



Easter Alert

2020

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

Christ is risen, indeed He is risen. Let us rejoice and be glad.

We rejoice because Jesus Christ, who triumphed over death, enables us also to triumph over all forms of death in our life. In our life, indeed, the forms of death are many.

Some of the world's great—along with many of those who have power—are still walking in the ways of death. They are imposing many wars on our Middle East and on our Holy Land, the land of the Resurrection. They see nothing but death as a way to life. The strong in our land continue to see the death imposed on the Palestinian people as their only way to life and security.

This is not the way of God nor the meaning of the new life given by the Resurrection. The Resurrection means the elimination of all kinds of sin, slavery and death. It is teaching humanity a new freedom, the freedom with which Christ liberated us, to be able to live, love and build the earth for all its peoples, and to make this Holy Land a home for God, and a place of life, freedom, sovereignty and dignity for all its inhabitants.

The Resurrection took place in our land. The Resurrection says that ways of death are not ways of God. That's why the Apostle Paul tells us: «Since you have been raised up to be with Christ, you must look for the things that are above (Col 3: 1).»

A look above, to heaven: men and women need this to remain a follower of life and love. As we easily walk on earth today, not looking up, our lives become a journey in the «valley of death and its shadows (cf. Psalm 23:4; Job 3:5).» God made humankind to live, not to die: «“For God did not make death, he takes no pleasure in destroying the living (Wisdom 1:13).” This is why Jesus Christ suffered, died and rose from the dead: to bring life back to



humanity, to release humanity from the «valley of death and its shadows» so no one remains a death-maker for his brothers and sisters.

Christ set us free, so that we should remain free (Galatians 5:1).

These words are meant for all—little and great alike—especially for the great who allow themselves to oppress people, and to oppress us in our land and homes.

Glorious Resurrection is a feast of life free of all servitudes. Before God, we are all children of God, and children of the life and freedom that God has granted us. Resurrection is a reminder to everyone that a person's glory abides in one's freedom and the freedom of his sisters and brothers. The Palestinian people are here on their land and in their homes, demanding their full freedom. But the powerful want them to be subject, devoid of the dignity that God has bestowed on them. This is what they offer them now in what is called the «Deal of the Century», which is only a deal of «permanent bondage,» far from God's love for all of God's children, far from the equal dignity that God has bestowed upon all of the Beloved's children.



We celebrate the Glorious Feast of Resurrection, the feast of the renewal of humankind's encounter with the grace of God. It happened here in our land. A new light in our land: first a call to the inhabitants of this land, then from our land to all peoples, to be people of life, no one imposing death on another, no one imposing death on us.

This is the day which God has made, a day for us to rejoice and be glad (Ps 118: 24).

Our land awaits those who, together, create this new day again, so we may truly rejoice and be glad in the land of the Resurrection. As we celebrate Easter today, we look to our extended family in all the Churches around the world, celebrating the joy of the Resurrection. We ask you to pray for us, so that the foresights of the prophets may come true and our land become a land of salvation and Resurrection for its people and for all the peoples of the earth.

We appeal to the international community to do its duty, to dare to apply the law of «life» to all, equally, including our land. And you, the strong of the earth, listen to the cries of the oppressed, help them build their life and freedom so that everyone of us will become the people of the Resurrection and the image of God's glory on earth. «So now, you kings, come to your senses, you earthly rulers, learn your lesson! In fear be submissive to Yahweh (Psalm 2:10)!»

Before the Lord of the Resurrection, we all triumph over death, and all peoples become makers of



Resurrection, makers of life, freedom and dignity for themselves and all their brothers and sisters. No human being, however great or strong, is allowed to impose death on another in order to secure one's own life. The lives of each of us—little or great, weak or strong—depend on the life of our brother and sister. God created us in God's image and likeness, great and free, in God's own image. This is what the feast of the Resurrection tells us. It announces that we can be good and givers of life and freedom to each other.

***Christ is risen. Indeed, He is risen.
Happy and Holy Easter.***



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
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Maundy Thursday

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

Kairos Palestine Document - Chapter 1.1.8



Being a Christian Palestinian in Jerusalem in 2020

*by Justice and peace commission
assembly of the Catholic ordinaries
of The Holy Land*

1. The uncertainty about the future of Jerusalem has recently deepened as a consequence of the initiatives sponsored by the United States of America and by Israel. These unilateral moves render any just peace even more difficult to imagine. Israel has proclaimed Jerusalem its eternal unified capital. However, the Palestinians claim East Jerusalem as their capital. The international community wavers, giving contradictory signals after the United States' recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, resulting in the transfer of the US embassy to the city. Yet, the Holy See reiterates its position, claiming a special status for the Holy City, so that people of all religions can visit the city's holy places and worship freely there without fear.



2. In the light of these troubling developments, Palestinian Jerusalemites are raising important questions about their own future and the attitude they should adopt towards these realities. In particular, Christian Palestinian Jerusalemites, because of their small number, making them even more vulnerable, struggle with the impression that they are not taken into consideration and have no means to play a significant role in the future of their beloved city.
3. How can Christian Palestinian Jerusalemites engage with this struggle in the Holy City and take a stand? Observing the powers that be squabbling over their city, Christian Palestinian Jerusalemites find themselves on the side of their people, the Palestinians, suffering like them and hoping with them. However, some look around at the world in which they live and see mounting religious extremism, devastating division within society and a political vacuum, provoked by corruption and lack of creative vision. They also note the turmoil in many surrounding Arab countries and the heavy price Christians have often paid as war, chaos and destruction take their toll.
4. While some Jews claim an exclusively Jewish Jerusalem and some Muslims claim an exclusively Islamic Beit al-Maqdis, some Christian Palestinian Jerusalemites might be tempted to withdraw from public life, clinging exclusively to their own religious identity. They might insist that they are simply Christian and that is enough for them. As regards the present status and future of Jerusalem, they might think only in terms of Jerusalem being their home: a Holy City, disregarding whatever the regime, political or national, may be
5. However, religious identity as important as it might be for a person's identity, is always incarnate in a specific historical, cultural and geographical context. Religious identity alone is not enough to secure the future of Christians in Jerusalem. Limiting identity to religion runs the risk of living in a vacuum, detached from land, people and time, from the very reality that defines life lived to the fullest.



