



Christmas Alert
2021

Kairos Palestine Christmas Alert 2021

“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 angels 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 2:1-2:1, NIV)

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In This Place, Among Us, the Word Became Flesh

Here the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

John 1:14

Fr. Dr. Jamal Daibes

In a visit to the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth as a teenager, the priest who guided us pointed to the grotto of the annunciation and said: "It is here that, for the first time in human history, the Son of God became one of us." What a great love made him become human! Like us! And what an honor for us as humans and as Palestinians.

Throughout history, theologians have discussed the question, "Why did the Word of God become flesh?" In the words of St Augustine, *Cur Deus homo?* – "Why did God become man?" He who is «the image of the invisible God» (Colossians 1:15) became a human being. God created us in God's own image and likeness (Genesis 1:27) and, in doing so, God gave us dignity and raised us above all other creatures.

By the incarnation, the Word of God assumed our human nature and raised it up to a divine dignity. The Son of God has united himself with every man and woman. He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind, acted by human choice, and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin.



It took humankind centuries to realize that all of us have equal dignity and rights, created by the same God regardless of sex, color, religion or ethnicity. With his incarnation and birth in the grotto of Bethlehem, Jesus gave priority to the poor and the oppressed. He himself was born poor, lived under the Roman military occupation, and defended the oppressed.

For us Palestinians, the celebration of Christmas is a reminder that Jesus became one of us: as Palestinian, he chose our land and our culture; oppressed, he suffered with us; human, he imparted dignity and pride. We are still denied our national and human rights. We live under military occupation. We are treated as subhuman. The discrimination against the Palestinians, or any group of people, is in contradiction with the spirit of Christmas.

Christmas, the birth of Jesus, reminds us that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, that all are loved by God – so loved by God that God became one of us – and that our basic human rights and freedom come from God. Living in the spirit of Christmas means to see the other as God sees them, and to love them as God loves them. To know that we are part of the human family, that the Word of God became flesh for us, too.



Fr. Jamal was born in the Christian Palestinian village of Zababdeh (Jenin). One of the authors of the Kairos Palestine document, he serves in the position of Patriarchal Vicar in Jordan. He was ordained at the Latin Patriarchate Seminary in 1988, and received his PhD in Dogmatic Theology in 1998. Among the many posts he has held, he served as Rector of the Latin Patriarchate Seminary (Beit Jala) from 2013-2017, Parish priest of the Holy Family Catholic Church in Ramallah from 2017-2021, General director of the Latin Patriarchate schools in Palestine, and general secretary of the Christian Educational Institutions in Palestine (2019-2021).

First Sunday in Advent

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

Kairos Palestine Document – A Moment of Truth, Chapter 2.1

Palestinian Life in Jerusalem

Suma Qawasmi

Persons around the world have read reports about and witnessed scenes of turmoil in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, a very strategic area in Jerusalem.

Sheikh Jarrah is considered a link between the west and east sides of Jerusalem. It is in close proximity to the Old City of Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which places it at the highest risk of annexation by the Israelis. It has been a target for many settlers and their organizations since 1971. They have managed to confiscate four residential homes, uprooting the families that resided in those homes, and throwing them out! There are plans to forcibly remove many more families.

The Othman bin Affan Street in Sheikh Jarrah Area has faced years of Israeli suppression and violations toward the people that live down this street. Since May 2, a lot has gone



on in relation to the court orders on the cases of the houses that are on this particular street. Four have received court orders of eviction. As a result, youth groups and other groups from all over Palestine have been coming to the street to show solidarity and support. All the supporters and the residents are unarmed and peacefully. They demonstrate by chanting and singing to have their voices reach the courts and the international community. Their presence, their voices express that it is merely a basic right for each human to live with dignity in his or her home without having to worry about losing that home, only to be displaced then replaced by Jewish settlers who, coming from Russia, the United States and other countries, have no connection whatsoever to the land!

The Israeli settlers –always armed – and the Israeli soldiers exercise various means of abuse to divide and stop the demonstrators: tear gas and sound grenades, rubber bullets, spraying of skunk water (sewage water that is mixed with harsh chemicals burning the skin and affecting the pulmonary system), pepper spray, and other acts of violence against the peaceful demonstrators. There came a time where the street was blocked from all of its four entrances by the soldiers. They wouldn't allow any supporters in or even relatives of the residents to visit. Even the residents themselves had to verify to the soldiers that they lived here by showing their IDs every time passed, an inhumane and barbaric act. Be reminded that the residents of the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood were forcibly displaced from their homes in Haifa, Jaffa, Acre, west Jerusalem and other cities of historic Palestine in 1948. We do not want to be ethnically cleansed and uprooted from our land and our beloved city Jerusalem.



Suma Qawasmi, a Muslim Palestinian with a Jordanian nationality and an Israeli ID, was born in Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem. Ms. Qawasmi is a senior program manager at Kids4Peace International. She has a BA in English Literature, double Minors in Business and Translation from Birzeit University, and a Diploma in Education.

Palestinian Life Without an Identity Card;

The story of Yasmine Awad

I am 25 years old. I have a law degree.

And I am one of many “stateless” people living in Palestine.

Why? My parents carry different identification cards. Born in Jerusalem, my father carries the blue Jerusalem ID (Israeli) because of his mother’s status as an Arab citizen of Israel. My mother has a green ID (Palestinian), having been born in the West Bank. Due to complications, my mother was in Bethlehem, the West Bank, when I was born. At my birth, I was issued an ID number; my parents were told that I would receive an official Jerusalem ID when I turned 16.

Not much thought was given to my ID card until my parents planned a family trip to Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. I went with my father to Israel’s Ministry of Interior to get the necessary documents for travelling. That’s when I heard of the shocking news. I had been withdrawn from Israel’s system without ever receiving an official notification.

Excited to travel for the first time, I was devastated. How would I tell my mother? I wanted to be strong for my family. I didn’t want to show my disappointment to my friends. On the outside, I took the news well. But at age 14, I was depressed. I told my mother this was only a temporary problem, that the lawyer would fix it. I encouraged my family to travel no matter what, in order not to lose the fees paid for tickets and hotels. And while I unpacked my bags, I didn’t put my clothes away hoping that any minute

I might get a call that I could pick up my ID card. That call never came. I stayed with my grandmother while my family travelled.

Lawyers that my parents hired promised that I would receive my ID soon. Two years later, my school planned a trip to Switzerland. But when my school mates left on the trip, I still didn't have my ID. I still don't. So, I am only one of thousands of "stateless people" living in Palestine. I have lost hope of ever leaving my hometown. My parents continue to spend their savings on lawyers fighting for my citizenship, for a normal life.

Think of anything for which you need an ID – getting a driver's license, opening a bank account, applying for a credit card, getting health insurance, owning a home, traveling abroad. I can't travel to complete my Master's degree. I can't think about having children, because without my citizenship my kids would end up like me: stateless.

