



United Methodists Commend World Council of Churches' Groundbreaking Statement

UMKR joins Kairos Palestine in celebrating the prophetic action by the world's largest ecumenical Christian coalition, representing over half a billion church members, in naming Israeli crimes against Palestinians and calling for BDS action.

July 10, 2025 – On June 24, 2025, while meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, The World Council of Churches (WCC) Central Committee issued a stunningly [groundbreaking message](#) to its member churches and the world. The “Statement on Palestine and Israel: A Call to End Apartheid, Occupation and Impunity in Palestine and Israel” comes after repeated pleas from Christians in Palestine to acknowledge the dire and ever-worsening conditions for the Palestinian people throughout the Holy Land and provide more meaningful and effective solidarity.

United Methodists for Kairos Response ([UMKR](#)), the independent United Methodist advocacy movement for Palestinian rights, warmly commends the WCC for this much-needed and prophetic statement and thanks them for responding so powerfully to Palestinian Christians' call.

For years, Christians in Palestine [have implored](#) the WCC and church leaders worldwide to acknowledge the apartheid reality that they live under and to support effective solidarity such as BDS tools for advocacy (boycott, divestment and sanctions).

Now the World Council of Churches has answered their plea, joining the world's major human rights organizations in naming the reality of Israel's apartheid regime; they also have boldly called for churches and states to “impose consequences for violations of international law.”

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of over 350 denominations, including The United Methodist Church, in more than 120 countries and territories and representing over 580 million Christians. The WCC Central Committee, the body that governs the WCC between their octennial assemblies, includes 158 members, regional presidents, and 100 advisors from the ecumenical movement.

NOT RUNNING FROM CONTROVERSY

Notable and newsworthy positions taken in the WCC statement include:

- Denouncing the system of apartheid imposed by Israel on the Palestinian people;
- Charging Israel with other grave breaches of international law, which they acknowledge may include genocide;
- Affirming the Palestinian people's right of return to their homeland;
- Calling for churches, states, and institutions to engage in divestment, sanctions, and arms embargoes;
- Supporting investigations by the International Criminal Court and the UN into war crimes and crimes against humanity.

All of these positions have been lightning rods for controversy in recent years. The Israeli government and Jewish organizations that comprise the Israeli Lobby in the U.S. and Europe usually will level accusations of antisemitism as their response.

Possibly in view of that, the WCC Central Committee made clear in their statement: "We recognize a clear distinction between the Jewish people, our siblings in faith, and the acts of the Government of Israel, and we reaffirm that the WCC stands firm against any kind of racism, including antisemitism, anti-Arab racism, and islamophobia."

On that same subject, Lisa Bender, UMKR Steering Committee Co-Chair and Boycott & Divestment Chair, observed: "United Methodists know it is not antisemitic to criticize a government's illegal and horrific actions, and we work in solidarity with thousands of allies in such groups as Jewish Voice for Peace to bring the Palestinian cause to the world's attention."

The Central Committee's week-long June meeting in Johannesburg focused on "Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity," particularly with South African churches, making it a fitting moment to acknowledge the reality of apartheid today in Palestine/Israel.

"Now, besides the reports on Israeli apartheid from groups like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, we also have the words of the World Council of Churches to help our congregations understand the reality of Israeli apartheid and a destructive occupation in the Holy Land today," said Carol Garwood, co-chair of UMKR's Steering Committee and Education Committee.

PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS RESPOND

The Palestinian Christian movement Kairos Palestine (which UMKR is named for) [responded warmly](#) to the WCC.

They expressed deep appreciation and commended the WCC "for declaring, clearly and courageously, that the term "apartheid" is appropriate and prophetic in describing the situation imposed on the Palestinian people. This step acknowledges the reality that Palestinians have endured for over seven decades: systematic oppression, displacement, segregation, and denial of basic human rights."

They welcomed the Committee's recommendations to "promote a global shift in narrative...confront Christian Zionism...[and] support mechanisms of accountability, including sanctions, divestment, and advocacy for the right of return."

Kairos Palestine's praise for the WCC's statement continued: "These commitments reflect a theology rooted not in abstract doctrine but in lived solidarity, moral courage, and prophetic witness. They offer a vital lifeline to the Palestinian people, and especially to Palestinian Christians, whose cry for justice has too long gone unheard."

LOOKING AHEAD

"A statement like this may not turn the tide in this moment, to stop the horrendous genocide in Gaza or stop Israel from bulldozing homes and destroying West Bank communities. But it will have an impact in church communities around the world and will hasten the day of reckoning we

know is coming, when Israel is held accountable,” noted Theresa Basile, movement organizer, and Communications Director with UMKR.

Effects of the WCC statement are already being seen. Two denominations in Britain, The Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, [have endorsed](#) the full WCC statement at their national church gatherings this summer, thereby condemning those Israeli crimes and endorsing those BDS actions that have been named by the WCC.

For United Methodist Church members and congregations that are seeking to support Palestinian rights and a just peace in Palestine/Israel, UMKR recommends looking into the [Apartheid-Free Communities initiative](#), co-founded by UMKR, and considering the Apartheid-Free pledge as a meaningful way to respond to the messages of the World Council of Churches and Kairos Palestine.

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United Methodists for Kairos Response (UMKR) is responding to *Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth*, a statement of faith and urgent call to action from Christians in Palestine. UMKR seeks – through nonviolent means and in partnership with Palestinian Christians – freedom, justice, and equality for all Palestinians and Israelis. Learn more at <https://www.kairosresponse.org>.