6. Christians are indeed disciples of Jesus Christ. Like him they live in a concrete place at a specific moment of history. The specificity of Christian Palestinian Jerusalemites is the fact that they live in the city of Jerusalem, the heart of the world for so many believers and the center of Palestine/Israel today. Just as Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled his mission in the concrete circumstances of his time, so also his disciples have a mission in the time and place in which they live. As members of the Palestinian people, Christian Jerusalemites are called to carry out their mission among their people and in their land, even if difficulties abound.
7. Jerusalem is both Holy City and city of daily life. Indeed, these two dimensions are inseparable. As Holy City, Jerusalem is shared with all people of faith throughout the world, Jews, Christians and Muslims. Yet as a city of daily life, Jerusalem is shared with all Palestinians and Israelis. Palestinians aspire to establish their own state with East Jerusalem as its capital. Palestinian Jerusalemites cling to both aspects of Jerusalem, a city that unites them with the dreams and aspirations of their people and a city that palpitates as the heart of great universal religious traditions.
8. The Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem published statements on Jerusalem in 1994 and 2006, which underlined this particular context. Jerusalem must be recognized as a city of its inhabitants, two peoples,



Palestinians and Israelis. At the same time, and without contradiction, Jerusalem must be promoted as “Holy City”, spiritual capital for millions of faithful belonging to the three monotheistic religions. In the 2006 statement, the Heads of Churches declared: *“Jerusalem, heritage of humanity and Holy City, is also the city of daily life for her inhabitants, both Palestinians and Israelis, Jews, Christians and Muslims.... Holy places and living human communities are inseparable.... Jerusalem, Holy City, heritage of humanity, city of two peoples and three religions, has a unique character that distinguishes her from all the other cities of the world; a character which surpasses any local political sovereignty....”*

9. Christian Palestinian Jerusalemites, solidly rooted in their personal identity, in its religious and national dimensions, can respond fully to their local and universal vocation, working for equality, justice and peace, contributing by all possible means to bring the conflict in Jerusalem to an end. Jerusalem can become again both a holy and a human city, a city of God and a city for all its inhabitants as well as an inclusive, open city that is accessible for all who seek to go there.
10. The commitment to this vocation was recognized and celebrated by Pope Benedict XVI on his visit to the Holy Land in 2009. During the mass celebrated in the Kidron Valley in Jerusalem, on May 12, 2009, the Holy Father said: *“Standing before you today, I wish to acknowledge*



the difficulties, the frustration, and the pain and suffering which so many of you have endured as a result of the conflicts which have afflicted these lands, and the bitter experiences of displacement which so many of your families have known and – God forbid – may yet know. I hope my presence here is a sign that you are not forgotten, that your persevering presence and witness are indeed precious in God’s eyes and integral to the future of these lands. Precisely because of your deep roots in this land, your ancient and strong Christian culture, and your unwavering trust in God’s promises, you, the Christians of the Holy Land, are called to serve not only as a beacon of faith to the universal Church, but also as a leaven of harmony, wisdom and equilibrium in the life of a society which has traditionally been, and continues to be, pluralistic, multiethnic and multireligious.”

11. In unity, all Jerusalemites together with all who love the city are called to cooperate in order to realize the vocation of the city called to be holy, making it, by their prayer and by the services they offer in it, a city of equality and justice, a city of peace for its inhabitants and for those coming from all over the world. Christian Palestinian Jerusalemites are both Palestinian and Christian, and thus they make their contribution to the holiness of the city and to the struggle for the dignity of all who live there. Thus, they witness to Jesus Christ, who lived and taught in Jerusalem, redeeming the world there, by his passion, death and resurrection.



Founded on April 20, 1971, the Commission for Justice and Peace functions under the auspices of the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land as a Catholic resource, liaison, and animation center to further the social mission of the Church.



Through the Tunnel Comes the Light

By Shatha Bannoura

Going back more than twenty years of my life, I was holding the hands of my younger cousin and walking together in the old city of Beit Sahour—the town of the shepherds' field. It was my first time to directly encounter an Israeli Jeep. My heart raced. As a little kid, I could not understand why I should face an armed vehicle. Nonetheless, since I was the older, I had to show courage. I told my cousin to keep calm, and we walked together to our grandparents' home. That incident was a turning point in my life. As a Palestinian who lived a serene childhood in Kuwait, it was now a different reality. But I was able to understand how to escape from danger, the same way I escaped with my family from Kuwait during the Gulf War.

After that scary encounter, I started to ask questions, seeking some truth about our situation as Palestinians. At the time, while I was at school—where unfortunately the history of Palestine wasn't taught—I would sneak some time to read about Palestinian history. Our home was between Ramallah and Bethlehem, the first two cities I got to know in Palestine. One day during Easter time, the family decided to celebrate Palm Sunday in Jerusalem. I was very enthusiastic since it would be my first time to conceptualize how Jesus had entered Jerusalem. As a Palestinian, I should cross the Israeli checkpoint to be able to reach Jerusalem. We were supposed to leave three hours before the start of the celebrations to ensure a timely arrival.

After crossing the checkpoint, the journey continued as if we were on a trip to a different country with a different reality. I started asking questions as we passed a stunning Orthodox Monastery and discovered it was Mar Elias Monastery. Amazed by the beautiful streets and astounded with the spectacular architecture of houses on both sides of the street, I turned to my family, telling them these were homes of Palestinians. That was very obvious to me. Each stone was like a crying stone missing its inhabitants.