I studied law to become a lawyer and defend people's rights. I work in an attorney's office. I hope to pass the Palestinian bar. May the time come when I can successfully argue my case to obtain a residency ID card and live in my city Jerusalem.



Yasmine Awad, a Christian living in the West Bank, has been stuck in her hometown for 25 years. Having no citizenship, she is denied many basic human rights.

A Prayer for Palestinians in Jerusalem

Bishop Munib Younan

In the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The grace that comes through our Lord Jesus Christ, the love that is of God the Father, and the fellowship that is ours in the Holy Spirit be with you and remain in you from now till eternity. Amen.

“Because there was no guest room available for them.” Luke 2:6b

When the Roman occupation authorities published a decree that everyone should be registered – the decree was issued by Caesar Augustus – everyone rushed to register, each to his own city, to preserve their legal status. Belonging to the house and lineage of David, the Holy Family, Joseph and Virgin Mary who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child, traveled to Bethlehem and searched for a place to give birth. They arrived after an exhausting journey, but could not find a room in their own town.

Today, there is a law titled “Family Reunification Law” passed by the Israeli Knesset in 2003. The law is renewed every six months. This law has a clear and direct impact on the local residents. When a man or woman from Jerusalem chooses to be married to someone from the West Bank, the couple cannot live together in Jerusalem unless they obtain a temporary permit, under the condition that the Jerusalemite has maintained his or her center of life within the borders of Jerusalem for the previous seven years. Then, if the couple obtains an authorization of family reunification with the spouse who is from the West Bank, the process is usually long, often extending over several years.

This law adversely affects all Palestinians. It has a direct impact on Christian Palestinians from Jerusalem due to their shrinking numbers and the fact that their natural environment is in the West Bank. If matters become more complicated and the couple cannot obtain a temporary permit or a family reunification – if “they cannot find a place in their own home” – they might be forced to emigrate to another country where they can live together without legal or financial pressures.



Therefore, we pray to You, our Lord, the Child of the Manger. May You open the eyes of the concerned authorities to change this law against the indigenous people so that the Jerusalemite family can enjoy a decent life of holy matrimony, living in dignity as a blessed family in their Jerusalem, in their homeland. We pray to You, O Child of the Manger, to look with compassion to the fear of those families who live under direct legal threat, who go to the official offices, fearful, panicking over the idea of the potential loss of their permanent residency rights in their hometown of Jerusalem.

We pray for those boys and girls who are growing up without a birth certificate or any document that proves that they exist and are present in their own country, suffering from ongoing fear for their future. We pray to You Our Lord, from Your birthplace, seeking peace that is based on justice. We are confident that You are listening to those families who want a place for them in the house.

***May You, Our Lord, Our Redeemer Jesus Christ accept our prayers.
Amen.***



Rev. Dr. Munib Younan is Bishop Emeritus of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, and President Emeritus of the International Religions for Peace Foundation.

Second Sunday in Advent

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

Kairos Palestine Document – A Moment of Truth, Chapter 1.4

Palestinian Life in Gaza Strip

Deteriorating humanitarian
conditions and a lack of accountability

Issam Younis

Gaza Strip is considered the largest open prison on earth, subjected for the last 14 years to a severe siege by Israeli occupation forces which has isolated the Strip from the rest of the Palestinian territories and



Photo credit: Mohammad Asad Middle East Monitor

the outside world. Israel imposes unprecedented restrictions on the freedom of movement of individuals and goods. Since 2008, Israeli occupation forces have waged four aggressions on the Strip. The latest took place in May of this year, leaving hundreds of victims, martyrs and injured, causing enormous devastation to houses, infrastructure and public facilities, and creating a catastrophic reality that further exacerbated the suffering.

Gaza Strip, an area of 360 square kilometers, is inhabited by more than 2.2 million people, 75% of whom are refugees. The Strip depends primarily on aid provided by the United Nations Refugee Works Agency (UNRWA) and international humanitarian organizations. Recent years witnessed unprecedented deterioration in terms of humanitarian conditions due the siege and the ongoing military operations against Gaza Strip.

The question of Gaza Strip has been transformed from an ongoing political issue as an occupied territory, to a dire and deteriorating humanitarian situation. Currently, more than 85% of the population is dependent on humanitarian assistance provided by humanitarian relief and donor organizations. The imposed siege is not only a form of collective punishment clearly prohibited under international law. It is also a process of intentional, ongoing de-development that has extremely dangerous repercussions. The development plans of the society have been stunted. The hope of the people has been destroyed. It is as if the strip has been thrown backwards by 50 or 60 years. These conditions have led to increasing rates of poverty, now at 53%. Thirty-four percent live in dire poverty. The current unemployment rate is 46.6%, much higher among youth, the core of the workforce. Sixty percent of the population is age 30 years and younger.

Israel has escalated the siege against Gaza Strip in a clear disregard of international law. Gaza Strip is considered an occupied territory; its residents are protected civilians according to the International Humanitarian Law. Still, the recent attacks targeted residential towers, industrial and commercial establishments, government facilities, poultry and animal farms, agricultural lands, infrastructure, electricity distribution networks, water and sanitation networks, hundreds of kilometers of streets and sidewalks, while maintaining ongoing closure of crossings and preventing the entry of food and medicine into the Strip.

Two-hundred-forty individuals were killed, including 60 children and 38 women. More than 1900 were injured. 7,395 residential units were destroyed fully or partially, and 60,000 people were displaced, mostly women and children. The recent siege damaged 177 schools, 1265 private and public establishments, 169 vehicles, and 4,200 dunums of agricultural lands. Two sick children died after being denied access to hospitals outside the Strip for medical treatment.

Even after the violent aggression stopped, the siege has continued and tightened. Israeli occupation forces continue to hinder the reconstruction process by preventing the entry of basic construction materials. Hundreds of families, approximately 8,600 people, are still waiting for their houses to be rebuilt after losing all their belongings and memories. Given the fact that winter is approaching, this is a particularly urgent need. Families will suffer in an unprecedented manner.

Many of the actions taken by Israeli forces rise to the level of war crimes, thus there is a need to legally pursue those who committed them and those who ordered them. The main issue concerning Gaza Strip and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory is the absence of accountability. As long as the principle of accountability is disregarded, Palestinian civilians and their properties will continue to pay the price in lack of employment and the denial of justice and human rights. Apart from an insistence on accountability, the worst is still to come for residents of Gaza Strip and the rest of the Palestinian territories.



Issam Younis is Director of Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights in Gaza. He is Commissioner General of The Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), President of the Arab Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ANNHRI). He is also a member of the Palestinian Higher Education Council. In, December 2020, Issam received the Franco-German Prize for Human Rights and the Rule of Law.

A Company Built on Dreams Still Growing

Mohammad Tayseer Qadada

As the aggression was escalating, I was keen not to lose it. I wanted to appear calm and collected in front of my wife and my little child who were filled with fear from the sounds of warplanes in the sky and the unusual, eerie, utter silence on the streets. I was naïve; as usual, I tried to reassure them that these days are just hours of escalation that will soon end, that we will go back to work, as usual, albeit with sad memories.

