the greatest fear.

\* Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb is the President of Diyar Consortium and of Dar al-Kalima University College in Bethlehem in addition to being the Senior Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem. He has written many theological works that have been translated in languages around the world and is one of the authors of the Kairos Palestine document.

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

*Kairos Palestine Document – A Moment of Truth, Chapter 2.3.4*

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## Months after night arrest, two children say the trauma isn't over

By: DCI

**Ramallah, July 6, 2016** —Two Palestinian children report that the lingering psychological effects of Israeli military night arrests are interfering with their daily lives, causing changes in sleep, a loss of interest in previous activities, feelings of insecurity, and reduced movement.

Ahmad A., 16, was arrested at 3:30 a.m. in Beit Ummar, near Hebron, four months ago. A few months earlier, in January, Israeli soldiers arrested 17-year-old Ahmad Q. also at 3:30 a.m., from his home in Nablus. Although months have passed and both have since been released, they told Defense for Children International – Palestine that their sleep, behaviors, and personalities were altered by the experience.

Many rights groups have advocated for an end to the practice of night arrest because of its potential to cause long-term harm to children. Despite these efforts, night arrests remain a frequent feature of Israel's military arrest of West Bank children, making up 41.7 percent of cases documented by DCIP between 2012 and 2015.

When compounded with other forms of ill-treatment such as blindfolding, physical abuse, and long interrogations without the presence of a lawyer or family member, night arrests can cause trauma. If untreated in the initial period following the trauma, during which the child may be imprisoned

or otherwise detained, the psychological symptoms may persist even into adulthood.

Sleep disturbances are one common psychological symptom reported by Palestinian children previously arrested at night, a time when children should be able to feel safe in their beds. "I wait until 3:30 a.m., the same time I was arrested, to go to sleep," Ahmad A. told DCIP.

Ahmad Q. also told DCIP he now has trouble sleeping and often lies awake until the early morning prayers. "I fall asleep when the soldiers leave my village, but as soon as I hear a small noise, I think it's them."

A loss of interest in previous activities can also be a sign of unresolved trauma, as formerly detained children struggle to put their lives back together upon release. Before the night Israeli soldiers arrested him, Ahmad Q.'s favorite activity was playing soccer, but since his release from detention, he told DCIP that he no longer enjoys the game. "I lost interest in many things," he said.

Ahmad A.'s mother, Haya, said her son used to be well known for his gregarious personality around the village. After Israeli soldiers arrested and detained him, Haya told DCIP that her son stopped going outside and no longer talks to many people.

"When the child is first released, they feel like a



Police arrest a Palestinian youth during a symbolic funeral for Abdelrahman Shaludi, who killed a Jewish baby and injured six others in Jerusalem after he rammed his vehicle into pedestrians at the tram station, in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan, October 26, 2014. Shaludi died of his injuries after he was shot and wounded by police as he tried to flee the scene. Israeli police were still holding his body.

hero,” Hassan Faraj, clinical psychologist at the Palestinian Counseling Center (PCC), told DCIP. “However, as time passes, everyone forgets about the child, and they often become detached and alone.”

Ahmad Q. said his whole town welcomed him with open arms when he was first released from prison. “I felt so loved, all of my friends and family were waiting for me,” he said. “Now, most of the time I sit in my room and don’t go out.”

Children sometimes self-restrict their movements after arrest, fearing interactions with soldiers. Ahmad Q. told DCIP he is too afraid to visit his

grandfather, who lives in the neighboring town. “I’m scared of being anywhere near the soldiers,” he said. Ahmad A. also said fear has motivated his reduced movements. “I never leave my village,” Ahmad A. told DCIP. “I always try to avoid the soldiers.”

Counseling may help a child cope with their experience of night arrest and mitigate some of the negative psychological side-effects. According to Murad Amro, a clinical psychologist with PCC, treatment is most effective when a child receives help “within the first hours and first days.” Ahmad A. received counseling after his release, and said it has helped him manage his feelings, but he still suffers from multiple psychological symptoms.

The Palestinian Counseling Center regularly reaches out to children who underwent military night arrests through home visits. “Many of these children don’t know that they need any therapy,” Faraj said. “We help them by rebuilding their confidence through play therapy, stories, and activities.”