I wondered to myself how the previous landlords would feel if they would pass this neighborhood.

We continued our journey and reached the starting point of Palm Sunday. We began our walk from Beit Faji on the eastern slope of Mount of Olives. There were people coming from all over the world to celebrate. I could see all kinds of flags. The only flag I could not see was the Palestinian flag. Palestinians were afraid to hold the Palestinian flag, as this would be a crime and they would be led to Israeli prisons.

From five million Palestinians, I am a part of the tiny percentage who are fortunate enough to be allowed, ironically, to enter Jerusalem with an Israeli permit. I am the indigenous daughter of this Holy Land and I am a stranger in my own home. It hurts every time I enter Jerusalem as “a visitor.” It hurts me walking the Via Dolorosa to reach the Holy Sepulchre, having to face Israeli soldiers every couple of meters. Nevertheless, with all the mixed feelings while walking the streets of Jerusalem, no one on earth had the right to prohibit my entering the Holy Sepulchre and witnessing the resurrection of Jesus. For me, a Palestinian Christian, in the same way Jesus has risen, justice will rise one day, and the long tunnel will lead us to the light.



Shatha Bannoura is a holder of an Accounting bachelor's degree, MA in International relations and Diploma in Community Trekking Tour Guide. Shatha has worked in the banking sector along with project funding sector. Shatha has been involved with Kairos Palestine since its beginning and is a member of Kairos Youth Group.



*Let me sing for my beloved
my love-song concerning his vineyard:
My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.
He dug it and cleared it of stones and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watchtower in the midst of it,
and hewed out a wine vat in it;
he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.
And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah,
judge between me and my vineyard.
What more was there to do for my vineyard that
I have not done in it?
When I expected it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?
Isaiah 5:1-4*

Reflect:

Recall a time when circumstances offered you the choice to turn away in fear or to move ahead with courage. What did you learn through that experience?

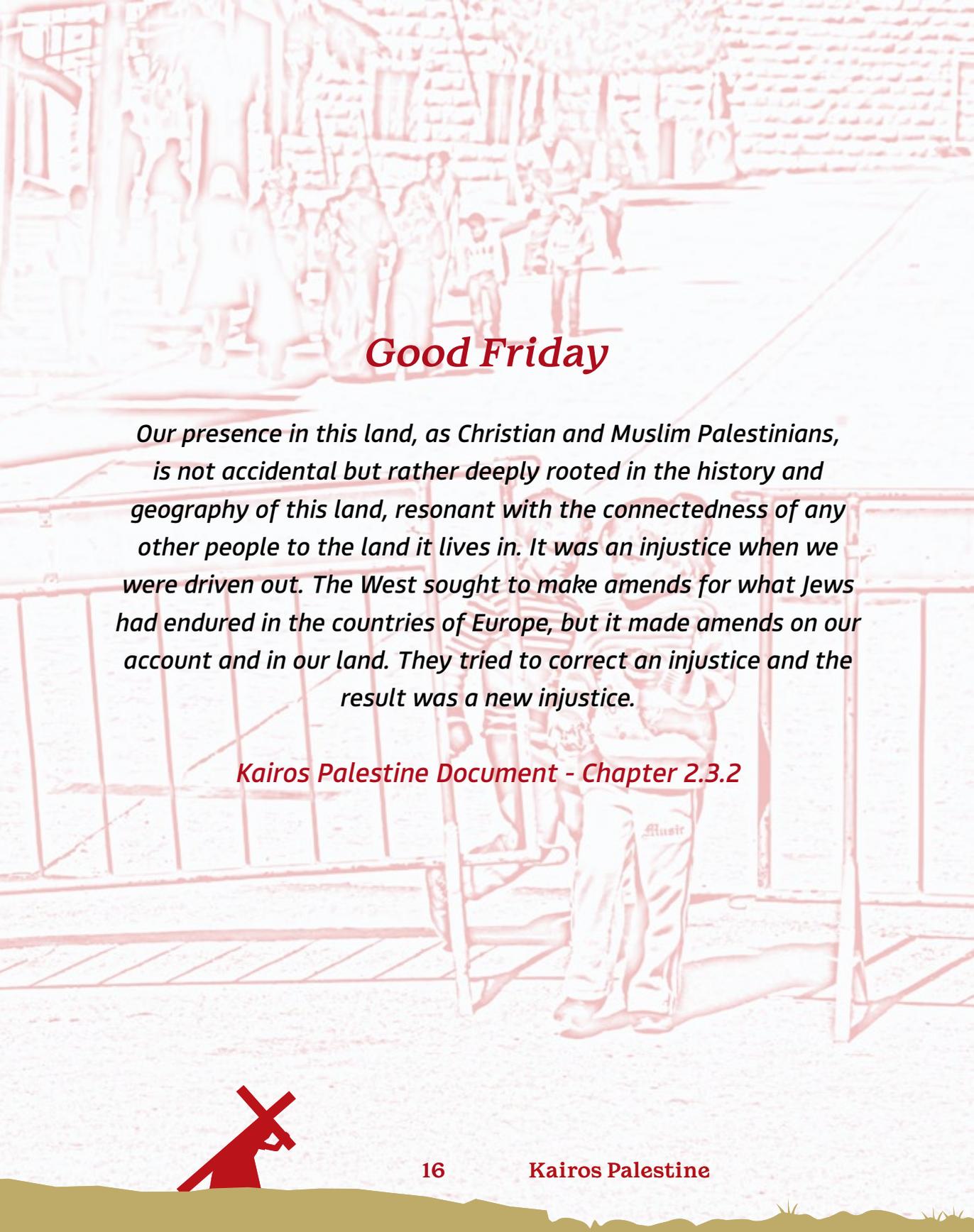
Pray:

Lord of the Vineyard, we pray for our sisters and brothers, Christian Palestinian Jerusalemites, who struggle daily to fulfill the mission you have given us all. Strengthen them—and us—to be a leaven of harmony, wisdom and equilibrium in our communities, to witness to the dignity of all, and to work for justice and peace. Amen.