It was 7:30 p.m., minutes before evening prayers. We had turned on the TV to follow what was happening outside.

My son was holding on to a toy,



worn out with his constant biting on it. My wife and I were setting the dinner table. We were silently watching the news that warned of the possibility of Israel's bombing the Hanadi tower. We were holding on to some fake hope that the building – the place where we created all our memories and put all our savings in a company that we launched in July 2017 – would not fall down.

“Allah u Akbar, Allah u Akbar” (“God is the Greatest, God is the Greatest”) came the call for the evening prayers. “I bear witness that there is no god but Allah” – the sound of a rocket filled all the area. “I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah” – the sound of successive rockets fired. Then, after the Muslim declaration of faith, the tower collapsed.

It came down, just like that: a building of stone, steel and concrete, housing many families and hundreds of memories and more memories collapsed as if it were built of biscuits.

Shocked, all other sounds faded; I was hearing only the noise in my head, the noise of my own thoughts. It was as if I were removed from the moment, until I raised my eyes to see the tears of my panicking wife sitting on the side of the armchair, and the amazement of my child at the sight in front of him: his parents sitting in shock and tears without their usual smiles. So many sounds, mobiles ringing, text messages pouring in at that moment.

When the tower fell, it was not only my dream that was devastated. It was the houses and shelter of so many families, companies, and projects built with sweat and hard work through both an unending state of one siege – one incursion, one bombing followed by another – and a complicated economic environment that breaks any efforts towards success.

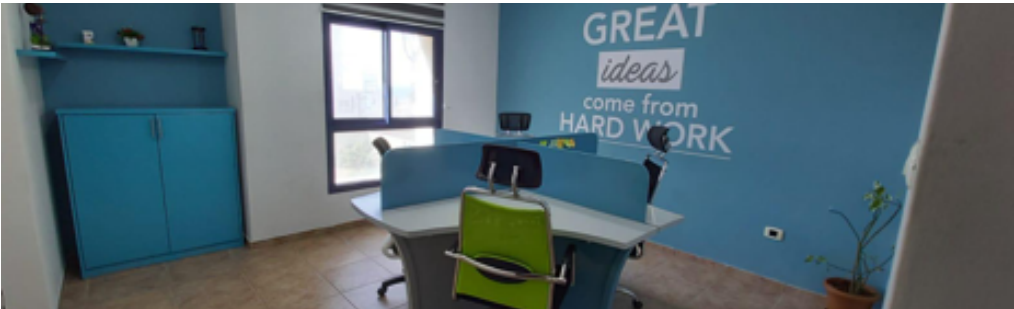
My story with the tower is not merely professional. There, on the tenth floor of the Hanadi Tower, my wife and I signed our marriage contract, there in the same building in front of which we had met for the first time. In this tower, I built my company that works in the field of digital solutions, hiring more than 30 staff members over four years, graduating 200 interns in the field, and helping more than 500 companies and institutions, successfully completing more than 4000 projects.

Planet for Digital Solutions, our company, was one of the pioneering companies in digital solutions. It gained the trust of so many clients.

It still is. It still does.

Because we are like the Phoenix, we never die, rather we soar ever higher. Our tears are hard to cry. The blood in our veins is full of defiance and determination. Thus, we are still operating our company till this moment. We will never be defeated as long as we are alive, as long as we behold a vision for success in our eyes.

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A footnote to this tragedy, for which I am still seeking the details, is that I am often asked, "If you had been given time to get something out of the building, what would it be?" My answer never has anything to do with the huge number of pieces

of equipment, devices and furniture that cost me around \$40,000. No, when someone asks me that question, my heart goes back immediately to that nicely framed picture in my office – the picture with me and my wife on our first meeting in front of the tower.

The reason I would choose this picture alone and nothing else? My wife's clear charge when she was giving it to me as a gift. She placed it on my desk and told me, "Keep this picture here, for everyone to see. Don't you dare to remove it even if the tower collapses. OK? "

I wish I could tell her that the one hour warning we had – those sixty minutes of time – was sufficient for me to get out of the house and retrieve the picture out the office. It was not.

When tower buildings collapse and become debris, our dreams take shape and rise up, constantly soaring higher. If you look closely as us Palestinians, you will realize that we are a people who never despair due to anguish and difficulties. Rather, we daily swallow our despair, trust in God, start our day with a cup of coffee or "tea to get the mood right." This company is a sacrifice for the homeland. The person who is telling you his story now – patient, smiling, drinking his coffee and sharing with you his memories – assures you of this: just like the phoenix, we never die!



Mohammad Tayseer Qadada is Founder and CEO of Planet for Digital Solutions based in Gaza. He says, "After studying political science, I never imagined that I would go into the field of marketing and graphics, until I became the director of a company made up of people who are passionate about the world of marketing. A dream knows no boundaries or politics!"

A Day Experiencing Death: The Dilemma of Light and Buzzing Sounds Over Gaza

Saleh AbuShamala



Three days of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip left 54 Palestinians murdered, including 15 children. Palestinians are being heavily attacked by Israeli rockets and missiles from land, air and sea.

Israeli airstrikes hit the 12-story Hanadi Tower in western Gaza City yesterday (on 11 May at 08:30 pm). The strikes brought down the entire building; they were preceded by firing small bombs as a warning of an impending attack. Now, it's 02:30 am, and another tower, Al-Johara, was bombed the same way. These towers aren't only residential buildings, but they're places that constitute landmarks of Gaza City,

including local and international media and press agencies, community and youth institutions working in the fields of self-development, gender, human rights and democracy. Many youths have special memories there; the same thing is for the residents, who have been sitting in the street until the moment, crying and complaining to God that they've become homeless.

Gaza seems to be a confusing human mystery. Not all that glitters in Gaza evokes emotion. Not all lights resemble the winter lightning or the warm morning sun. Certain sounds aren't preferable to be heard; i.e., the sounds that resemble anything but life - those that are like «the Rolex» distinctive sound and violent thunders.

Lights and sounds pop up as a result of the Israeli missiles. In less than two seconds, your memory figures out whether these missiles will hit your house or your neighbors, and more difficult, expects the type of missile and the warplane that launched it. These happen in just two seconds but seems like falling in a hole and then getting out of it; this is just in case that you're still alive and it isn't you who was torn into pieces.

You die and rebirth in a blink of an eye. Then, you start to check up on whether you've lost a neighbor or a friend. Mothers begin to ask questions such as, «Is your brother, Muhammad, at home?» and «Has he not returned yet?» Once hearing the whisper of their all children, they can be assured, thank God and try to know who the victims of the last Israeli missile are from people outside the family.

No bombings have taken place near my house yet, despite hearing the sounds of the continuous Israeli shelling far away. This came in the midst of the current Israeli attacks on Jerusalem, specifically in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, from which the Israeli settlers are fighting to displace Palestinian residents

and take their homes. This sparked confrontations between defenseless Palestinians and heavily-armed Israelis. As usual, the civilians in Gaza have their share of the intransigence and killing by the Israeli occupation. At these moments on Wednesday, 12 May at 03:00 am, the Israeli warplanes are launching violent attacks on all areas of the besieged Gaza Strip since 2007.

