

# Easter Alert

## 2019



*“Jerusalem is the foundation of our vision and our entire life. She is the city to which God gave a particular importance in the history of humanity.*

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

Kairos Palestine Document—A Moment of Truth, Chapter 9.5



# Introduction

Easter Blessings! Thank you for accompanying us in this journey to the cross. The purpose of the annual Kairos alert is to shed light on the reality on the ground and provide a Christian commentary and analysis to this reality. Indeed, you have heard from voices on the ground and international activists on what it means to live as Palestinians and Palestinian Christians under systemic injustice and discrimination. Whether we talk about political pressure, collective punishment, restriction of movement, or the denial of entry to holy sites, it all points to the severity of the situation.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Kairos document. When the document was written, the authors stated then: “Why now? Because today we have reached a dead end in the tragedy of the Palestinian people.” I wonder if they knew back then that things would be even worst 10 years later. Last year, Israel passed the new nation-state law, which arrogantly states that “the right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people.” This ignores the existence of millions of Palestinians who have been living in this land for hundreds if not thousands of years—long before Israel was even created—and prepares the way for more laws that will further deny their rights. This is apartheid legalized! It is clear for the world to see.

It is time to unite in our response for justice and equality. Yet, may our response honor the one whose sacrificial death we remember this holy week. As such, this call is grounded in logic of love and is a call for non-violent resistance. In the face of discrimination and apartheid, we insist that the only way forward is a shared land and a political reality of justice and equality. Let us call and commit ourselves to work towards a new socio-political reality in which all the dwellers of the land share the land and its resources equally and have the same rights—regardless of their ethnicity, nationality and religion. There should be no “second-class”



citizens in this land. This is our response to discrimination and apartheid. It all begins by ending the occupation.

We call on our sisters and brothers around the world to join the Kairos Global movement and its signature campaign, which aims to mobilize faith-based voices to lobby and unite towards ending the occupation. This is a call for persons from around the world to further the Kairos call for an end to the State of Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people and its occupation of Palestinian territories. We urge you to consider signing, promoting and distributing this call to all your networks. The aim is to present this call on May 15, 2019, to Israeli embassies and foreign ministries all over the world

Finally, let us remember that the journey to the cross does not end on Friday. Yes, Friday may last long and Saturday even longer, but Sunday will inevitably come! It will be a day of resurrection gladness; a day in which we remember that truth will overcome injustice; light will overcome darkness; and freedom and liberty will overcome oppression and discrimination. And because we believe in life and resurrection, we commit even stronger to work tirelessly to make this a reality. Amen.



# Kairos Palestine urges you to, please, do the following:

1. Distribute and study these theological reflections in your places of worship each Sunday to inform and educate your community about the suffering of your Palestinian family living under Israeli occupation.
2. Share the alert with congregations, regions, conferences, presbyteries and dioceses across your country.
3. Respond to the Call...Send letters of solidarity and support for justice in Palestine/Israel to the Israeli embassies in your own country. For further information, see [www.allembassies.com/israeli\\_embassies.htm](http://www.allembassies.com/israeli_embassies.htm)
4. “Come and see.” We will fulfill our role to make it known to you the truth of our reality, receiving you as pilgrims—sisters and brothers—coming to us to pray, carrying a message of peace, love and reconciliation. Thus, you will know the facts and the people of this land, Palestinians and Israelis alike. (Kairos 6.2)
5. Take tangible actions. Support Palestinian rights by supporting Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it complies with International Law and UN resolutions. Support the right of persons, corporations, states and nations to boycott Israel as an expression of their freedom of speech.
6. Inform your Palestinian brothers and sisters about the ways you have been involved with the Easter Alert by writing us at this email address: [kairos@kairospalestine.ps](mailto:kairos@kairospalestine.ps). Contact us for any other reason, too. Our strength and courage are emboldened by our contacts with you.



*Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac:*

Palestinian Christian pastor, theologian, writer, speaker, blogger, and more importantly, a husband and a father.

Munther wears many hats. He now pastors Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem and is at the same time the Academic Dean of Bethlehem Bible. He is also the director of the highly acclaimed and influential Christ at the Checkpoint conferences and is a board member of Kairos Palestine. He speaks locally and internationally on issues related to the theology of the land, Palestinian Christians, and Palestinian theology. He is the author of “From Land to Lands, from Eden to the Renewed Earth: A Christ-Centered Biblical Theology of the Promised Land”. Munther is a musician. He plays the guitar and the flute. He is also an avid sports fan, specially football (aka soccer!) and basketball (NBA). Munther originally studied civil engineering in Birzeit. Realizing that numbers and construction sites are not his thing, he obtained a master’s in biblical studies from Westminster Theological Seminary and then a PhD from the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies. Munther is married to Rudaina – an architect, and together they have two boys: Karam (4) and Zaid (2).



# H.B. Patriarch Michel Sabbah's Easter message

*“Christ is risen; indeed, He is risen.”*

May Easter bring all of us peace and justice in all countries around the world. In Palestine and Israel, in Jerusalem—the city of the Resurrection, in our prayer and in the heart of the conflict. This is our prayer from Jerusalem on this glorious day of Resurrection.

We live in Jerusalem around the church of the Holy Sepulcher, full of the hope that the Resurrection brings us. Because our lives and the lives of all the inhabitants of Jerusalem are full of death, along with the prayers of the righteous and good people of all religions. Death in our context is the oppression of one people on another; it is a human being humiliating another human being and uprooting that person from one's holy city and home. Today, this is the death of the Palestinians of Jerusalem.

The light of the Resurrection shines for all who want to see it, as St. John said in his Gospel: «Light shines in darkness, and darkness could not overpower it” (John 1:5). Jerusalem today is in darkness, and its people seek life for themselves and their city. But life is far away. As we celebrate the light of the Resurrection, there is darkness and struggle in the hearts and in the town. We celebrate with great solemnity the light of good Saturday, as a sign which precedes the full light of the Resurrection, and the new life it brings. But the new life has not been reached by the people of Jerusalem, neither those who oppress nor those who are oppressed.

In Jerusalem and all the Holy Land, we see people committed to justice and peace for themselves only, built on injustice and occupation imposed on others. We see one human being living at the expense of another human being. Although Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, died for the life of all. He died and rose from the dead, to give life for all, in order



to enable everyone to triumph over death in him/herself, and become a maker of life, justice and peace for oneself, his/her people, and all the peoples of the earth. One should not live and another die. The life of no one should be based on the death of the other.

This is what is happening today in Palestine and Israel, in the Holy Land, the land of the Resurrection. The Israelis are asking the Palestinian people to die, to disappear, so that the Israeli people can live. The truth is, both should live as equal human beings.

The strong and powerful must realize that the life of a people cannot be built at the expense of the life of another people. Israel cannot be built and survive on the death of the Palestinian people, whatever the claims, whatever the forces and weapons, and whatever the human plans. The powerful people of this world, including Israel and the USA, must realize that the big sums offered instead of the just solution do not wash away the bloodshed, nor can they replace justice.

The Easter message, the Resurrection message, says to all: those liberated by God cannot be made slaves by anyone. The message of Resurrection says that a new human being can be born. A new man, a new woman, not a maker of war or death, nor a life-seeker at the expense of the life of another people. Israel can be this new being, who does not demand life at the expense of the life of the Palestinian people. Palestine can also be this new being, living free in dignity, sovereign, as all peoples of the earth

The Psalmist said: «He maintains the peace of your frontiers, gives you your fill of finest wheat. He sends His word to the earth; His command runs quickly” (147:14-15). But the question is, will the aggressors allow God Almighty to make their borders peaceful and to satisfy all peoples, to “fill them all of finest wheat”? Will the aggressors allow the word of God to reach the hearts of all people, especially the hearts of the strong and the powerful, so that Jerusalem truly becomes the city of the Resurrection and the new life?