Act:

Consider not receiving the Eucharist today as an act of solidarity with West Bank and Gazan Palestinians—Muslim and Christian—who cannot attend their places of worship in Jerusalem.





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 - Chapter 2.3.2



“When the exception is the rule”

The arrest of Palestinian children in East Jerusalem

For Palestinian children in Jerusalem, simple errands like walking back from school or going to the grocery store mean exposure to the risks of being shot or arrested by Israeli forces without any reason or legal ground reason.

At approximately 5:00 p.m. on 24 January 2019, Mohammad Al Qasawmi, 14 years of age, was on his way to the grocery store in East Jerusalem when he saw some young men gathering around the store. Trying to find a way out, he bumped into someone and fell on the ground. As he tried to get up, Mohammad suddenly was shot from the back by Israeli undercover agents. That act contravened international regulations which necessitate that lethal force must be utilized only as a last resort in cases of life-threatening situations or exposure to serious injury.

Mohammad fell to the ground. “I felt so much pain, I lost consciousness and woke up inside an ambulance at a checkpoint,” Mohammad told Defense for Children International - Palestine.

Mohammad was transferred to Hadassah Hospital in East Jerusalem and underwent surgery where he remained in intensive care for four days. Due to the bullet penetration, doctors needed to remove Mohammad’s spleen, and stitch his stomach, kidney and diaphragm.

Despite calls for impartial and transparent investigations, accountability for shootings by Israeli forces are extremely rare. Israeli forces enjoy near complete impunity for the grave violations evoked against Palestinian children. This includes the unjustified use of excessive and intentional lethal force, making Palestinian children increasingly vulnerable to violence.

With disregard to his medical condition, Mohammad was handcuffed to the bed by his right hand throughout the entire period while being guarded by four Israeli border policemen. Mohammad was informed that he was under



arrest on the accusation of taking part in clashes and throwing Molotov cocktails. His detention was extended in absentia by the Israeli Magistrate Court.

Unlike the occupied West Bank where Israeli military law applies, East Jerusalem falls under Israeli civilian law. Children are subjected to the Israeli Youth law, which in theory applies to Palestinian and Israeli children, providing those in conflict with special legal safeguarding and protection during the entire process of arrest, transfer, interrogation and court appearances. In practice, however, Israeli authorities discriminate in the implementation of the law, resulting in the denial of the enshrined rights accorded to Palestinian children in East Jerusalem.

In 2019, 382 children have been arrested with no charges filed against them, while 125 children have been arrested with charges in East Jerusalem,



bringing the total number of arrested Palestinian children to 507 according to the Israeli Police official numbers. In East Jerusalem between the years 2018 and 2019, a cumulative number of 730 children have been arrested with no charges, while 354 children have been charged. Children who are arrested often lack legal guarantees, are often arrested in the late evenings, and are exposed to physical and mental abuse.

In 2019, DCIP collected 35 affidavits from children who were arrested in East Jerusalem. Through an analysis of these affidavits, 49% of children reported being arrested at night, while 57% of them reported being subjected to physical assault, and 34% of them reported being subjected to humiliation and intimidation.

On January 28, in spite of his critical health condition, Mohammad was interrogated in the hospital at noon. «I was alone with [the interrogator] in the room. He showed me a video of someone holding a Molotov cocktail, but I told him it was not me.»

The interrogation lasted for almost one and a half hours, during which the interrogator ordered Mohammad to sign a statement that was written in Hebrew. Mohammad refused to sign the document, because he did not understand its contents. According to records collected by DCIP, 74% of arrested children either signed or were requested to sign a document in Hebrew.

On January 31, Mohammad was released from arrest on the conditions of paying a bail of NIS 2,000 (\$540 US), providing a third party's voucher of NIS 7,000 (\$1900 US), and promising not to contact the suspects in the same case. On the same day of the verdict, the interrogator took a DNA sample from Mohammad under the pretext of "interrogation purposes."

"I still suffer from severe pain at the place of injury and I have medical reviews, which means I cannot go back to school yet," Mohammad told DCIP on February 21, 2019.



As a whole it is apparent that, when applied to Palestinian children, Israeli civilian laws do not approach “guarantee” standards. DCIP’s analysis over past years finds that this is because Israel over-applies the exception clause of its Youth Law to Palestinian children—meaning that for East Jerusalem children the exception is the rule.



Defense for Children International Palestine (DCIP) is committed to securing a just and viable future for Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. For more than twenty years, DCIP have supported and advocated for this child population: investigating and documenting grave human rights violations, holding both Israeli and Palestinian authorities to account, and providing legal services to children in urgent need. DCIP continue to demand national and international bodies enact stronger measures to safeguard this vulnerable demographic of Palestinian society. Since DCIP’s inception in 1991, we remain the only Palestinian human rights organization specifically focused on child rights. DCIP’s highest value is the pursuit of each child’s best interests. To this end, DCIP is guided by the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), as well as other international, regional and local standards.