I haven't slept since yesterday, watching the news on the Internet. I've seen a picture of a four-year-old burned child whose teeth are apparent. I don't know whether he was listening to a funny thing before being murdered or it was the cry of pain. He was wearing a pink short, but again, I don't know if it was another color but has dyed with his blood. His name is «Zaid al-Telbani». In addition to him, his father and five-month pregnant mother, Rima, didn't survive the Israeli airstrike targeting their apartment in the Gaza City neighborhood of Tal al-Hawa. The Israeli bombardment continues till this moment.

A popular saying in Gaza goes that «you won't hear the shot that will kill you». Hearing the sounds makes me feel that I'm still fine; however, it reminds me that other people are not. It's now 12 May, 06:00 pm. I'm reading news on the Internet about a threat of bombing Al-Shorouq Tower, in the center of Gaza City and bringing it down. It's likely that 100 families will stay in the street tonight, and they may not find a house to live in for years to come.

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Saleh K. AbuShamala, a Palestinian writer and researcher born in Gaza, holds a BA in Management information systems from the University of Palestine. He works in the Institute for Civil Society Studies (CIVITAS), a civil forum for politics, as ThinkTank group coordinator. He worked as a Microsoft student partner in Palestine. Saleh was awarded the Gaza C project internship in South Korea in 2018. Saleh has published many articles and research papers, including “The Holocaust VS The Nakba” and a position paper on Iranian protests, “Between Popular Demands and Authority’s Repression, A Lost Revolution.”

A Message of Love, Fraternity and Solidarity with our People in the Besieged Gaza Strip

Archbishop Atallah Hanna

Our beloved people in Gaza, we express our solidarity with you. Our wounds in the homeland are the same whether in Gaza, Jerusalem or any other place in this holy land.

We see how you continue to suffer from the siege and ongoing aggressions and violations of the occupation. These cruel, arbitrary and racist violations against Gaza have led to a situation in which Gaza Strip has turned into the largest prison in the world; more than two million people live in dire and tragic conditions worse than those in Third World countries.

We see you suffering from very high unemployment rates. Your living conditions are tragic. Your innocent children are deprived of their right to enjoy their childhood. We pray to God that your suffering will end soon. We call upon every human being with conscience, ethics and humanity around the world to mobilize in support of our beloved people in Gaza Strip.

The most recent Israeli aggression on Gaza Strip resulted in multiple human tragedies that added to the tremendous human suffering as a result of previous aggressions and the siege. Whole buildings were destroyed, innocent people were martyred, including children, while the rate of persons with disability in Gaza Strip might be the highest worldwide.



In this blessed Christmas season, we pray that God Almighty may bestow God's mercy upon our people in Gaza Strip. We have great confidence in God, for God is the merciful and the compassionate, and has love for all humans. If the politicians of our world have abandoned their responsibilities, we remain certain that God will not. God is with us, God will remain with us for healing, for solace, and for strength to each hurting human being, to all who are in need and who suffer injustice.

We tell our Christian family in Gaza Strip, whose numbers have declined dramatically due to the tragic events:

Oh, ye Christians from Gaza, remain in Gaza, preserve your faith, values, humanity and your spiritual, human, and national mission.

We know that you are going through extraordinary circumstances, but we know well that love in Christianity means sacrifice. If we love our church, and we do, and if we love our homeland, as we do, then we should hold fast in our country, defending rights and justice. We have and will always side with those who suffer injustice, for those who are in pain.

Oh, Christians in Gaza Strip, remain in Gaza. Gaza is your home, your homeland.

You are proud for belonging to your homeland, just like your homeland is proud of its long-standing, authentic Christian presence that dates back to the early days of Christianity. The historic Church of St. Borferios in Gaza stands as a witness to your ancient history in this good country, this blessed land. Our hearts go out to you. May God shower blessings and divine consolation upon every person in pain and misery. We wish we were able to be there beside you, but checkpoints stand between us. Please accept our prayers and accept it when we say that we stand up for you, we are there for you, even if we remain physically distant. We feel your pain, suffering and wounds, as if they were our own. May God bless you. May God be with you.

Oh, Christians in Gaza Strip, may your future be better than your present and the painful past. Our wishes for you are our wishes for our Palestinian people as a whole, especially in the city of Jerusalem.



Archbishop Atallah Hanna was born in 1965 in the town of Al Rama in the Upper Galilee. After finishing high school, he joined the Orthodox Seminary in Jerusalem. In Thessaloniki, Greece, he studied Greek and then joined the College of Theology at the Thessaloniki University from which he graduated with distinction in 1990. He was ordained a monk in 1990 at the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem. He contributed to the development of the unified curriculum for Christian religion teaching in Palestinian schools. Archbishop Hanna participated in many local, regional and international conferences and advocated for the Palestinian question in all forums. He is a member of many committees and organizations in addition to his membership in several Christian and ecumenical institutions. He played a role in the Christian-Muslim dialogue. He was elected unanimously as the Archbishop of Sebastia in 2005.

Third Sunday in Advent:

“Resistance to the evil of occupation is integrated, then, within this Christian love that refuses evil and corrects it. It resists evil in all its forms with methods that enter into the logic of love and draw on all energies to make peace. We can resist through civil disobedience. We do not resist with death but rather through respect of life. We respect and have a high esteem for all those who have given their life for our nation. And we affirm that every citizen must be ready to defend his or her life, freedom and land.”

Kairos Palestine Document – A Moment of Truth 4.2.5

Palestinian Life in the 1948 Occupied Palestinian Cities

Ameer Makhoul

Two significant developments have unfolded recently on the part of Arab Palestinians in Israel (1948 Palestinians). The first was the decision to address international organizations to demand international protection as “a public at risk.” The second important development was the UN Human Rights Council’s

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decision last May to establish an investigation committee to look into Israel's hostile practices against the Palestinian people. Setting a precedent, the Human Rights Council decided that the mandate of the committee includes Palestinians inside Israel and that its scope of work should not be limited to the territories occupied in 1967. This represents an international acknowledgment that the issues of Palestinian citizens of Israel are inextricably a part of the entire Palestinian people, therefore obligating international organizations to recognize the rights of 1948 Palestinians.

In still another development, when Arab Palestinians in Israel expressed their support for those in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem, and the defending of holy sites in the city, and the protesting of the bloody military aggression against Gaza, they were themselves subjected to a grave and bloody aggression. Systemic attacks were made on their neighborhoods, houses and properties – even their bodies and lives – particularly in the coastal and mixed cities of Al-Lidd, Ramleh, Akko (Acre), Haifa, and Jaffa. According to a report in The Times of Israel, the Israeli Defense Ministry said that ten companies of reservists from the paramilitary Border Police were brought in. These Israeli security forces allowed the attacks to continue with impunity.