We celebrate the Resurrection in the Holy City. We hope that all those all over the world who celebrate the Day of Resurrection will be aware of the ongoing death and struggle in the Holy City of the Resurrection. The oppressed seek refuge in God, and all the righteous in the earth. Jerusalem, the city of the Resurrection, needs to be saved from ongoing death, hatred and injustice imposed on its people. May new hope shine upon us, and a new life begin in Jerusalem for all those who love Jerusalem.

*Christ is risen. He is truly risen.*



### *Patriarch Michel Sabbah*

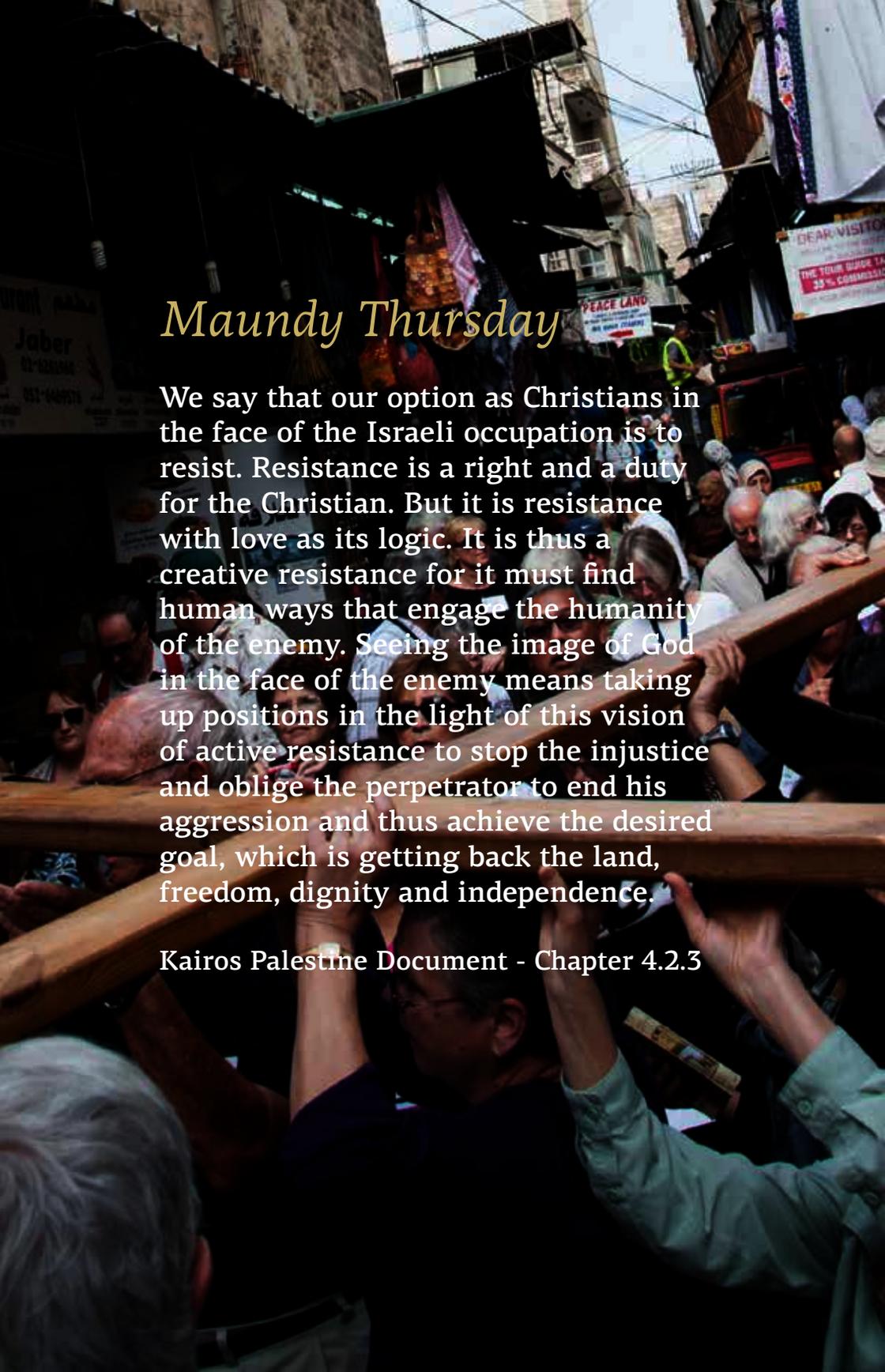
H.B. Patriarch Michel Sabbah served as the Archbishop and Latin (Roman Catholic) Patriarch Emeritus of Jerusalem from 1987 to 2008. Patriarch Sabbah was ordained a priest for the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem in June 1955. He was a parish priest for a few years before being sent to the University of St. Joseph in Beirut to study Arabic language and literature. Shortly thereafter, he became director of schools for the Latin Patriarchate. In 1980, he was named President of the Bethlehem University. In 1987, Pope John Paul II appointed him Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, making him the first native Palestinian to hold the office for centuries. Since 1999, Patriarch Sabbah has been the International President of Pax Christi, a Catholic organization promoting peace. Sabbah resigned as Patriarch in 2008. He is currently the Grand Prior of the Chivalric Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem, one of the knightly orders founded in 1099. 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.



*Kairos Palestine would like to thank all the contributors for their help on this Easter Alert.*

*A heartfelt thank you to Loay Sababa for the inspiring photos included.*





## *Maundy Thursday*

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 - Chapter 4.2.3

# Truth, Solidarity & Love

*By Omar Harami*

I suggest that on Maundy Thursday people read the entire chapters of Luke 22 and John 13 to prepare for Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Both chapters introduce the important events and teaching of Jesus prior to his betrayal, arrest, crucifixion, death and resurrection.

As I prepared for my own reflection on Maundy Thursday, a number of themes rose from these chapters:

## **A. Truth: Jesus spoke openly and truthfully about a number of issues**

The powerful are determined. Things do not look good. The cross is inevitable. They have made the decision, Jesus must be killed. They have used their money and connections to bribe one of his followers to hand him over, they have infiltrated the movement, and they are not planning to turn back.

This is very much how we believe today as Palestinians. The powerful—the Israeli government, the USA administration and many leaders of the world, including some of the Arabs—have decided to put an end to the Palestinian people’s fight for liberation. In many ways, the impending “Deal of the Century” seems like the deal of the 30 silver coins given to Judas. The dramatic cuts of financial support to the Palestinian Authority, UNRWA and Palestinian organizations and hospitals are an attempt to silence the just demands of the Palestinians for justice. Today, the challenges facing Palestinians are huge and the reality on the ground is not in any way in our favor.

Our weakness: Jesus diagnosed the weakness of his movement. Although he had spent many years in the disciples’ training and preparation, his followers are not all loyal nor do they have sufficient faith and courage to represent him. Some



will betray him, others will deny him, and most will merely abandon him and be silent. Understandably the challenges are big and not all are willing to pay the price. The gospel of Luke also depicts childish debates among his followers: “Who is greater?” The reality seems dim. How can Jesus face empire with such weak followers?