There is no mercy without love nor kindness or tenderness

By Bishop Atallah Hanna

Beloved sisters and brothers

God being merciful means God is love. John the apostle tells us that God is love. There is no mercy without love nor kindness or tenderness. The most beautiful thing that we discover together in the glory of lent, and at the height of the bleak and terrifying circumstances that we are going through, is probably God's kindness and tenderness with the abundance of love that flows like fresh water of God's blessings and generosity; a love that cleanses our sins, purges our diseases, and grants us strength and steadfastness. God, my beloved, cannot be reached through rituals only, while reiterating the rich traditions of the Orthodox church in this regard that flow magnificently and help us grasp our faith, manifest it with all its beauty, exactly like a great poet who writes a beautiful poem for which tunes are composed, the lyrics are colored and packaged with nice music that helps us understand the words better through a beautiful voice that brings joy to our ears and impacts deeply our souls. While one recognizes the importance of such beauty just like the glow of what is good and righteous in our world, yet every good and every beauty one would see, will be summed up in the body of Jesus as he lay on the cross. The completion of the vision and the completion of beauty and the beauty of perfection are all embedded in the image of the crucifixion and its powerful connotations.

As COVID19 plagues our world and lives, it is imperative that we obey the medical instructions that are meant to protect us against this virus and the measures that governments are applying to minimize its spread and repercussions. We should also fight this virus through our faith and trust that we are first and foremost protected by God's grace. Believing in the existence of God, the holy Trinity, in our lives, helping us more and more so that we do not panic or fear. "Have no fear, for I am with you", I am with you until the end of days. Jesus Christ urges us to overcome the state that



we are in, not because of the virus but rather out of fear? The Church is the larger spiritual hospital in parallel of the physical and medical hospital. A large part of healing is done spiritually and there are plenty of examples in the modern history of patients who overcame their diseases and ailments through their faith and determination to conquer the disease. I stress, of course, that prevention is highly crucial. Anyone who is infected by COVID19 has the moral obligation of distancing him/herself from friends to avoid infecting them. He/she should immediately receive medical treatment to be cured. However, the moral obligation on the other hand is to maintain our ties to a Corona virus patient out of fear, but rather strengthen our relations with that patient out of love for him/her and a desire to support that patient in his/her time of need.

Before we were hit by COVID19, this rapidly spreading pandemic, we have noticed that in our part of the world, human relations and interactions were deteriorating, and the deep value and spiritual related meanings were disintegrating, limiting relations to become financial or interest based. We



saw also a dangerous structural fragmentation at the level of the family unit, in terms of relations between spouses, children with parents and vice-versa. My great friend, Archbishop George Khader, had always a beautiful saying that I always remember. He said that 'Jesus communicates with Himself through the relations between the man and the woman, between parents and children.' Archbishop Khader also said once 'We have become Christians without Christ, since fragmentation makes us as such.' Do you remember how our forefathers showed solidarity among themselves at times of joy and sorrow, when building houses, and the architecture of old houses with their bricks, stones, and arches is a witness to this solidarity and help within the community. They used to work together at times of working the land and at the time of the harvest. Why did we then lose this concept of 'Al Ouna' - the Arabic for collective help from the community? Why did we stop seeing people supporting each other? Does that not indicate that we have ignored and disregarded our love for each other just as we have abandoned and neglected our love for the land. Did that not lead, at one point, to the loss of Palestine as well as to the havoc that the Orient has been dealing with through the major crises that overshadowed most of its countries. Everyone has become equal in terms of the tragedy and catastrophe: the weak and the powerful, the rich and the poor, the leaders and the people, Muslims and Christians, believers and aesthesis, without any difference between one skin color or the other, everyone was united and terrified by the Corona virus.

God is the giver of life and is the healer of diseases. God's relation with us is not merely at the ritual level because we adore Him and try to be closer to Him through these rituals especially at this holy time, yet our relation to God is existential and it strengthens and heals us. The Corona virus as a crisis has revealed the fact that we are at heart of a serious spiritual crisis in terms of our relation with God and Christ. It revealed that we limit this relation to rituals while Jesus Christ is our life. "When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory" as St. Paul said.

Allow me to go back to quote from the sermon of my dear friend Archbishop George Khader who said : " Anyone who does not believe that Jesus Christ is





alive now, and not 2000 years ago, and anyone who does not believe that Jesus loves him personally, his family, and children, is someone who says that Jesus was only mentioned in the scriptures. Jesus is not only in the scriptures, He is in your guts, hearts, and eyes. If you fail to accept him, he would only be a human being who died 2000 years ago. Jesus is alive now. Understand this, reflect on it deeply, live based on it and then you will have life." Jesus does not only exist in the books, He exists in you, in the world. Jesus is therefore is not only present at the alter but also in the hearts. However, He is present at the alter and we receive His body in the form of communion. That is why I refuse the closure of churches during this holy time, I refuse the idea that we will not hold all the important masses during the lent and the Sunday mass, but I support that each one of us should accord attention to his/her condition and health.



Finally, I would like to ask you to kindly pay attention to your health, don't treat it lightly, but also and at the same time, do not undermine your faith and the fact that you are Jesus witnesses here in Palestine, His homeland, and in the East as a whole. Strike a balance between the well-being and good health that God orders us to maintain, and between standing witnesses to Jesus, which is a holy mission that is cherished in words and deeds. Beware of fear, because fear will blind your eyes and kill you morally and spiritually. Keep praying and maintain your good health. Care for each other as we were ordered by our Lord. Do not lose your ties with each other, maintain them. Once we overcome this pandemic, we will all understand that we need love to strengthen us and push us forward towards everything that is good, righteous, healthy, and healing.

May God protect you and keep you safe, and may God save our world of this virus and help us remain true witnesses to our faith to keep it vibrant and glowing in our region and the core of our lives. Amen!



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.



*Ah, you who call evil good and good evil,
who put darkness for light and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet
and sweet for bitter!*

*Ah, you who are wise in your own eyes,
and shrewd in your own sight!
Ah, you who are heroes in drinking wine
and valiant at mixing drink,
who acquit the guilty for a bribe,
and deprive the innocent of their rights!*

Isaiah 5:20-23

Reflect:

In your community, where and how are the rights and lives of children neglected? What are your community's resources for protecting these children and embracing them in love?