In 2013, a UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) report, *Children in Israeli Military Detention Observations and Recommendations*, found “widespread, systematic, and institutionalized” ill-treatment in the Israeli military detention system. It offered 38 specific recommendations to address the abuse, including that “[a]ll arrests of children should be conducted during daylight, notwithstanding exceptional and grave situations.”

UNICEF has engaged in a dialogue with Israeli authorities since releasing the report to implement the recommendations.

In February 2014, Israeli military authorities implemented a new pilot program in parts of the West Bank involving the use of written summonses as an alternative to night arrests. Despite general compliance with summonses, which are often provided via phone or delivered at night, they have not improved the situation for Palestinian child detainees. Once in Israeli military custody, Palestinian children still experience physical violence and other forms of ill-treatment, according to DCIP documentation.

In the first half of 2016, night arrests have shown no sign of slackening, with 46.6 percent of child detention cases documented by DCIP involving the

practice.

Night arrests violate Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration guiding a state’s treatment of any child. Arrest of children should be a last resort and children should be presumed innocent, informed promptly and directly of charges against him or her, and have prompt access to legal assistance and to be accompanied by their parents during questioning.

“If I had been notified of my arrest ahead of time instead of being taken from my home, I would have been prepared for it,” Ahmad A. said. “I never knew they were coming for me. I never thought they would take me from my home.”

\* Defense for Children International – Palestine is an independent, local Palestinian child rights organization dedicated to defending and promoting the rights of children living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. For 25 years, we have investigated, documented and exposed grave human rights violations against children; held Israeli and Palestinian authorities accountable to universal human rights principles; and advocated at the international and national levels to advance access to justice and protection for children. We also provide direct legal aid to children in distress.



"It is not how he was killed but the way he said goodbye....

We exploded with sadness for his painful loss... He left us during the Holy month of Ramadan and was the flicker that ignited our revolt (Intifada). He became the legend in every heart in Shu'fat and in Palestine... his story will be narrated by all tongues decorated by his name 'Muhammad Abu Khdeir'... This story we shall never forget. Though we suffer the extensive fears and anxiety for our children... we shall not relinquish our rights and our cause."

*Ala' 'Ammouri, 17 years, Spaford Center, Shu'fat Refugee Center, Jerusalem*

# Fourth Sunday in Advent

“Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.”

(Matthew 2:13)

## *A PRAYER FOR REFUGEES:*

*Almighty and merciful God,  
whose Son became a refugee  
and had no place to call his own;  
look with mercy on those who today  
are fleeing from danger,  
homeless and hungry.*

*Bless those who work to bring them relief;  
inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts;  
and guide the nations of the world towards that day  
when all will rejoice in your Kingdom of justice and of peace;  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

## Forty-one Palestinian children killed as period of violence enters sixth month

By: DCI

**Ramallah, March 3, 2016**—Three Palestinian cousins, all teenagers, from the West Bank village of Halhul, near Hebron, set out on February 5 to throw stones at vehicles on a nearby main road used by Jewish settlers. Israeli troops patrolling the area spotted them. One cousin escaped, another was caught, and the third died of multiple gunshot

wounds to the upper body.

“My cousins and I did not throw any stones and did not make any move that showed we were about to do so,” Wajdi Yousef Mohammad Saada, 16, told Defense for Children International – Palestine. Wajdi heard two gunshots and saw his cousin, Haitham, 14, fall to the ground. “A soldier then



A Palestinian youth is arrested by Israeli border police during a demonstration marking Land Day around the old city in East Jerusalem on March 29, 2014. Land Day is held every year to mark the deaths of six Palestinians protesters at the hands of Israeli police and troops during mass demonstrations on March 30, 1976, against plans to confiscate Arab land in Galilee.

jumped on me, punched me hard on my face, knocked me down to the ground, and ordered me to take off my shirt,” Wajdi said. “I did so while I was looking at Haitham.”

Palestinian doctors, who examined Haitham’s body later that day, told DCIP that one of the bullets struck his back, pierced through his lungs and chest, and exited from his mouth, killing him instantly. Wajdi, on the other hand, was blindfolded and his hands were tied tightly behind his back with a single plastic cord. The soldiers transferred him first to a military base near the Jewish-only Karmeit Zzur settlement, where he stayed for several hours, then to a police station for interrogation.