This is also true in our context. Many of those seeking a just solution for Palestine are weak. Many are willing to back off on our just demands, some tend to use language that hides the real truth in order to avoid being accused of being pro-Palestinian, and many are also silent when things get tough. Even the ones who speak seem to be trying to compete over who is more effective, more prominent—who is greater. Today the reality on the ground mandates us to look critically on our movements and to overcome our weaknesses by placing the people we serve as our priority.

### **B: Solidarity: Support is courageous and costly**

Solidarity is expressed beautifully in the sharing of wine and bread from one cup and one plate. Everyone takes as much as they need, while keeping in mind there are others also requiring sustenance. Coming together around the communion table is all that is required to build true community. I admire the courage of the family of Saint Mark (the upper room was located in the house of Saint Mark). It was a courageous and generous action for the family to share their house with fugitives.

Today, regardless of all the challenges we are facing in Palestine, we are blessed with true friendships and solidarity. When things are getting tough, many are showing true solidarity by speaking truth to power. True community and solidarity is not only in Palestinians receiving support, but also in our being ready, as Palestinians, to provide support for the many diverse people struggling against the power structures in their own context.



## **C: Love: The nature of love is revealed throughout the Maundy Thursday readings:**

Apart from Love being an emotion and a practice, it is also a word that needs to be both spoken and heard. It takes courage to say, "I love you." This is why Jesus said it openly to his disciples.

1. Love gives us the grace to serve others. Many are in need of help. We all have what is needed to serve regardless of how vulnerable we are. Even as he was on his way to the cross, his disciples saw how he used his energy to serve those he loved.

Today, there are many who are suffering in our own context, in Palestine, not only directly from political injustice, but also from the social and economic injustices that are within our society. Serving people, not politics, is the example set for us by Jesus.

2. Love gives us the grace to be served. Peter loved and therefore served Jesus. In true love, we don't want the people who love us to become our servant. So, it is therefore a challenge to be open to being served by others. It requires us to set aside our pride and be humble.



Today, it is important for Palestinians to celebrate and recognize all the people who do support us, regardless of their faith, nationality, identity, color, gender, etc.--especially the love we receive from the Jewish communities in the Diaspora, inside Israel, and people who are on the margins within their own communities.

3. Love makes us forget about our status, makes us humble, restores our humanity and pulls down the walls that separate us. Jesus is the master, yet he removed his outer robe, picked up a towel, and washed the feet of his followers, one of the lowliest of jobs in the eyes of society.

Today, being humble and serving others is one of the most common preaching topics, yet one of the least practiced in the church. Serving others and letting go of our privileges is not an event or ceremony. It's a way of life. Few can truly practice it, as it is not logical. Many spend years in university and seminary, perfecting their gifts and abilities to reach the top of their community. To many, it seems illogical and a waste of knowledge and experience to humble oneself, yet that's the way of Christ.

I believe we must all abandon the podiums and pulpits to be present with the people who are on the frontline of resisting injustice.



## Conclusion

As I continue to reflect on Maundy Thursday with the current dark realities on the ground in Palestine and Israel, I comfort myself with the words of Christ: “Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God” (John 13:3). This is the truth for us as people of faith: God has the final word and truth is stronger than the sword.

I also reflect on the words of Christ in Luke 22:26, “But you are not to be like that,” on how our communities and movements should be. Very powerful and challenging words that require us to continue reflecting on how we do our work and ministries.

It is because God loves us that he sent his only son to save us by showing us the way of life that brings us closer to God. As people of faith we should always keep our eyes focused on the resurrection, “Qyameh” (in Arabic). But the resurrection is not only an important incident in history. It is a mentality, a way of life.

We are happy that Global Kairos is using the Sabeel Kumi initiative, along with other initiatives in its action plan for 2019, the Kairos year.



*Omar Harami* is an Orthodox Christian, a member of the Steering Committee of Kairos Palestine, Christian Peacemaker Teams, and serves as the Administrator at Sabeel- the Center for Palestinian Liberation Theology



# Do No Harm! Palestinian Call for Ethical Tourism/Pilgrimage

*By Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI)*

Palestinian civil society calls on all international visitors, especially pilgrims, and people of conscience to do no harm to our nonviolent struggle for our rights under international law by respecting our ethical tourism guidelines.

Based on the UN's World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) affirmation in its statutes that it fundamentally aims at "the promotion and development of tourism with a view to contributing to [...] universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion";

Given the escalating grave Israeli violations of Palestinian rights and freedoms, most notably in the continued illegal and brutal siege on Gaza, which will be uninhabitable by 2020, according to a UN report; forcible displacement



of Palestinians from their homes; entrenched apartheid through the adoption of the “Jewish nation-state law”, which embeds institutionalized racial discrimination in Israel’s basic laws, in addition to the already existing more than 65 discriminatory laws; and ongoing refusal to respect the rights of Palestinian refugees as stipulated in international law;

Taking into account that Israel’s tourism sector “benefits from and drives Israel’s unlawful policies and practices in the occupied West Bank, including the confiscation of Palestinian land and exploitation of Palestinian natural resources, unlawful excavations at archeological sites, the obstruction of the Palestinian economy, and the transfer of the protected Palestinian population,” denying Palestinians their right to sovereignty over their own heritage and culture;

Given Israel’s continuous sabotage and/or theft of Christian, Islamic and even Jewish Palestinian heritage sites and properties in Jerusalem and the occupied Palestinian territory, including attacks on and harassment of Christian and Muslim faith leaders, in addition to its direct



responsibility for the rampant vandalism of Palestinian churches and mosques through its systematic and deliberate failure to identify, indict or penalize those responsible; In the light of the fact that Israel employs tourism to whitewash its war crimes and grave violations of Palestinian human rights, as part of its “Brand Israel,” “Tel Aviv Global” [1] and pink washing campaigns which cynically promote LGBTQIA tourism, and which are condemned by leading Palestinian queer groups;

Based on the moral obligation of all visitors, especially pilgrims, to do no harm, and on the 2009 Kairos Palestine call from Christian Palestinian leaders, which considered “boycott and disinvestment as tools of nonviolence for justice, peace and security for all”;

And inspired by the global struggle against apartheid in South Africa, which included calls for boycotting tourism there,

**Palestinian civil society calls on all international visitors [2], especially pilgrims, and people of conscience to do no harm to our nonviolent struggle for our rights under international law by respecting the following guidelines:**

- Do not visit historical/religious/touristic sites [3] in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and its Old City, that are illegally controlled by the Israeli occupation authorities, especially those in illegal settlements, such as the “City of David”, or that are promoted as “Israeli” sites, such as the “Tower of David”. [See partial list]
- Avoid all products and services provided by Israeli or international companies that are complicit [4] in Israel’s human rights violations -- including but not limited to Israeli airlines, hotels and other accommodation services, travel agencies, tour guiding services, bus companies and restaurants -- and substitute those with Palestinian or non-complicit providers.



- Pressure online tourism companies, such as Booking.com, Airbnb, Expedia and TripAdvisor, that are implicated in Israel’s violations of international law, to stop operating in or otherwise promoting visits to illegal Israeli settlements, “contributing to their existence and expansion”, and to stop listing “Palestinian homes unlawfully taken under Israel’s ‘Absentees’ Property Law’.”
- Boycott all LGBTQIA+ events organized by or in cooperation with the Israeli government or complicit Israeli institutions [5], and refrain from using any LGBTQIA services or utilities like beaches, bars, hotels or clubs, provided by operators and companies that are complicit in Israel’s human rights violations.
- Avoid any travel itinerary to present-day Israel or illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory that include any links to the Israeli government or complicit Israeli corporations or institutions.
- Increase visits in solidarity with the Palestinian people as well as independent fact-finding missions that have no institutional link of any sort to the Israeli government, complicit institutions or lobby groups.

***Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI)***



*Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.*

**John 13:1-5**

## *Reflect:*

**If you had to apply for a permit in order to travel to your place of worship and sit at the Table with your faith community, how would you respond? If you were denied that permit? In just this way, Christians and Muslims throughout the West Bank and Gaza are kept from worshipping in the Holy City.**

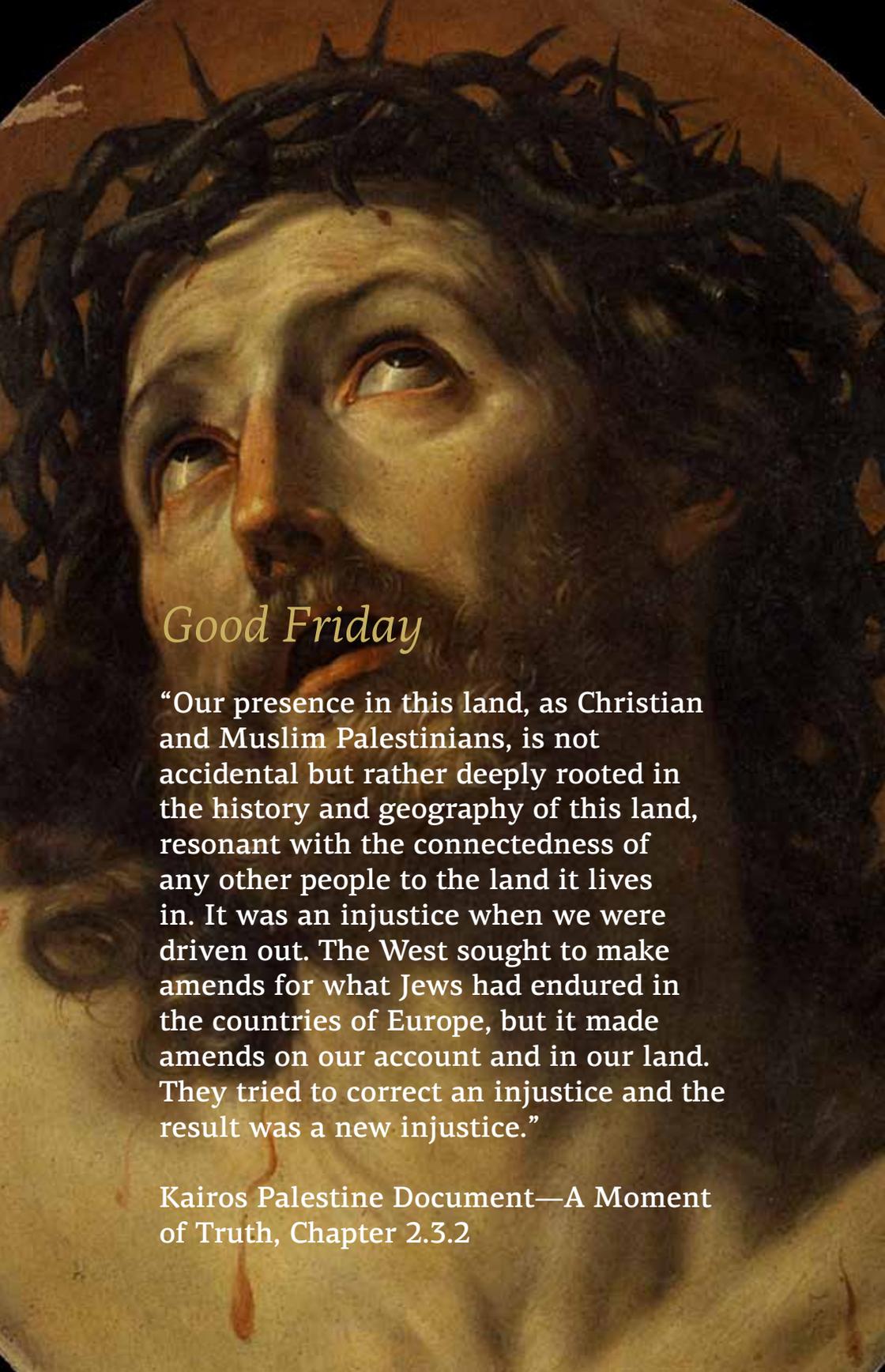
## *Pray:*

**Bread of Life, Taken, Blessed, Broken and Given: take, bless and break me once more, that I may be given to serve and to be served in ways that bless your people and the whole of your creation. Amen.**

## *Act:*

**Order a copy of Kumi Now: An Inclusive Call for Nonviolent Action to Achieve a Just Peace and commit yourself to its creative, nonviolent acts of advocacy for the issues of injustice and human rights to which your spirit is drawn.**





## *Good Friday*

“Our presence in this land, as Christian and Muslim Palestinians, is not accidental but rather deeply rooted in the history and geography of this land, resonant with the connectedness of any other people to the land it lives in. It was an injustice when we were driven out. The West sought to make amends for what Jews had endured in the countries of Europe, but it made amends on our account and in our land. They tried to correct an injustice and the result was a new injustice.”

Kairos Palestine Document—A Moment of Truth, Chapter 2.3.2

# Good Friday in Jerusalem, Now and Then

*By Fr. Dr. Jamal Khader*

Two thousand years ago and before Easter, the crowds were gathering to prepare the sacrifices for the Passover feast. The streets of Jerusalem were full of men and women from all nations. While people were busy with the feast, the leaders and the powerful had a problem, an obstacle to “take off the table”: Jesus Christ. His preaching and message of love, peace and reconciliation represented a discomfort for the mighty and the rich; they needed to get rid of him. That day, the streets of Jerusalem became the Via Dolorosa. The crowds witnessed the crucifixion of an innocent man, a man who preached love and peace was faced with hatred and the worst of torture.

Every year, the streets of Jerusalem become crowded with people who come together to commemorate those events. On Good Friday, believers from the three monotheistic religions rush to their respective holy places: Christians follow the Via Dolorosa towards the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Muslims gather in the Al-Aqsa Mosque for the Friday prayer, and Jews go to the Western Wall. What may seem a rich diversity in the Old City of Jerusalem reveals tensions that remind us of that first Good Friday: peace and reconciliation are replaced with exclusion and denial of rights.

Jerusalem is a city not like any other city. It is the place chosen by God to reveal himself through the preaching, death and resurrection of Jesus. Instead of being the place of diversity and meeting God and others who are different, Jerusalem became a city of conflict and injustice. Isn't it a micro picture of our world today? Some mighty people see in Jerusalem an obstacle to their plans of domination and oppression. The mightiest country in the world rejected the diversity of the city, so they decided to declare it the “unified capital of the Jewish people.” “By moving the American



Embassy to Jerusalem, the question of Jerusalem is off the table”, so they can move ahead with their plans. That is exactly what the leaders at the time of Jesus thought when they decided to crucify him, to get rid of him. But things did not work out as they planned.

God, through the events of Good Friday, surprised us with his own plan. What seemed to be a victory of might and violence turned to be a failure. With the resurrection of Christ, life triumphed over death, love over hatred and mercy over injustice. The darkness of Good Friday did not last. It was conquered by the light of Sunday morning. And the methods used against Jesus--violence, false accusations, treason, intimidation--paved the way to joy, light and new life.