Pray:

God, give your people hearts that weep, lips that speak the truth, and hands that work for peace. My heart, my lips, my hands, too, O God, for your use. 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).



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



Confused, Afraid...

Responding Faithfully

By Omar Harami

Trump has declared his “Deal of the Century”, a plan that is founded neither on Justice nor International law—the foundation upon which the international community relies to solve international disputes. Most organizations in Palestine base their local work on international law as the legal tool to end the occupation.

Today many organizations feel as the followers of Christ felt during passion week:

1) At moments... we are confused:

The center of the movement, the leader, is arrested and condemned to die. The religious authorities, Rome and its collaborators, have conspired to silence truth and terrorize the movement with the cross.

Palestinian organizations feel that international law has been abandoned, and that Netanyahu and Trump dictate how things should be run. Palestinians are bullied by the United States and the reality on the ground seems hopeless.

2) At moments... we are afraid:

Peter denies Jesus. Peter is afraid of the tyranny of Rome and its allies. The roman cross succeeds in silencing those who consider speaking out. The followers of Christ scatter.

Many organizations are toning down their work to be less geared around justice in an attempt to stay beneath the radar. Organizations are afraid to be targeted by the monitoring systems of empires.

3) At moments... we are in panic:

Mark runs to warn Jesus of the danger, that the hour has arrived, the soldiers are coming... but Mark is stripped of his clothing and removed from any form of power.



Palestinian organizations continue to call out the injustices faced by the Palestinian people. However, we are stripped of any form of power. Apart from our cry for help, we lack a tangible plan.

4) At moments... we are tempted to collaborate:

Judas feels that the movement is doomed to fail. The odds are in favor of the powerful. Judas comes forward and betrays Christ for 30 silver coins. In the current situation it is easy to give in to the temptations of silver. Israel and its allies are in power. They shape both the sources of funding and the legislation. The powerful demonize and imprison those who resist. It is difficult for Palestinian organizations to survive in Jerusalem without collaborating to some extent.



5) At moments...we are present yet absent:

Mary, the mother of Jesus, and John, the disciple that Jesus loved dearly, are present under the cross yet their voice is not heard.

Like Mary and John, some watch the political developments in silence. They are helpless in the face of the cross and look at Jesus with tearful eyes. Many Palestinian organizations in Jerusalem are angered with what is happening and feel hopeless. The shadow of the cross has placed them in darkness.

6) At the moment... we are responding spontaneously:

Like the women of Jerusalem and Simon of Cyrene, not all abandon Christ. The women weep and cry in remonstrance. Veronica dares to wipe the sweat off the face of Jesus. Simon helps carry the cross. The women of Jerusalem and Simon do not abandon Jesus. They do what they can.

As organizations, we are trying to show compassion and help the people who are suffering. Yet we acknowledge that we are unable to break the chains that hold them captive. We know that we are unable to remove the inevitable death sentence on Palestine, yet we refuse to remain silent and leave Jerusalem without lamentation.

Today, the situation of the organizations in East Jerusalem is not healthy and is very troubling. Darkness covers the sky.

We are in the midst of passion week and we wait to welcome the resurrection. May the power of the resurrection and the Spirit that lit the streets of Jerusalem with tongues of fire bring back hope and life to Jerusalem and its organizations.



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What is the Big Deal? Why Palestinians reject “the Deal of the Century”

By Rev. Dr. Jack Sara

As a Palestinian Christian living and serving on both sides of the Separation Wall, I live with the people on the ground. Being a native of Jerusalem has given me the advantage of understanding how Jerusalem residents think and serving in the West Bank for many years has given me an understanding how West Bankers think. On both sides of the wall, sadly, Palestinians continue to drown in an atmosphere of uncertainty, unfulfilled promises and crushed hopes.

Deal after deal and agreement after agreement has made our people dull and suspicious of anything that is proposed. If we look back at the former peace treaties and proposed partition plans, the losers have always been the Palestinians. We have never gained from any of these plans, only lost more. For example, the partition plan under the United Nations shrunk the Palestinian portion of land to about 43% of our homeland, though the number of Arabs at the time was almost twice that of Jews. In succeeding wars and peace accords, we lost even more land, resources and rights. Through the years that followed, we were given proposals such as Oslo and Camp David, both of which—from our perspective—required greater compromise on our part without making equal requirements from the Israelis. We feel that international peace plans have generally always been biased towards Israel, but none more so than the latest plan from the White House.

Now, we have been offered a deal from the Trump Administration which the president calls “The Deal of the Century.” This plan is basically asking for another huge compromise from the Palestinians; allowing Israel to annex about 30% of the West Bank (which is in itself only 22% of our original homeland) and pushing us increasingly into the margins. Trump’s plan cuts all throughout the Palestinian territories, making it look like Swiss



cheese—with the disconnected “holes in the cheese” being Palestine. The non-contiguous land will be connected by tunnels and “safe roads” which will be controlled mainly by Israel. It is a future of more checkpoints and closures, our freedom micromanaged by another people.

I am sure that aspects of the “peace plan” are more complex than what I have mentioned so far. I am also willing to acknowledge that from some points of view the plan might offer a few positive things for the Palestinian people. Nevertheless, a few economic proposals do not do much to alleviate the larger loss, subjugation and humiliation that this plan imposes upon us.

Taken as a whole, the plan reminds me of a verse uttered through the prophet Micah:

“Woe to those who scheme iniquity, who work out evil on their beds! When morning comes, they do it, for it is in the power of their hands. They covet fields and then seize them, and houses, and take them away. They rob a man and his house, a man and his inheritance” (Micah 2:1-2).

Having a plan without the involvement of the people who have lived in the land for centuries is not a plan at all – it’s a setup. It is an ironic plan that was disrespectfully imposed on us without even asking us of our own opinions.