The most salient feature of this aggression was the fact that these forces were accompanied by thousands of racist Israeli civilians, members of violent gangs as well as settlers' gangs who are supported by the state as part of the "Biblical nuclei" – groups following a program of ethnic cleansing, the expulsion of the indigenous population. Many '48 Palestinians believe that the escalation in violence was promoted by an incitement campaign carried out by Israeli media. The recent escalation of violence against Palestinian citizens of Israel is part of the effort to weaken the Palestinian people as a whole – to prevent communication and the relational sharing of the challenges and suffering they experience across historic Palestine.

There are several glaring indicators that the State of Israel is not interested in a solution grounded in a just peace based on international law and human rights. The laws and policies of the state – particularly Israel’s Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People – as well as the growing influence of the Zionist religious-nationalist settler movement over the state’s main institutions including the judiciary, the army and the police, reveals that the state is focused on managing an open aggression and a system of restraint and control.

In another Times of Israel article, the Israeli Police command charged that the Israeli security agency Shin Bet is providing protection and immunity to leaders of organized crime and those who sell weapons among Palestinian Arabs in Israel. A driving objective for this cover for organized crime is the destruction of the Palestinian community, pushing its members to immigrate and to refrain from supporting the Palestinian people. Crime, blackmailing, vandalism against properties and homicide have seemingly become part of Israel’s state policies. Israel has not undertaken any actual steps to fight crime as long as it continues to happen in Arab Palestinian towns. The society is bleeding. The number of people killed through September 21 of this year is 89, including 12 women.

Despite racism and oppression, there are more than 60,000 university male and female students spearheading



a cultural and educational renaissance that Arab Palestinians are witnessing, particularly amidst the promising youth who dream of a better future. Even this dream is targeted by Israel, seeking to drive youth into a state of frustration and despair.

The question of Palestine didn't begin with the occupation in 1967. It has its roots in the 1948 Nakba and its continuing consequences. The rights of Palestinians cannot be divided based on the Green Line, because the Zionist Israeli structure is imposed in the state of Israel as well as in Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The struggle is collective in its nature, for Palestinians in 1948, the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jerusalem and refugees. Recent developments have shown that Palestinians will resist any effort to divide them.



Ameer Makhoul, a former prisoner in Israeli prisons from 2010-2019, is a writer and politician from Haifa. Until his arrest, Ameer was the Director General of the Union of Arab NGOs (Etijah) and Chairman of the People's Committee for the Defense of Freedoms within the framework of the Higher Follow-up Committee for the Palestinian Arab masses. Ameer is currently working within the framework of the Institute for Palestine Studies and has created many research articles and translation works.

Palestinians in the occupied cities of 1948

The Inevitable Rise

Adi Mansour

There are moments in life where you realize that what you are living is going to be part of your personal history. A history that you are going to narrate to those around you. A story to tell the younger generations to come, when your youth eventually lets go of you. Usually, these are simple events that occur in a more complex context. You have just a bit of time to evaluate the importance of the many things happening around you, until looking at a much bigger picture that somehow makes sense of the unbearable stress you've felt and the unprecedented events you've lived through.



I remember the exact date and time. It was a sunny Monday afternoon, the 17th of May 2021. Despite the beautiful weather, the air in our neighbourhood, Wadi al-Jimal, was thick with tension. A week had passed since the start of what later became known as the Karameh (Dignity) Uprising. During that week, we had witnessed true Palestinian unity, a feeling of oneness that had long disappeared from the Palestinian political scene. From Sheikh Jarrah to Wadi al-Jimal, the cities of Jerusalem and Haifa had never felt closer. The spirit of resistance broke the geo-political boundaries forced upon us, stirring our long-desired dream of a free and united Palestine.

Alongside Lud, Yaffa, Nazareth, Jerusalem, Gaza and Ramallah, Haifa's streets were burning in rage. The battle against our continuous Nakba – a struggle that has never stopped but only intensified – is a battle for our existence. The invasion of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the direct settler-colonialism practiced against refugee families in Sheikh Jarrah was the torch that lit the streets of Palestine. With that torch came extreme state violence. Demonstrations in Haifa were followed by a strong repression from the police. Tear gas and stun grenades filled the streets as Mosta'areben (undercover police) attacked and arrested peaceful protestors. Clashes erupted between the state forces and the protesters. Burned tires and garbage cans separated both parties. Demonstrations escalated drastically, while the number of participants kept on rising

As the Palestinian uprising flooded the streets, Israeli extremists began organizing on a national level. Their aim was simple: attack and possibly kill Palestinians everywhere. Buses arrived in main cities with hundreds of Israelis waiting to unleash their hate. Haifa was one of them. The first attack occurred around the centre of the city. Israelis, some armed with live ammunition, attacked Palestinian houses and their residents. I heard about a man who was walking past them, talking to his wife on the phone, when they heard him speaking Arabic. They immediately surrounded him while shouting "Aravi, Aravi"

(Arab, Arab). One of them hit him with a pole carrying an Israeli flag, others with their bare hands. He eventually succeeded in running away despite suffering from a head injury. This state-run chaos was accommodated and protected by the police, and the Palestinian community was left alone in their fight for dignity. That fight soon turned into a defensive front on the blurred borders of Haifa's Arab neighbourhoods.

The shock of the footage from the previous day demanded one thing only: organize to defend. Soon, neighbourhoods formed their own groups. Hundreds of Palestinian youths began preparing for any possible attack. That night, it seemed like everything was planned beforehand. Police and military special units attacked us without warning. They threw tear gas and stun grenades while pointing their guns at our unprotected bodies. The arrests came next. After we scattered, Israelis attacked our neighbourhoods in their cars. They tried to run people over. They threw glass bottles and stun grenades where we organized that evening. An hour later, Israelis began marching from Shprinzak, an Israeli neighbourhood next to Wadi al-Jimal, shouting "Death to Arabs." The police stopped them this time, throwing one stun grenade and waiting for them to scatter voluntarily. How convenient, no arrests.

It wasn't until that sunny afternoon that I understood the significance of what we went through during the previous week. At that time, on the 17th of May, we were distributing fliers for the Dignity Strike that was scheduled for the next day across Palestine. Going from house to house, we heard that, just across the street, Israelis had thrown glass bottles on our neighbours – once again. Despite this, and for the first time during the week, I felt complete strength, not fear.

We were inviting people to join one of the biggest strikes that have ever happened in Palestine. One could actually feel it. Somehow, at that very moment, everything else seemed to matter less, as I realized what we are going through and, most importantly, the affect it had on our community. During that week, I met with many friends and neighbours that I hadn't seen in ages, many of whom had left, just as I did, but came back during this time of distress. Our desire to protect our loved ones and the place where we all grew up provided us with collective power. We were back to square one, where unity starts spontaneously among the oppressed. It is with that unity that we become stronger than their conceived supremacy. We were fighting, again, for a free and just Palestine.