“The land of Redemption is still unredeemed: this is the main contradiction generations live through till this day. Jerusalem and all its inhabitants today, live out this contradictory situation in their daily political life. They are people in search of life; instead they find a situation of war, oppression and death. Here faith has to spread light on the happenings within the land today.” (Michel A. Sabbah). The mystery of Jerusalem is linked with the mystery of salvation: the place chosen by God to save humanity suffers from oppression and exclusion. Jerusalem is like a mother who wants to see all her children gathered around her. Whenever one child is missing, the mother suffers. Denying the Palestinians, both Christians and Muslims, the right to



live and to freely practice their faith prevents Jerusalem from practicing its own vocation, to be a city for all believers, a rich mosaic gathering for humanity. When peace and justice reign in Jerusalem, the light of Easter Sunday will shine all over the world, and humanity will begin to learn how-to live-in harmony with the other, the different other!

Recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of one component of the holy city will plants seeds of hatred and oppression. Jerusalem is the city of God... and of all God's children.

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: ‘May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.’” (Ps. 122:6 -7).



*Fr. Dr. Jamal Khader* is a priest at the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, ordained in 1988. After several years of pastoral experience, he continued his studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome (1994-1998), where he obtained his PHD in Dogmatic Theology.

Fr. Khader has served as: Professor of Theology at the Latin Patriarchal Seminary (1998-2017) and at Bethlehem University (2000-2017); Chairperson of the Department of Religious Studies at Bethlehem University (2003 - 2013); Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Bethlehem University (2008-2013); Rector of the Latin Patriarchate Seminary (2013-2017); and Pastor of the Holy Family Church in Ramallah. He is one of the co-writers of the “Kairos Palestine document.”



# An International Perspective of Good Friday

*By Katherine Cunningham*

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often I have desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See your house is left to you, desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.” (Matthew 23:37-39 NRSV)

Today is Good Friday, the day when Christians remember the sacrificial death of Christ at the hands of religious and political empires. It is the day when just outside the walls of Jerusalem, Jesus was stripped, mocked, stabbed and crucified on a wooden cross, an instrument of the Roman occupation’s execution for criminals. Not long before his death, at Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, he was greeted with the palms and exclamations usually reserved for the king of a nation. But this “king” came instead as a prophet, as a teacher, as the Son of God, with a gospel of love for all. Jesus had wept over Jerusalem, crying out, “If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace!” (Luke 19:42) Christ’s message of inclusion and peace made him one of those prophets targeted and killed by empire and the leaders of the Jerusalem of his day. In our time, principalities and powers still rule in the holiest of cities, Jerusalem.

Nearly a year ago, on May 14, 2018, marking what the State of Israel called the 70th anniversary of independence and the Palestinians commemorate as the 70th anniversary of the Nakba (catastrophe), the government of the United States of America opened the its embassy in Jerusalem, declaring that the city—all of Jerusalem—was the capital of the State of Israel. The Trump administration had ignored decades of diplomatic protocol on the 1995 congressional act recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, refusing



to continue the bi-partisan presidential waver on that act. The White House would not listen to the voices from around the world demanding the US refrain from moving the embassy. Then in early March 2019, the US government merged the US Consulate in Palestinian East Jerusalem with the Jerusalem US Embassy, enshrining in Israeli West Jerusalem the message that all of Jerusalem is regarded as the capital of the Israeli state.

In spite of the denial that this “administrative” move does not change US policy on East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, it sends the chilling message of the USA’s denial of the identity and autonomy of the Palestinian people in their own right. It is the final indication to the Palestinians, after also shutting down the Palestinian consulate in Washington, D.C. this year, that indeed the United States does not know or support “...the things that make for peace.”

With these political actions, the US has shown that it cannot be an honest broker in the search for a genuine peace with justice and full human rights for both Palestinians and Israelis and declares that its political and diplomatic decisions are above international law and global accountability.

For these reasons, in the language of the Gospel of Matthew, the United States has “stoned” those who have relied upon it as a government to deal with justice and wisdom for all parties in the disputes. Over five decades of military occupation and violation of human rights have led to Palestinians being stripped of intact families, homes and ancestral lands, and being forced to become a stateless people. Now they go to Israel to ask for those rights or visas that are taken for granted in so many parts of the globe.

Religious and secular followers of the rabbi and prophet Jesus still weep over Jerusalem. He envisioned all people gathered under the wings of a loving God. And many still gather to pray in their hearts for the city holy to Jews, Muslims and Christians, to grieve and protest over the crucifixion of hope for that peace that Jesus preached. His vision was rooted deeply in the spiritual values of wholeness, justice and love



for all God’s people, including in his homeland, the region that became the “Holy Land.”

Citizens of many nations lift their voices denouncing the Jerusalem embassy move by the US and ask for the country that proclaims itself the “home of the free” to insure freedom for Palestinians, too, and to reset the diplomatic and foreign aid policies with the State of Israel.

And for those of us who gather at the foot of the Cross of our Lord this Good Friday, we bring our solidarity to those who long for the fulfillment of Jesus’ vision for peace. We offer not only our prayers of anguish, but our active commitment to serve Christ by relentlessly seeking freedom and justice for the people of Palestine. And for all who live in the places of suffering and crucified hope.



*Katherine Cunningham* is a leader in the Global Kairos for Justice and its partner organization, the Israel Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) She has been an educator and grassroots international advocate for Palestinian human rights and freedom in faith-based and civil society organizations, including Kairos Palestine.



# Jerusalem is the city of our faith

*By Bishop Atallah Hanna*

Jerusalem is the city of our faith, the guardian of our spiritual, human, and national heritage and civilization. Jerusalem is the holy city that Christians consider their one and only 'Qibla' or the spiritual destination of their prayers, for in it lies the Holy Sepulchre and the Holy Tomb with all their significance in our belief, faith, and heritage.

During Lent, when we prepare ourselves for the Holy Week and the glorious Resurrection, the church is preparing us spiritually through fasting, repenting, worship, and spiritual readings in order to witness the light of the glorious resurrection and for God to allow us to kneel down before His cross, passion, burial, resurrection, and triumph over death.

Jerusalem is the city of salvation, the cross, passion, and resurrection. During this sacred Easter period, Christians around the world look up to the city of Jerusalem and reflect on the salvation related events and the final stages in the



life of Jesus Christ. They also remember the empty tomb where the body of our Saviour was laid for three days before rising triumphantly from the dead.

For us Palestinian Christians, Jerusalem is our capital. We live in it physically, but Jerusalem lives in our hearts, minds, and conscience.

Palestinian Christians hold firmly onto their sense of belonging to Jerusalem. They are the faithful of the first church that was built in Jerusalem because Christianity started from our holy city.

Palestinian Christians defend Jerusalem, reject the policies that the occupation imposes on it with the aim of obliterating the landmarks of the city, distort its history, and undermine its identity, heritage, and authenticity.

While we describe Jerusalem as our city of faith as Christians and the spiritual capital for us and all Christians around the world, yet we reiterate that this city is sacred and holy for the three monotheistic religions. We respect Jerusalem's specificity and uniqueness for it is a city unlike any other in the world. However, the arbitrary and unjust occupation policies in the city seek to transform Jerusalem portraying it as having one religious identity and tone. Additionally, the occupation policies in the holy city ignite hatred, extremism, and violence because Palestinians, Muslims and Christians alike, cannot accept nor surrender to the policies that are planned for the holy city with the aim of weakening the Palestinian Christian and Muslim presence therein.