“They pulled me out and sat me down in a yard for about one and a half hours,” Wajdi said. “They never spoke with me, but they kept me out there in the cold weather, tied and blindfolded.”

At half past midnight, the soldiers brought Wajdi in for interrogation. “The interrogator asked me through an interpreter what I was doing there in that area and I told him, ‘Nothing,’” Wajdi told DCIP. “So, he got up, grabbed my head, banged it against the wall, slapped me hard on my face, and pushed me out of the room.”

An hour later, the interrogator brought Wajdi back into the room. He showed Wajdi a video of him and his cousins near the main road. Wajdi told DCIP it did not show them throwing stones.

The interrogator wanted Wajdi to confess that Haitham, his cousin, was carrying a firebomb when he was shot dead. “I told him that was not true,”

Wajdi said. “He shouted at me, pounded the table, and told me to say we were carrying Molotov cocktails.” The interrogator typed up Wajdi’s statement in Hebrew, refused to translate it for him, and forced him to sign it.

A policeman escorted Wajdi out of the room and untied his hands for the first time in nearly 11 hours. Soldiers transferred him to Etzion detention center, where he spent the night, and the next day took him to Ofer prison.

Both Haitham and Wajdi are casualties of a period of heightened tensions that has entered its sixth month.

Forty-one Palestinian children from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip have been killed since October as a direct result of intensified violence, all except one at the hands of Israeli forces. Of this number, 31 allegedly carried out knife or gun attacks. A further 130 Palestinian adults were shot dead, according to media reports. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported more than 2,177 Palestinian children from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, sustained injuries.

Palestinian attackers have killed at least 28 Israelis during the same period.

In response to escalating violence, Israeli forces appear to be implementing a ‘shoot-to-kill’ policy, which in some incidents may amount to extrajudicial killings. One such incident took place on February 26, when Israeli soldiers shot dead Mahmoud Mohammad Shaalan, a 16-year-old who held U.S.

citizenship, as he allegedly attempted to stab them at a military checkpoint near Beit El settlement, north of the West Bank city of Ramallah.

A witness waiting to cross the checkpoint in his car told DCIP that he saw the teenager approach the soldiers and he did not appear to be carrying a weapon in his hands. He then heard three gunshots and decided to turn his car around, at which point he saw a soldier fire two shots at Mahmoud while he was already on the ground. A doctor at the Palestine Medical Complex in Ramallah confirmed that Mahmoud sustained three gunshot wounds to the chest and two to the hand.

In a press briefing on Monday, U.S. State Department spokesperson John Kirby said, “We’ve asked the Israelis for more information, and it’s our expectation that we’ll get that,” adding, “we certainly are tracking this and watching it closely.”

Accountability for shootings by Israeli forces is extremely rare. Israeli authorities have rejected opening full and transparent investigations into the recent incidents.

International law requires that intentional lethal force be used only when absolutely unavoidable. Where individuals allegedly carry out a criminal act, they should be apprehended in accordance with international law and afforded due process of law.

Most children arrested, however, are denied their basic rights from that moment through sentencing. Despite the physical abuse that Wajdi endured, his coercive interrogation, his lack of access to counsel, and the fact he was forced to sign a statement he

*“Is it only me or does every Palestinian child feel so alone? There is an enemy who chases me, who wants to kill me. I did not do anything. I run, I am maddeningly confused and lost from defeat. Why does he want to kill me. I just run. No, you will not get me, we shall regain our life, we shall sustain our steadfastness ‘sumud’ (in Arabic), the people’s voice is strong.”*

*I shall rebel until he leaves the homeland he stole from me by the force of arms. I will rebel until he stops chasing me on my land, me and every other child.”*

*Amina Jamal Zaid, 16 year, from Jalazon Refugee Camp, near Ramallah*

did not understand, Israeli military prosecutors still filed charges against him on February 14.

Wajdi remains incarcerated at Ofer prison awaiting the conclusion of his military trial.

Since November, the number of Palestinian children in Israeli prisons has skyrocketed to the highest it has been in seven years. The Israel Prison Service's latest data shows that it has custody over 406 Palestinian children.