Adi Mansour was born in Haifa and studied Law and Political Science in Tel Aviv University, where he was active in the students' movement, most notably through Al Muntada-the Arab Law Students Forum, and the Jafra-Al Tajamoah student faction. Today, Adi is a lawyer at Adalah Legal Center and an activist in the Haifa Youth Movement.

A Prayer for Palestinians in the Occupied Cities of 1948

Lama Mansour

Oh Emmanuel, the God who is with us.

Who lived among us throughout the Galilee, and travelled to Nazareth, Qana, and Neen,
We believe that You are walking along our side, holding our hands as we struggle to understand the
identity You gave to us;
Palestinian young men and women, holders of blue ID cards, a burden of belonging to a state we do
not belong to.

We believe that You have placed us in this geographic area as a blessing to our kin, regardless of their
race, religion, gender, social, or political affiliations and opinions.

Will You open our eyes to see Your will for our societies? Will You give us compassion and mercy to
come together and build Your kingdom on our land?

El Roi, the God Who sees

You have seen Hajar in her despair, You heard her heart cries in the wilderness,
We believe that You see us today. That You can see the heartache of our society as we struggle against
crime that took away the lives of hundreds of youth created in Your image.
We believe that You hear us today, listening to the painful cries of the hearts of every battered woman.
You embrace every young woman subjected to verbal or physical abuse and violence.

Dear Lord, grant us wisdom and grace to discern the needs of those around us, and to rise up in love of people as You love them.

Oh Lord, our Creator,
You who formed humans from the dust of the earth and blew the breath of life into them.
Remind us our Lord of this glorious reality- that we all, males and females, carry Your image wherever we go. May this motivate us to see You in everyone we meet.

Remind us that You created us in the best image like You, creative and capable, so that we create a new and better reality for our societies.

Help us, dear Lord, to open up to Your spirit to work through us, so that we grow in love, hope, and faith.

Dear Lord, bless the young men and women of Palestine, to Your glory.
Amen!



Lama Mansour, from Nazareth, is a graduate of the Baptist School there. She holds a BA in Psychology from the University of Haifa, and an MA in Social Politics from Oxford University. She is currently studying for a PhD in Social Politics at Oxford. Lama serves in the youth meetings of the local Baptist church in Nazareth and is active in the youth group for the «Christ at the Checkpoint» conference. She has written about faith and social issues on various local sites.

Forth Sunday in Advent

"We have arrived at a critical point in the struggle to end the oppression of the Palestinian people. The State of Israel's adoption of the Nation State Law in 2018 legalized institutional discrimination in Israel and the Palestinian territories, officially depriving Palestinians of their rights to life, livelihood, and a future in their homeland. Recent acts of the U.S. administration have supported Israel's ongoing project of land taking and attaining control over the entire territory of Palestine...."

Cry for hope document

Palestinian Life in Area C of the West Bank

Jack Munayer



Area C in the West Bank is home to around 300,000 Palestinians who live under the complete authority of Israel and its military regime. Area C is often overlooked on the international platform perhaps because the challenges and injustices have remained the same since 1967: settlement expansion, settler violence, demolitions and more. Many of the readers here will remember Israeli's recent failed attempt to annex the Jordan Valley and most of Area C. However, these past two years under the new reality of COVID-19 have been different due to the lack of international protective presence.

13/05/15. South Hebron Hills. Residents try to keep their spirits high despite of fears of eviction in the village of Susiya, Photo EAPPI/P. Moore

During 2020, the amount Israeli demolitions of Palestinian homes and other structures exceeded that of the year before by one third. The consequences are made worse as this increases the potential of COVID-19 spreading. Even with a change of government in Israel, the first quarter of 2021 saw demolition rates double, most taking place in Area C.

Another issue facing residents in Area C is an increase in settler harassment and violence. During my last visit to a community that the World Council Churches Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine-Israel (EAPPI) would normally accompany, Palestinians reported that the absence of protection has become a serious issue. Children are forced to take a 3-hour alternative route on foot to school due to fear of settler harassment. Some have to cross desert areas on donkeys in order to make it to exams on time.

In the same area, a young man (Harun) was paralyzed after he was shot through the neck by the Israeli authorities when he tried to stop them beating his father. One of the activists in the area who has been trying to step into the role as an accompanier – in the absence of the EAPPI – stated, “If we had international protective presence, Harun may have never been shot.” The family is waiting to see if Harun will be able to use a wheelchair while facing the added obstacle of being unable to build a house; they are forced now to live in a cave. The family is also prevented by the Israeli authorities from building any ramp structure that would assist Harun from accessing the cave via wheelchair.

To summarize, there is no doubt that the communities in Area C are facing a rapidly deteriorating situation. This has been accelerated by an absence of international presence (journalists, activists, counsellor intervention and others). We desperately need these initiatives to return once they are allowed. Still another action that has proved to have some success is increased advocacy on the part of

the global civil society and international pressure. Don't forget these and the following stories. Continue to advocate for these vulnerable communities.



Jack Munayer was born and raised in Jerusalem to a British mother and Palestinian Christian-citizen of Israel father. Jack completed his BA in Sociology and Criminology from the University of York and an MA in Human Rights and Transitional Justice from Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He currently manages the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (WCC-EAPPI). Jack's main line of work has been focusing on human rights and humanitarian assistance. He is also active in bridge-building initiatives and advocacy platforms like Christ at the Checkpoint, The Jerusalem-Belfast initiative and more.

Daily Life in Hebron



Olive trees grow on a plot in the Tel Rumeida area of Hebron, West Bank, March 2020. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

I am 17 years old. I live in the Tel Rumeida neighbourhood in the city of Hebron. When I am not in school, I volunteer in the Human Rights Defenders Association. I document the settler and IDF attacks against the people of my neighbourhood and participate in some of the gathering's activities, such as organizing English and Hebrew language courses with the aim of using them to present the Palestinian cause in the region.

In Tel Rumeida, there are three military checkpoints, so my life in this area is completely different from the lives of people who live abroad. For example, when I go to school and come back, my experience differs from that of other students in more normal situations. Soldiers at the checkpoints search me and my bag.

When I was 13, I used to wake up to the sounds of bullets. It may not sound scary when I tell it, but for me there is nothing more difficult than hearing the echo of bullets. You close your eyes in fear and when you open them you see a blood-drenched corpse on the ground. I'm not attempting to narrate a graphic story of a massacre; I'm sharing with you my normal life.

These examples are only a small part of what we experience and what others are experiencing in this region.

I aspire to become a doctor in the future, but day by day I feel the obstacles of the Occupation increasing in front of my dream. The Occupation is starting to prove that it is here to stay and that my dream should be forgotten.

My daily life

When I wake up in the morning, sometimes I wake up normally and sometimes, as I wrote, I wake up to the sounds of bombs and bullets. Suffering as I do with breathing problems, sometimes I awake to the smell of teargas.

Stopped and searched on my way to school, I am often late. And I've learned to expect the same treatment on my way home.