Palestinians do not talk about Palestine without Jerusalem, neither do they talk about Jerusalem without highlighting the fact that it is the capital of Palestine. They consider Jerusalem to be their spiritual and national capital. The American presidential decision to declare Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem came to contribute towards and reinforce the occupation's policies in our holy city. It is a decision that aims at transforming Palestinians into guests in their own city. However, Palestinians are neither guests nor visitors



in our spiritual and national capital. Jerusalem is our city, our capital, our main destination, and the place of our most important Christian and Muslim holy sites.

I appeal to Palestinian Christians in Jerusalem and the holy land as a whole. I call upon them not to abandon their faith and spiritual values, or their sense of belonging to the Palestinian people regardless of how severe the conspiracies, plans, and suspicious projects are that aim at alienating Palestinians from their Arab-Palestinian national roots.

We might be few in numbers but we are not a minority. We refuse to be viewed as minority or a community or visitors or passers-by in this holy land. The resurrection and the biblical salvation events that accompanied it remind others and us too that this city, this holy place is the cradle of Christianity and the place that first heralded the message of faith to the whole world.

We are 100% Christians and 100% Palestinians. We should hold firmly onto our faith, heritage, and spiritual values based on the Bible. We should also hold firmly onto our sense of national belonging because we were and remain to be Palestinians. Our voice should always be a voice that calls for justice, freedom, and the fulfilment of the hopes and aspirations of our Palestinian people.

*The Lord is Risen, He is Risen Indeed!*



## *Bishop Atallah Hanna*



Bishop Hanna was born on 6/11/1965 in the town of Al Rama in the Upper Galilee. After finishing high school in Al Rama in 1983 he joined the Orthodox Seminary in Jerusalem. In 1984 he left to Thessaloniki in Greece where 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 at 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.



*Then the soldiers led Jesus into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.*

**Mark 15:16-20**

## *Reflect:*

We live still in a world in which, like Jesus, some who speak truth to power, advocate for justice, and serve the forgotten and marginalized are stripped, mocked, beaten and killed. What are you willing to risk and are you willing to follow Jesus into places of brokenness and injustice?

## *Pray:*

God of Hope and Healing, visit your Spirit today upon all those who are suffering for their following in the footsteps of your Son, through whom you are redeeming the world.  
Amen.

## *Act:*

Write to your elected representatives and insist that they learn about the State of Israel's arrest and administrative detention of Palestinian minors. Check out resources at "No Way to Treat a Child"—[www.nwttac.dci-palestine.org](http://www.nwttac.dci-palestine.org).





## *Holy Saturday*

We also declare that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is a sin against God and humanity because it deprives the Palestinians of their basic human rights, bestowed by God. It distorts the image of God in the Israeli who has become an occupier just as it distorts this image in the Palestinian living under occupation. We declare that any theology, seemingly based on the Bible or on faith or on history, that legitimizes the occupation, is far from Christian teachings, because it calls for violence and holy war in the name of God Almighty, subordinating God to temporary human interests, and distorting the divine image in the human beings living under both political and theological injustice.

Kairos Palestine Document—A Moment of Truth, Chapter 2.5

# How can we celebrate Easter while leaving part our family behind?!

*By Yusef Daher*

UN Resolution 476 calls for “the protection and preservation of the unique spiritual and religious dimension of the Holy Places in [Jerusalem].” Similarly, the World Council of Churches maintains that “Jerusalem must be an open, inclusive and shared city in terms of sovereignty and citizenship.” Moreover, movement restrictions that impede access to religious institutions—and are not necessary for the maintenance of public order—infringe on the rights of the Palestinian population to freedom of religion and worship, according to Article 46 of the Hague Regulations, Article 58 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and Article 75 of the First Additional Protocol (IAP).

Jerusalem is a spiritual city for the three monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It is also the center of Palestinian identity and the source of its cultural, historical, economic and social life.

The Israeli government respected the traditions of Easter worship between 1967 and 2005, especially the Holy Saturday celebrations. After 2005, Israeli authorities in Jerusalem increased barriers in the Old City as well as restriction over issuing permits for West Bank & Gaza residents to enter Israel. These systematic limitations have shown discriminatory treatment to non-Jews in the city and divided Christian families during Easter. Every person visiting the city during Easter and Passover can tell the difference in and around the city. During the Easter celebrations, one can see the iron barriers leading towards the Holy Sepulcher and, in contrast, open access to the Wailing wall during Passover. Christians have noticed another dimension to this policy: when the permits are given, only a few members of



the family are granted permits. Sometimes the father and sometimes the mother, but never the whole family. How can we celebrate Easter while leaving part of the family behind?! These increased restrictions and barriers have witnessed some physical clashes that were aired live in some cases and brought international media attention. In 2014, it culminated in the attack on a Coptic clergy member during Holy Saturday celebrations, which led the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem to bring the issue of Access to Worship to the Israeli Supreme Court.

Palestinian Christian organizations, seeking to set a record for their rights, collectively raised a law suit against the Israeli Police at the High Court of Justice. The aim was to get back to the arrangements prior to 2005. when local Christians freely accessed the city without police barriers inside the city that started to interrupt their Good Friday Procession and barred them from accessing the Greek



## Orthodox patriarchate's roof on Holy Fire Saturday.

The court avoided a ruling, asking instead that the two sides reach an agreement. No agreement was reached. The court has asked the police to carefully and respectfully deal with this right for the worshippers. One of the main obstacles that prevented an agreement is that the police still insist on the barriers system to control the crowds while at the same time limiting the numbers of visiting pilgrims into the plaza in front of the Holy Sepulcher. Traditionally this is the place where on Holy Fire Saturday visiting pilgrims would be worshipping and celebrating when the locals place would be on the roof of the Greek Orthodox convent overlooking the plaza.

H.B. Patriarch Michel Sabbah once said: "Our congregations, our sons and daughters were not with me on Palm Sunday. This was due to not enough permits or no permits at all



or very late permits that were received few hours from the procession on Sunday.” He continued saying, “Many bus loads from the different West Bank cities and villages were ready to come but were turned down because the Israeli authorities did not grant them military permits to access Jerusalem for worship.” Very calmly he said, “Our faithful also include Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. They, too, want very much to be here.”

Until this goes back to its normality, the Christian family will still be separated during Easter.



### *Yusef Daher*

Born in Jerusalem in 1966, Daher is the Executive Secretary of the Jerusalem Inter-Church Center of the Heads of Churches of Jerusalem in association with the World Council of Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches. He holds a master’s degree in Pilgrimage and Tourism from London Metropolitan University. One of the authors of the Kairos Palestine Document “Moment of Truth”. Tourism Reference guide for Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, 2014. Tourism team leaders for Jerusalem Multi-Sector plan 2008. Yusef is also Executive Director of the Arab Hotel Association and the Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators Association, representing the Palestinian Tourism private sector in many fields and occasions.



# Limiting the freedom of worship

*By Duduzile Masango*

Freedom of religion is a principle that supports the freedom of an individual or community, in public or private, to manifest one's religion and belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance. It also includes the freedom to change one's religion and beliefs.

Freedom of religion is considered by many people and most of the nations to be a fundamental human right. In a country with a state religion, freedom of religion is generally considered to mean that the government permits religious practices of other sects besides the state religion and does not persecute believers in other faiths. Freedom of belief is different. It allows the right to believe what a person, group or religion wishes, but it does not necessarily allow the right to practice the religion or belief openly and outwardly in a public manner.

Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is widely regarded as one of the most important—if not the most important—articles regarding freedom of religion and belief. It reads:

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.
2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.
3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of



others.

4. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

Leaders in my own country and those of every democratic government with leaders who are of different religious backgrounds should know that the best way to protect religious liberty is to keep the government out of religion. The US is a society built on freedom. As stated in the first amendment to the United States Constitution, freedom of religion prevents the government from forcing citizens to practice any single kind of religion.

Nowadays, as a dark-skinned person, I believe Jesus Christ would have been treated very harshly and rejected for numerous reasons. He would be discriminated against for the color of his skin, undermined for the lack of a capitalist money-making agenda, ridiculed and defamed for the people with whom he associates, and persecuted for his criticism and attempts to resist the system of control and fear.



Colonialist-based ideologies have reshaped theological and religious understandings of the world. This revisionist trend has manipulated theology to justify ideologies and systems that promote racism, oppression, manipulation of resources and discrimination against others. Hindering people to worship is a cause of colonialist-based ideology. Restrictions on religion across the world increased between mid-2009 and mid-2010, according to a 2012 study by the Pew Research Center. Restrictions in each of the five major regions of the world increased—including in the Americas and sub-Saharan Africa, the two regions where overall restrictions previously had been declining. In 2010, Egypt, Nigeria, the Palestinian territories, Russia, and Yemen were added to the «very high» category of social hostilities. With Israel calling itself a democratic state, the Israeli government should move away from religion and allow every citizen of its “country” to worship and pray as they please.

“*Duduzile Masango* is a South African mother of 4, human rights activist. Duduzile has been involved with human rights issues since 2007, she is also a board member of the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions-South Africa. A firm believer that all people are equal in the eyes of God.”



*As a deer longs for flowing streams, so, my soul longs for you, O  
God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When shall I come and behold the face of God?  
My tears have been my food day and night,  
while people say to me continually, “Where is your God?”*

*These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I went with  
the throng, and led them in procession to the house of God,  
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,  
a multitude keeping festival. Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise God, my help and my God.  
Psalm 42:1-5*

## *Reflect:*

Some Holy Saturdays can last a season—that time between a death and the new life that follows. For Palestinians, it’s been seventy-one years of waiting since the Nakba. Think of a time in your own life when you’ve had to wait in doubt or despair. What resources sustained you?

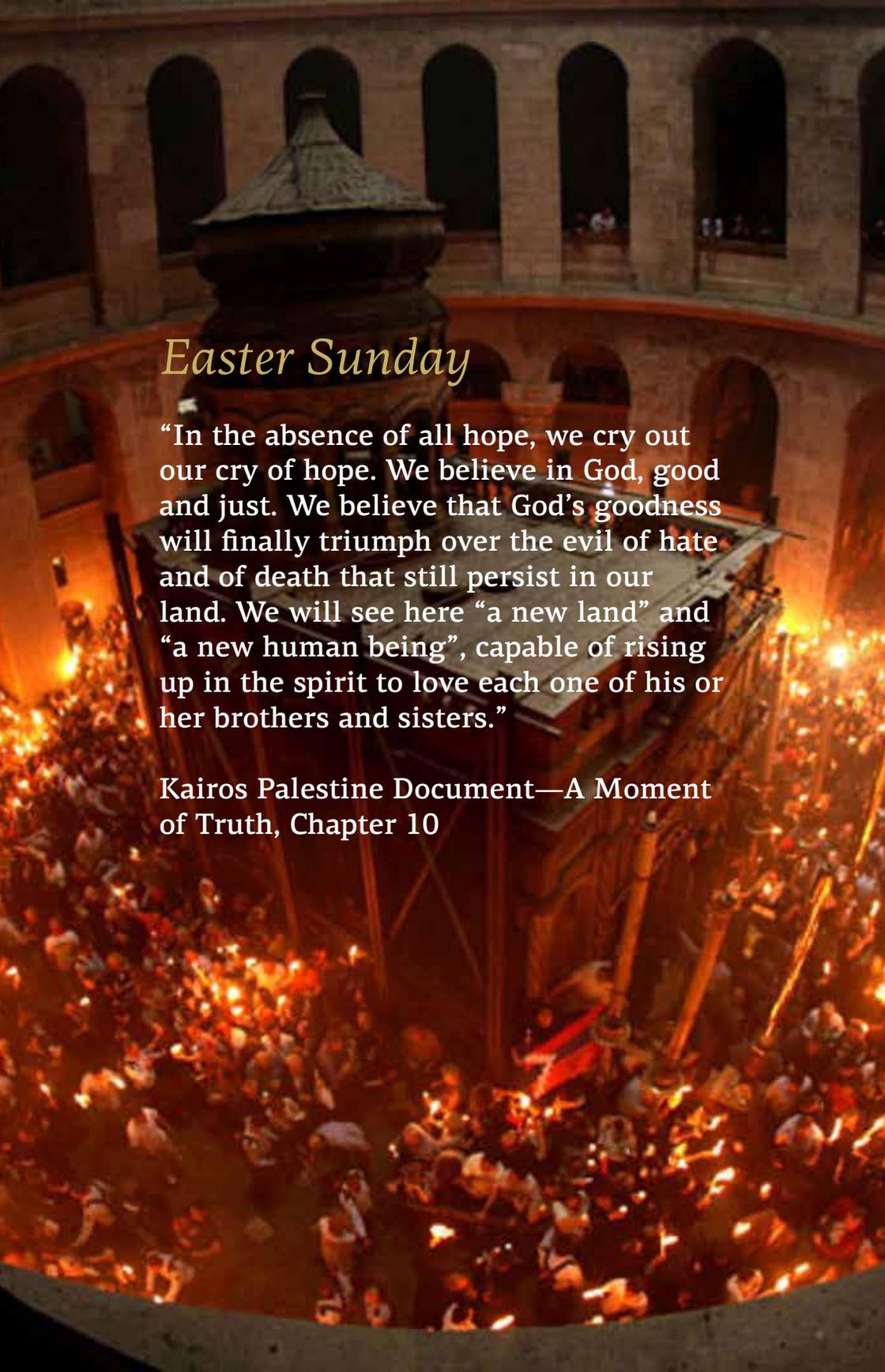
## *Pray:*

God, in the moments of your seeming absence, as we hope when there is no hope, help us trust that you are at work during our Saturdays preparing to bring resurrection in the morning. Amen.

## *Act:*

Read again the Palestinian cry from within their suffering, Kairos Palestine: a moment of truth ([www.kairospalestine.ps](http://www.kairospalestine.ps)). In what way today will you “sit” with our Palestinian family during this “in-between” time. And in what way, will you rise up and make a way for the new life of Resurrection?



A high-angle photograph of a large crowd of people gathered in a circular arena, likely the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. The crowd is holding numerous lit candles, creating a warm, golden glow. In the background, a large stone structure with a conical roof is visible, surrounded by a wall with several arched openings. The scene is captured from an elevated perspective, looking down into the arena.

## *Easter Sunday*

“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

# The meaning of Resurrection for Christian Palestinian youth

*By Father Bashar Fawadleh*

*What is the resurrection actually?*

The Catholic Church religion textbook defines resurrection as “a faith-based fact that the son of God who became man just like us except for the sin. He defeated death for he had risen on the third day. This is considered an action of divine trinity par excellence.” Resurrection is God’s intervention in creation and history through his only son. Resurrection is the cornerstone of our belief as Palestinians, because “if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is out faith.” (1 Corinthians 15:14). Resurrection is a proof of everything that Jesus Christ has done and taught and is the fulfillment of God’s promise in the Old Testament as well as Jesus proclamation during his earthly life: “He has risen, just as he said” (Mathew 28:6). We describe the resurrection with different terms such as “hope” and “expectation” because resurrection is the seed of hope for a better life not only in the future but also for the present of the human being who grows and flourishes in wisdom, stature, and grace.