**CORRECTION:** *The article was amended to reflect that one of the 41 Palestinian children killed since October as a direct result of intensified violence was from the Gaza Strip. Marwan Hashem Barbakh, 10, died of a single gunshot wound to the chest on October 10, when Israeli soldiers used lethal force to quash a protest near Gaza's border with Israel, sparked by tensions over Palestinian access to the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem's Old City.*

\* Defense for Children International – Palestine is an independent, local Palestinian child rights organization dedicated to defending and promoting the rights of children living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. For 25 years, we have investigated, documented and exposed grave human rights violations against children; held Israeli and Palestinian authorities accountable to universal human rights principles; and advocated at the international and national levels to advance access to justice and protection for children. We also provide direct legal aid to children in distress.

*“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”*

— Frederick Douglass,  
abolitionist and statesman

## How will Gaza's children carry their scars into adulthood?

By: DCI

“The children who survive Operation Protective Edge will emerge to find their previous lives almost unrecognizable, as the families, schools, hospitals and mosques that framed their world are systematically destroyed,” writes Olivia Watson\* in +972 Magazine.

Ramallah, August 5, 2014 - Israel's ground invasion of the Gaza Strip has seen the child death toll climb so rapidly – at the rate of one child killed every hour – that the exact circumstances of each killing are now

barely mentioned in reports. But lists of fatalities, 329 and rising, obscure the reality that awaits Palestinian children in Gaza. Those who survive will emerge to find their previous lives almost unrecognizable, as the families, schools, hospitals and mosques that framed their world are systematically destroyed.

Ahmad Tawfiq Ahmad Abu Jami', an 8-year-old boy from Khan Younis, lived through five previous Israeli



A member of the Jaradat family stands in the remains of his home demolished by Israeli authorities in the Al Tur neighborhood of East Jerusalem, April 24, 2013. Authorities demolished an addition built for the children of the 45-member Jaradat family. Palestinians are routinely denied permission to build or add to their homes in East Jerusalem as part of a municipal policy designed to maintain a wide Jewish majority in Jerusalem's population. Israeli forces demolished two other houses in the Al Tur neighborhood on the same day.

military offensives in the Gaza Strip. In 2006, two Israeli military operations claimed the lives of 143 children; in 2008 and 2009, two more assaults killed 385; in 2012, yet another led to 33 more deaths. A total of 561 children killed in six years, according to evidence collected by Defense for Children International Palestine. After surviving five attacks, Ahmad did not survive the most recent one: He died in an airstrike that killed 25 members of his family, 18 of whom were children.

Had he survived, he would have become one of thousands more suffering from the effects of the bombardment. More than 326,000 children, according to the latest UN figures, need immediate, specialized psycho-social support after experiencing the deaths of family members, injury or homelessness. This figure includes children fleeing indiscriminate attacks on residential buildings, driven to UN refugee shelters where intense overcrowding exposes them to potential abuse, exploitation and violence. More than 260,000 people – or 15 percent of the total population of Gaza – are taking shelter in UNRWA schools.

There is no safe space now for children in Gaza. Those who escape death the first time around find in their refuges more death and destruction. Hospitals and schools, theoretically protected from military attack under international law, are targeted indiscriminately by the Israeli military, in attacks described by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights as tantamount to war crimes.

In Beit Hanoun, an UNRWA school was directly targeted by the Israeli military, killing 15 people, most of whom were women and children. Reports

included a mother and her one-year-old among the dead. When the school was hit, the children and their families who had fled there were preparing to evacuate again, with UN staff trying to coordinate a window with the Israeli army for the removal of civilians. The request was never granted.

Children recovering from initial attacks are then subjected to multiple ordeals, such as two-year-old Ibrahim al-Sheikh Omar, who died when shrapnel from an airstrike hit him as he lay recovering from a previous injury in the intensive care unit at Muhammad al-Durra Hospital.

Those who do survive these attacks will continue to pay the price for many years. Amputees like Mohammad Baroud, 12, who lost both his feet in an explosion that killed 11 of his neighbors, will require lifelong medical care and support. The damage wrought on Gaza's infrastructure is so profound that children needing treatment will be forced to wait while hospitals are repaired and re-equipped with medical supplies.

For the children who manage to escape physical injury, the psychological effects of this latest operation will be hidden, but severe and resounding. Many have lost one or both parents, or other family members. Some have lost their entire extended families. All have experienced violence, fear and instability at close quarters.