My friends, when President Trump announced the plan were there any Palestinian leaders with him on stage? Did he make a statement that this is what the Israelis and the Palestinian leaders have agreed upon? No! To us, this plan was nothing more than a scheme cooked up by two leaders who are facing their own political pressures: one with a trial over corruption and another who wants to make a business deal.

We are concerned that this matter will continue to deteriorate the already-precarious situation here. Among other things, it will inflict a greater sense of hopelessness upon our people. And unless something changes, it will





continue to facilitate the depletion of Christian citizens from Palestine.

Many people may not know this, but most of the lands that were confiscated around the Bethlehem Governate—which includes three major Palestinian cities, Bethlehem, Beit Sahour and Beit Jala—have a majority of Palestinian Christians living in them. This so-called “peace plan” will increase the loss of these Palestinian Christian lands. How can it be expected of us that we would agree to a plan that will only inflict pain, loss and suffering on our own people? Under these circumstances, incentive for younger Palestinian Christians to remain here continues to decrease.



In conclusion, the whole situation requires prayer. Here are a few points:

Pray for the peace of God to come upon the Palestinian people in a new way, since clearly no man is able to deliver that.

Pray that there will be an international intervention that will halt all of these absurd plans that are being projected upon us.

Pray for the Palestinian church not to lose hope; but rather the opposite.

Pray that we will become a beacon of hope for our people.

Pray for the leaders of Israel and Palestine to find a way to come together with mutual respect and create our own peace agreement.



Rev. Dr. Jack Sara: Born and raised in the Old City of Jerusalem, Jack was raised in a Christian family but committed his life to the Lord as a teenager after several rough experiences and challenges that many young Palestinians face. His experience of salvation through Jesus Christ led to a dramatic change in his life. While studying in the Philippines Jack was called to serve with the pastoral team of Pasay City Alliance Church; a very prominent church in the Christian and Missionary Alliance church of the Philippines (CAMACOP). After returning from the Philippines to Jerusalem he began ministering in full time capacity with the Evangelical Alliance Church in the old city of Jerusalem, while also teaching part time at BBC. While serving as Senior Pastor for 13 years, he and other likeminded leaders saw the congregation grow and become a church planting movement and a catalyst in reaching out to the Palestinian people and Arabs with the love of Christ.



*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined...*

*For a child has been born for us, a son is given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

*His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless
peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.*

*He will establish it and uphold it with justice and with
righteousness from this time onward and forevermore.*

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Reflect:

The text above, taken from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, is often read during the Season of Advent. In what ways has this promise been fulfilled? In what ways are we waiting still for its fulfillment? In what ways are you preparing the way for its completion?

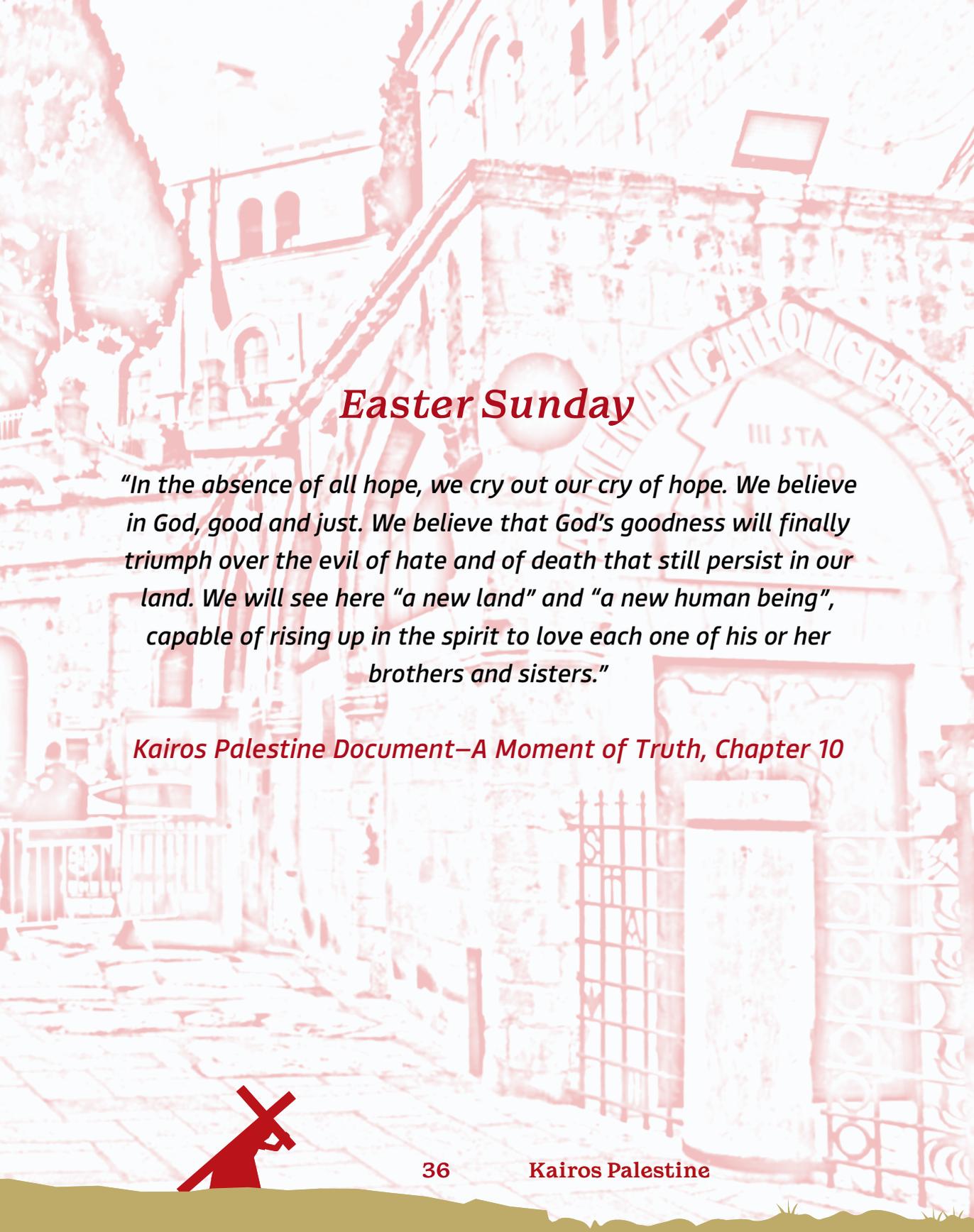
Pray:

God, in the midst of my Saturday moments of confusion, fear, panic and resignation, renew in me the hope of resurrection and stir in me the strength to serve others and the courage to resist injustice. Amen.