## *The reality of our present times*

The journey of the Palestinian people is one of dynamic resurrection: death and life as Father Rafiq Khoury describes it. In other words, the more we grow in death, death on the cross, we grow in eternal life, through the resurrection and the ‘power of the Holy Spirit.’ (Romans 15:13). The church is hallmarked by resurrection, and the Church of Jerusalem particularly is marked by the distinguished sing of the ‘empty tomb.’ Everything around us is changing at all social and economic levels as well as the pain and suffering as a result of the occupation that persists in a more systematic and formal manner, etc. It is here that the role of the church comes to the forefront. The church, throughout its long





history in this resurrection movement, has always risen to a new life with new vitality. Despite the pain of the systematic and calculated occupation, the killings that prevail in the East in general and in Syria and Palestine in particular, we somehow lose any glimmer of hope to stay and promote a culture of life. However, this resurrection dynamism between death and the cross met with the that of the empty tomb and the life that both grant us new hope for a better future for our church and our homeland.

Our duty as witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ  
To be witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ today means that through baptism, we have died and resurrected with Jesus. We do not bear witness to the resurrection in the future, but also at the present times, a resurrection that is within us and a resurrection that is current. Moreover, when death appears to have taken place within our hearts in the form of desperation, grief, illness, loss, failure, and sin that we cannot overcome, yet with all this death we should be the witnesses to the resurrection of “hope”. Desperation has no place in our church provided that we search for the true hope. If our hope is about money or properties, there is a place for desperation, but if our hope is in the life of



Jesus within us, then desperation has no such place. We are witnesses of a present resurrection. We are alive despite all the death, grief, illness, and desperation within us; we are alive despite all our suffering as a result of oppression, tyranny, and pain.

Amidst the cases of death that we are witnessing, Easter, the resurrection, reminds us that the last word is for life rather than death. The last word is not for Good Friday but rather for the joy of the day of resurrection. This is what plants hope in the hearts of all young men and women. Hope is not a flying emotion, but rather hope as energy for work and commitment. With all the powers that gather against us, yet hope is a good reason for action. Let us therefore work for Jerusalem, its resurrection+ within us, and our bearing witness to the city of resurrection which is the beginning of everything, carrying the secret of life and conveying it to the world. We, as young men and women, should carry this secret from the heart of the city of Jerusalem, from the 'holy tomb' and preach it, thus becoming young witnesses, the youth of the resurrection and life.





*Fr. Bashar Fawadleh:* is a Latin Seminar Priest in the Latin Patriarchate; he holds a bachelor's degree in theology and Philosophy. Since 2014 he has been the chaplain of Christian Youth Movement in Palestine. He is also the Chief of Christmas Fund Student in Al Quds University- Jerusalem and a member of Justice and Peace Commission



# Being Eyewitnesses and Messengers of Life-giving Justice over Death

*By Ranjan Solomon*

In our celebration of Easter, we reaffirm anew our hope for a world that rejects—rather than promotes—the human-induced separations stemming from injustice. The resurrection abhors the social-cultural-economic-political divisions in a world that God has chosen to love unconditionally (John 3:16). The resurrection ignites the power of justice rooted in love that overcomes all evil, and invites an alternative vision led by the Spirit of God.

Just as it is the Spirit who accompanies Jesus during his life on earth, stirring his preaching and teaching, his uncomplicated acts of kindness and love, it is the Spirit who journeys with Jesus along the road to Golgotha, witnessing Jesus' suffering and humiliating death on the cross. It is the Spirit of God who remains with Jesus through death and burial, signifying resolute love for the only beloved Son who gives his life in love so the world might be reconciled to itself and to God (Rom 8:11).

Like the Spirit who witnesses Christ's suffering, we witness the Palestinians continuing to suffer like Jesus Christ. The pathway that Jesus was forced upon on the way to his crucifixion left him bloodied by the crown of thorns on his head and bruised from dragging the weighty cross on his shoulder.

We witness Palestinian suffering at the hands of extremist Jewish settlers who use crude street violence and evictions to turn the Old City of Jerusalem into an exclusively Jewish enclave. We understand that the "Nakba" (catastrophe) of 1948 feels unending, leaving Palestinians condemned



to a slow death of expulsion and destruction. We see the giant concrete apartheid wall, checkpoints, barriers and settlements, all diminish and dehumanize like the cross and crown of thorns.



Israeli military army officers have turned the Gaza Strip into a “community of funerals, walking wounded and amputated limbs,” reports Middle East

news. These soldiers have indulged in killing, maiming, and wounding Palestinians in the hundreds during the non-violent Great March of Return protests that began in March 2018. The fact that the victims include children, medics, journalists and people with disabilities has not deterred their cruelties, nor has the fact that protesters were unarmed and engaged in peaceful protest along the nominal border, posing no threat to the soldiers or anyone else.

During their Easter vigil, Christians in Palestine must prepare for assaults that may be inflicted on them during their Palm Sunday march. Christians from Gaza will be denied permits to celebrate Easter in Jerusalem, where they have their holy places, creating a sense of desolation and deprivation that repeats itself year after year. The mere denial is a form of persecution. Still worse, Israel was gifted Jerusalem in 2018 under false premises by self-serving politicians; the uncertainty stemming from this only causes greater unease and nervousness.



Yet, the resurrection is the ultimate sign of God's faithfulness to the Son, to each of us, and to all of creation. God works in the world to care for us, heal our wounds, comfort us, and to demand that we live in a state of reconciliation, the precondition of which is peace with justice.

In Jesus' resurrection, a new conception brings down death's dominance over humanity. This new conception expands our own hearts, recreating them in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

The faithful women who waited unwaveringly by Jesus in death become the first eyewitnesses to the resurrection. At this juncture in history, we are likewise called to be faithful eyewitnesses to the suffering of the Palestinians and to be the messengers of the rising peace and the victory of life-giving justice over death.



*Ranjan Solomon* from India is a longtime activist for justice in Palestine. It began in the late sixties during his University days in Delhi and intensified when the First Intifada was launched in December 1987. Since then he has frequently visited Palestine, led several delegations to Palestine, and organized international events on Palestine. He is now actively associated with Kairos Palestine and the Alternative Tourism group. He has helped set up an alliance of ecumenical partners in India who have worked on Palestine solidarity actions. He is also working with human rights groups and social movements in India to forge Palestine solidarity actions.



*But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, the women came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen.*

Luke 24:1-5a

## *Reflect:*

The Kairos movement for freedom, dignity and justice has spread to nations around the world. How in your own community will you live the theology implicit in the document—a way of life grounded in radical faith, hope and love?

## *Pray:*

God, you continue to surprise us by bringing new life out of death—in this life and the next. Renewed now in your own image through the Good News of Resurrection, open before us opportunities to share the surprise with others. Amen.

## *Act:*

This week, prepare a Palestinian feast. Hummus and pita, lentil soup, Arabic salad, fattoush and fresh fruit. Invite friends to share. You can find recipes on the Internet. Celebrate resurrection and pray for new life for the Palestinians.



*Thank you for sharing with us in reflection and prayer.*

*If you're wondering what further action you can take, refer to the list at the end of the Forward.*

*Please, participate in the Call on May 15, 2019, and encourage others to participate by sharing on your social media.*