As children reel from the onslaught on Gaza, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has accused Hamas of "using telegenically dead Palestinians for their cause," putting the responsibility for every child death squarely on Palestinian shoulders. Meanwhile, the Israeli authorities block public

discussion of the deaths of Gaza's children.

For a generation of young Palestinians, rhetoric of this kind will create a mindset that can only serve to move the region further away from a lasting peace. Those in Gaza who are children now will take their scars into adulthood, potentially shaping the trajectory of the conflict in years to come.

For now, international efforts are rightly focused on an immediate end to the violence. Those who understand the impact of Operation Protective Edge on the lives of Palestinian children, however, will strive for more: for an end to Israel's ongoing blockade of the Gaza Strip; for a reappraisal of the impunity offered to the Israeli government that allows these massacres to take place. Only then will Gaza's children be able to pick up the pieces, for the sixth time.

\* Defense for Children International – Palestine is an independent, local Palestinian child rights organization dedicated to defending and promoting the rights of children living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. For 25 years, we have investigated, documented and exposed grave human rights violations against children; held Israeli and Palestinian authorities accountable to universal human rights principles; and advocated at the international and national levels to advance access to justice and protection for children. We also provide



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

*Kairos Palestine Document – A Moment of Truth, Chapter 10*

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# CHRISTMAS DAY

“Good news from heaven the angels bring,  
Glad tidings to the earth they sing:  
To us this day a child is given,  
To crown us with the joy of heaven.”

~ Martin Luther

# Overcoming the World with Love by Sharing the Peace of Christ

John de Gruchy

Christ stands before us, and peace is his gift,  
Peace as the day begins,  
Peace in the heat of noon,  
Peace as the light wanes,  
his peace at all times and in all places.

That gift of God's peace, the peace we share  
in the Eucharist, was born in Bethlehem. It was  
there that the angels first sang "Glory to God in  
the highest and peace to all of goodwill on earth."

As you share the gift of peace on Christmas  
Day in Bethlehem, the whole church that  
is truly of goodwill stands in solidarity with  
you. We stand inside that frightful wall built  
to imprison you, crush your spirit, and suck  
away your life-blood. But as we embrace you  
and you embrace us with Christ's gift, the gift  
you first shared with the world, we continue  
to give thanks for your witness to that peace  
which passes all understanding.

Peace is the outworking of God's love in  
overcoming evil. So sharing the gift of peace  
is an act of love because in doing so we  
share God's gift of himself for the salvation  
of the world. Jesus said: "Blessed are the  
peacemakers, for they are the children of



God.” Isn’t it strange that the principalities and powers of this world, not least those that surround and hem you in, cannot tolerate God’s peacemakers? They pursue war and respond violently to peacemakers, arresting and imprisoning them instead of saluting their courage and the truth for which they stand. It has always been so. It happened to the Prince of Peace.

God’s peace is inseparable from God’s justice, for God’s justice is the outworking of his love in the life of the world, in the public spaces we inhabit. There is no peace without justice. That is how love overcomes evil. In doing what is right and good, in standing for the truth, evil takes flight though never without a fight. Evil cannot tolerate those who make peace. Nothing reveals evil more starkly for what it is than its reaction to love in action in sharing peace. But we can do no other than witness to the peace of Christ as we embrace each other and even the enemy in the love of God.

Religion, all religion, not just Christianity, should be an instrument of peace. But there is good religion and bad religion. This is not saying that some faith traditions are good and others bad, but rather that we find good and bad religion within every faith, whether it is Christianity, Judaism, Islam or any other. Religion goes bad when it turns its back on God’s gift of peace, spreads hatred of others, and sanctions violence. All of us who are heirs of Abraham are guilty of doing this. But the children of Abraham know that this is a denial of the God of Abraham. Together we, above all others, should be the agents of God’s peace. This is our calling wherever we live and work. And that is why dialogue between religious faith communities and

traditions is essential. If we pray for the peace of Jerusalem, as we must, we have to work together for God’s justice and human dignity in order that God’s gift of peace may become a reality for all God’s people in the Holy Land – a land which is holy for Christians precisely because God shared his peace so wonderfully and dramatically that first Christmas in Bethlehem.