As for my family, my father suffers from mobility issues and cannot carry the things we need for the house. Cars are forbidden by the Israelis from reaching the area that we live in, so simple tasks like refilling our gas bottle are a significant problem for my dad. My mother worries that something bad will happen to my brothers as they wait outside for my father to return. Being late can make the difference between life and death. We have known a number of young people who were killed for being at the wrong place at the wrong time.

I am here writing and sharing with you the tip of the iceberg of what our daily life looks like in Hebron. If I were to share the full details of our daily life, I couldn't finish the paragraph. It would go on and on. I hope you will understand that I cannot describe what we are experiencing in words. Because living something is completely different from describing it.

N has chosen to share her story anonymously.

Life in the South Hebron Hills

Hello. I am 16 years old. I live in Susiya, a village in the South Hebron Hills, south in the West Bank, Palestine. In Susiya there are around 450 residents. People in my village depend on farming and herding for a living. Due to the situation, some work with NGOs to document and report what is happening here.

We have been living in this area since before 1948 and have the evidence to prove it. Our families were kicked out of their original homes because Israel claimed we were living on an archaeological site. A few years later my family was removed again when the Israeli authorities loaded everyone on trucks and



13/05/15. South Hebron Hills. Flags are fluttering in the village of Susiya, Photo EAPPI/P. Moore.

dropped them off fifteen kilometres away. We were forced to build our homes on our grazing lands because we discovered that our water wells were destroyed during the time we were transported away. This is where I live now.

As a student I go to a mixed school in Susiya. The school structure is built from aluminium. In the summer it is too hot to sit inside and during the winter it is freezing cold. If there is any rain, we are unable to hear each other or the teacher because of the noise of the rain drops hitting the aluminium roof and walls. A storm during the winter could damage the school structure and disrupt our studies entirely.

As our school structure is in Area C, the Occupation military system has issued a demolition order on our school. Every day my sisters, cousins and I go to school on foot. Each day we walk 1.5 Km, risking the harassment of settlers and the Israeli military because there is a settlement near Susiya.

When I was in the sixth grade an incident happened to me that I cannot forget. As I was returning home from school, I noticed that an Israeli civilian's car was passing by. Suddenly, the passengers of the vehicle exited and started following me. I started running home but it turned out that those chasing me were actually police forces dressed as civilians. They forcefully entered our house, pointed their guns towards me, and physically attacked my mother. The settlers and the military here are really violent; they are not afraid to attack women and children.

Finally, all what I ask for as a child living in Susiya – I think it is the request of every child here: stop the demolition of my house, stop the demolition of my school, give us permission to build structures and develop our village. I want to continue my education and live in safety and peace.

Thank you.

A has chosen to share his story anonymously

A Prayer for Palestinians in Area C of the West Bank from the Melkite Greek Catholic Church in Jerusalem

“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.» (Romans 12/12)

Dear Lord, you have revealed and shown Your love to the sinful humankind through the incarnation of Your only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Help us our Lord in these difficult times and conditions that we face due to the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, the wars we face, and the lack of jobs. Dear Lord, You are our strength in times of affliction, our solace in times of need, our Lord the King of peace.

Oh God, I believe in Thee, make my belief stronger; I trusted and depended on You, make me more dependent. I love Thee my Lord, enflame my love for You. Let Your wisdom guide me, let Your mercy console me, and Your strength help me maintain my dignity.

Oh God! I entrust the fate of this Holy Land in Your hands.

Grant us honorable work, in the footsteps of Your Son Jesus Christ, Who worked as a carpenter.

Grant us freedom to move around this Holy Land just like Jesus Christ who traveled without restrictions or checkpoints.

Guide us, our Lord, and protect us during these difficult times filled with life-threatening risks, wars, and the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

Oh dear Lord, make us witnesses to Your love and mercy, teach us to proclaim faith to the hesitant among us, hope to the desperate, love to the indifferent, forgiveness to those who hurt others, and joy to those who suffer.

Let Your spark of compassionate love become a fire that transforms hearts and renews the face of earth.

Through the intercession of Virgin Mary, Who like all mothers, has witnessed and experiences, through Her only Son, the pain and the joy in this Holy Land.

Amen

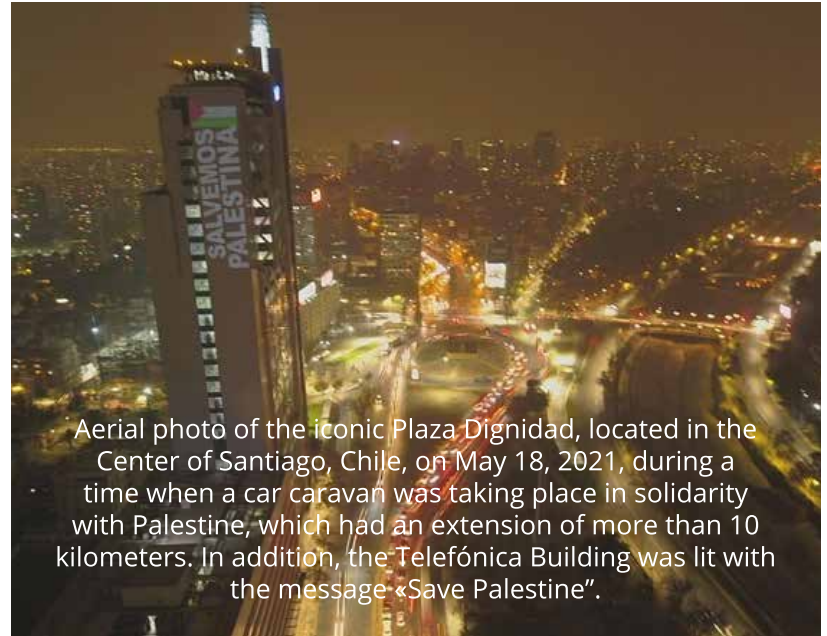
A Message from our Palestinian Family in the Diaspora

From Chile:

Being the largest Palestinian community outside Palestine is an important responsibility. We are a visible Diaspora, with multiple activities and we do not hesitate to denounce Israeli crimes against Palestine in all spaces when we have the opportunity.

Our work is focused on two fronts. One is committed to the Palestinian community, in order to maintain the sense of Palestinian identity in the next generations. We have developed multiple activities to pass Palestinian history and tradition to our young adults, youth and children: taking educational trips to Palestine, teaching Dabke, organizing film series and more. Most of our work is carried out at the Palestinian Club, a beautiful gathering place for our community that has existed since 1938. Over the years we have worked to create our own sense of «home» abroad.

In our work with the next generations, we try to balance immersion in our culture with



Aerial photo of the iconic Plaza Dignidad, located in the Center of Santiago, Chile, on May 18, 2021, during a time when a car caravan was taking place in solidarity with Palestine, which had an extension of more than 10 kilometers. In addition, the Telefónica Building was lit with the message «Save Palestine”.

maintaining ties with Palestine. This is an urgent endeavor, because of the Israeli attempts to erase our existence. Given this, the transmission of these values to our children requires a strategic plan, not mere improvisations.