In standing in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Bethlehem as we all celebrate Christmas, we in South Africa feel a special bond with you. Coming from our own past of the struggle for peace and justice against the powers of racism and injustice, we have some sense of the struggle in which you are engaged. The global Kairos movement which has arisen out of the South African Kairos Document and your own Kairos Palestine Document speaks profoundly and eloquently to this struggle. But it is nothing more than a restatement of the good news that was first proclaimed by the angels hovering over Bethlehem. That first Christmas was God’s kairos. For it was in the “fullness of time (kairos) that God sent his Son” (Galatian 4:4) in order that we might together become his children. This, as Paul says, was the promise given to Abraham. The Kairos Documents are not saying anything new. They are proclaiming something that was there from the beginning of our faith journey. It is God’s will that we should live in peace and pursue justice in order to embrace God’s gift of reconciliation both with God and with each other. That is our testimony this Christmas as it has been from the beginning.

Nowhere is this vision of what this peace means better expressed than in the Old Testament vision

of the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25). It is also the vision of the great prophets who spoke God's truth to power in their own day. And it is this vision which Christ came to fulfil as he declared that Sabbath day in Nazareth:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the  
captives and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”  
(Luke 4:18-19)

This is why Jesus was born in Bethlehem. This is the message of the Year of Jubilee which speaks so directly and clearly to your situation. This is the peace of Christ in which love overcomes hatred and violence. May this coming year be one in which you know the favour of the Lord.

\* John de Gruchy is a renowned Scholar, theologian and philosopher from South Africa. Born in 1939, he is an ordained minister with a doctorate in theology and another in social sciences and earned a number of honorary doctorates. He has lectured in many countries across the world and authored or edited more than thirty books with emphasis on contextual theology and Christian humanism.



## Let us be real this Christmas

By: Hind Khoury, General Secretary, Kairos Palestine

As we begin the Advent celebrations let us turn our eyes to realities of life at the place where Christianity was born. 2000 years ago, Bethlehem and Palestine suffered a harsh and unjust Roman military occupation. Today, Palestinians suffer the brunt of a 50 year-long Israeli military occupation. This situation is doubly painful as we also watch the destructive and ravaging interest-driven warfare in the region.

Christian Palestinians are calling on all people of faith to be real this Christmas. The Christmas season is not all peace and joy. Throughout the Christmas season runs a current of suffering that calls on all of us people of faith to identify with the dispossessed and the families of those unjustly deprived of life.

**For the Christmas Alert 2016**, Kairos Palestine reminds us of the plight of Palestinian children. It provides theological reflections, prayers, reports, articles and stories to guide deeper and more meaningful celebrations. Inspired by the real Christmas story, the themes cover current conditions of dispossession, homelessness, fear, poverty and exile suffered by our children. We expose the dire consequences on children of occupation measures such as the growing poverty and hopelessness due to the destruction of the Palestinian economy, the control of natural resources and mobility of goods and people, the expropriation of land and water, the construction of a Separation Wall in our midst, the incarceration

## Christmas Alert 2016

of men, women and children for resisting prolonged oppression, extra-judicial killings and the pain of a prolonged exile.

In this context we reiterate our request to the Global Church and people of faith around the world to respond through action to our Kairos Palestine ([www.kairospalestine.ps](http://www.kairospalestine.ps)) document: 'Come and See' and speak to Palestinian Christians; let 'the good news' be good to all and critically review theologies that support oppression and occupation; and support creative and nonviolent resistance with love as its logic to preserve the humanity of oppressed and oppressor. We also call on all our brothers and sisters to:

- Demand that the Israeli authorities immediately **stop all human rights violations against Palestinians and especially the use of administrative detention orders against Palestinian children and enshrine this prohibition in law;**
- **Call on the Israeli forces to stop the extra-judicial killings and the use of excessive force** in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, against Palestinians.
- Call on the **international community to uphold its obligations** delineated in international law, including all UN resolutions on the matter, hold Israel accountable for its violations and provide international protection to Palestinians suffering the brunt of occupation.
- Join the No Way to Treat a Child Campaign at ([nwttac.dci-palestine.org](http://nwttac.dci-palestine.org)).

May this coming Christmas bring to all great blessings of joy, goodwill and peace.

# 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](http://www.kairospalestine.ps)