For this reason, we are also aware of the need for unity among our people and the need to act jointly. Recently, we have been generating links with other communities in the Diaspora. A few years ago, in the Palestinian Club of Santiago, we organized a convention, «Taqalid» (traditions), to bring together the Palestinian communities of Latin America around the Palestinian culture and identity. Thousands of people from different Latin American countries arrived in Santiago in 2017 and to Lima, Peru, in 2019. Both gatherings were very successful. Ours is a process that seeks to reactivate other communities, get to know each other, and insist that the Palestinian Diaspora must play an important role, not only sharing information about what happens in Palestine and as a supporter of the culture, but also as active members of the Palestinian community—a decision maker. We are part of the Palestinian people. We must participate in their decisions.



Presentation of the Dabke Folkloric Group from the city of Iquique, northern Chile, at the Second Taqalid Meeting of 2019 in Peru

The second front of our work involves our dissemination and advocacy on behalf of the Palestinian Question. This work is carried out at three levels: approaching authorities (executive and legislative power); engaging civil society (NGOs, schools, universities, etc.); and of course, encouraging the Palestinian community. In addition to educating and raising awareness about what is happening in Palestine, we also invite our community to mobilize through concrete actions.

In Chile there is an active Congress on the Palestinian issue. In fact, the largest friendship group in the Chamber of Deputies is the Chilean-Palestinian Inter-Parliamentary Group. With more than 90 members, some are of Palestinian origin, but most not. It is a transversal group, whose members are from the right wing to the left wing; probably the only thing that unites them is the Palestinian Cause.

In July 2020, a Draft Resolution was approved in the Senate that calls on President Sebastián Piñera to sign a bill that prohibits the entry into Chile of goods produced by Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territory. On June 2, 2021, the Chamber of Deputies introduced a bill that has the same objective. The project, which has not been exempt from an intense Israeli lobby in the Congress, will soon begin its first legislative procedures in the Constitution, Legislation and Justice Commission.

There is nothing binding yet, but it is a good step to start holding Israel accountable for its crimes. The Israeli occupation must come at a cost. We must work to move from solidarity to action. Palestine no longer needs only declarations of goodwill, but also actions that help end the illegal occupation of Palestine.

Seventy-three years have passed since the beginning of the expulsion of the Palestinians from our land, following an ethnic cleansing that continues to this day. In fact, during the year 2021, we have witnessed

the intensification of colonization in East Jerusalem, strong repression in the West Bank and Historic Palestine of 1948 and a brutal massacre in the Gaza Strip—facts that remind us that the pain of the Nakba has not ceased.

We appreciate how Chile opened its doors to thousands of Palestinian immigrants and refugees, who found opportunities for a new life and an immensely valued freedom that we did not find living under the repressive British Mandate and the subsequent Israeli military occupation. But this has never been a motive to forget our Palestinian origins and national identity that motivate us to actively participate in the liberation of our people.

We are as Palestinian as anyone in Jerusalem, Nazareth, Gaza or Beit Jala. Like those in the refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan or Syria, we feel both loss and pain. We support the Palestinian struggle for freedom, self-determination and justice, committed to be the best ambassadors of our Cause in our countries of residence.

The status quo that only benefits the Israeli occupier must end now. We urgently need a complete renewal of the Palestinian leadership, through the democratization of its institutions and with the participation of all Palestinians in a transparent and united way, as our People deserve.

Written by George Elias, an active member of the Palestinian Community in Chile.

A Prayer for Palestinians in the Diaspora

Msgr. William Shomali

Oh Lord, Thou who knows everything, what is in the hearts and everywhere, as You see the suffering of the people on this earth, their yearning for justice, equality and peace. Listen dear Lord to our prayers for the Palestinian people, who suffered and continue to suffer more than any time before. Their life journeys are now accompanied by the pandemic, unemployment, poverty, and the war on Gaza, in addition to the occupation and the absence of hope.

Dear Lord, You are capable of everything, arranging matters for the best interest of those who love You and obey Your commandments, please Lord look to the suffering of peoples of the earth in general, and the suffering of the Palestinian people in particular. Without Your blessing, the Palestinian people will not be able to achieve their legitimate aspirations for peace, justice, security, and reconciliation.

You said “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God”, dear Lord help us find well-intentioned individuals who seek peace instead of war, love instead of hatred, joy instead of sadness, health instead of diseases and pandemics.

Amen!



Msgr. William Shomali, born and raised in Beit Sahour, has held many positions in the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem: priest, seminary professor, rector and Chancellor among them. In 2020, Msgr. Shomali was nominated by the Vatican to serve as a member of the Council on Interreligious Dialogue with Non-Christians. Having served from 2017 as the Patriarchal vicar in Jordan, he was recently appointed Patriarchal vicar in Jerusalem and Palestine.

Christmas day 2021

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

Kairos Palestine Document – A Moment of Truth 4.1

Christmas Day Message

“God Created man in His Image”

Patriarch Emeritus Michel Sabbah

The Eternal Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).
Let us worship him.

God created humankind in God's own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27): good, intelligent, and capable of love. But those first human beings wanted to be like God, without God. This is the significance of the first temptation narrated in the book of Genesis (Chapter 3). “If you disobey God's command and eat from the fruit of the forbidden tree, you will become like God.” Yet before the temptation, having been created in the image God, they were already like God. The temptation was, “You will be gods without God, making your life as you want, without God.” The temptation remains until this day. Those who fall into it are many, even the majority.

So, human beings became like gods apart from God. Without God, what do humans do? They do both good and evil. They make wars, famines, and diseases. Created in the image and likeness of God who is love, persons were supposed to be only capable of love. But love has become egoism, at the level of individuals, communities and even nations.



Apart from God, the strong makes oneself a god, becoming a tyrant, an oppressor, and able to kill. This is what is happening in Israel's relationship with Palestine. In this, our woes arose in our land. Our only crime is that we simply exist – in our land and in our homes. Without God, the strong became a murderer of one's own brother, an oppressor, a jailer and a destroyer of homes. Ignoring that he or she is created in the image of God, the strong refuses to see the image of God in the weak.

But even if a person or nation ignores or refuses to acknowledge the original image of God in oneself and others, it cannot be erased.

Christ was born to give us the opportunity to restore in ourselves what we lost: the image of God. Christ came – “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:5), “Emmanuel” meaning “God with us” (Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23) – so that we may go back, if we want, to embrace

again the image of God, enabling us to love one another as God loves us, so that killing, aggression and arrogance will stop, prisons will be closed, homes will be rebuilt, weapons of death and destruction will be transformed into love in the hearts of Israelis and Palestinians, and Palestine will return to be the land that provides “milk and honey” to all its inhabitants.

Redeemed by Christ and restored in the image of God, come! Come, let us worship God. Let us hear the song of the angels, “Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth” (Luke 2:14). Let us all be peacemakers, capable of loving each other, so the tragedy of this land will end, first from within our hearts because “God has created all of us in his image”.



H.B. 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 - A moment of Truth

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