Act:

“Our word to the Churches of the world” (Section 6, Kairos Palestine): read again this section from the Palestinian cry from within their suffering.





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 Resurrection of Christ – Our Hope

Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac

The resurrection of Christ is the foundation of our Christian faith. Yes, if Christ had not been raised from the dead, our faith would be in vain, as the Apostle Paul said. We do not exaggerate if we say that if there was no resurrection, Christianity would not have existed! Resurrection is everything! The resurrection has theological, faith and life-long meanings for the Christian faith. Our faith without resurrection ...is in vain!

The resurrection is Christ's victory over death. In fact, in the resurrection, Christ mocked death and everything associated with death. Think with me of the power of death! Who can stop death? All the medicine of the world and all the technology of the world are utilized to postpone death as much as we can. But in the end, we cannot stop it. It surprises us from the unknown, killing our dreams. This is the reality that we were confronted with as a humanity with the spread of the Coronavirus; which reminded man of his limitations before the Creator and in the face of death. Who can defeat death? Except Christ! He trampled death by his death. He marched in the valley of the shadow of death and emerged from it alive and victorious. Our Christian faith, therefore, is that the last word is not to death, but to life. Death has no last word! Corona has no last word. So we can proclaim with Paul: "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" Also, for the same reason, we believe that the last word cannot be evil, injustice or extremism. And the resurrection confirms this. If Christ remained in his grave, Caesar and Pilate would have triumphed. Rome would be victorious. The Pharisees would have won. The mentality of the Law would have won. Extremism would have won. The oppressors would have won. If Christ had remained in the grave, injustice would have triumphed over truth, evil over good, might and sword over meekness and faith.





If Christ had remained in his grave a decomposing corpse, he would have buried with him the ideals he called for, and his kingdom teachings would have become mere unrealistic romantic teachings of a Palestinian rabbi who lived in our land – nothing more. We would not be able to talk about the Kingdom of God amongst us today. But Christ is risen, and His resurrection is the victory of life over death, good over evil, truth and righteousness over evil and injustice, God’s Kingdom over the kingdoms of the world! Neither death, nor extremism, nor Caesar and his soldiers were able to stand in the way of Christ. For Christ:

- Challenged of the assembly of religiosity and extremism, facing the culture of religiosity and exclusion.
- Stood before Pilate, and with his silence he defeated the kingdoms of the world and the culture of death and the sword.
- On the cross he shouted «Forgive them», defeating a culture of hatred and revenge.
- By accepting the thief crucified beside him, he defeated apartheid and racism.
- In the grave, he faced the strongest and most cruel enemies, death, and emerged a victor mocking death.



Today we remember that because Christ arose, we too can experience the same victory. The resurrection of Christ is our resurrection, for He rose and became the first fruits of those who have died; a guarantor. And because Christ arose, we have hope, today and here.

Imagine with me the meaning of life today without the resurrection! The meaning of life is affected. Imagine if death had the last word! We work hard, get weary, and finally go to the dust ... and this is the end! Imagine if the Corona virus triumphed over humanity. Life will be futile and void. As the Apostle Paul says: "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied."

Imagine with me if the last word was for the oppressor and tyrant, under the principle: «I can do what I want for no one can judge me!» Can we accept this? Would God's love, mercy, and justice allow this?



Today, we think of our land under the oppression of the occupation. As we contemplate on Good Friday of a man who was killed by extremism, the absence of love, and the absence of justice, in conspiracy with Caesar, Pilate and the kingdoms of the world, we see our people and the peoples of the region being killed, persecuted and condemned in the same manner and with the same logic. On the cross we saw God's solidarity with the oppressed, the marginalized, and the crushed. We cried with God, the Crucified, and the women of Jerusalem and Mary, over the evil of our world. Over death. Over hate. Over lost hopes of freedoms. In the resurrection, we have a guarantee of the victory of the truth over falsehood.

Yes, Christ is risen. The last word does not belong to death. The last word is not injustice. It does not belong to the occupier. It is not for Caesar. Not for extremism and religiosity. Not to despair and fear. But for life. So, we proclaim today that the logic of war, killing and extremism cannot have the last word in our land and in the world, because we believe in the Lord of the Resurrection, and in the God of justice, the God of love. We believe that justice is coming, and that victory is for our God.

Christ is risen, and His Resurrection shapes our worldview, our hope, our motive for action. The Resurrection gives us hope and strength to rise, build and change our reality. The resurrection removes despair from our dictionary, despair that paralyzes and frustrates humankind. Resurrection frees us from the chains of fear; the fear of death and the unknown. Fear of tyrants. The resurrection urges us and even forces us not to accept the chains of injustice and evil as a reality that will not change.

So, in conclusion we say, the resurrection reminds us and even assures us that the last word always belongs to God, and that salvation belongs to the Lord, and that victory is for God, for life, for truth, and for love. So today we sing with Hannah the mother of Samuel:

My heart exults in the Lord; my strength is exalted in my God... because I rejoice in your victory...



The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. (1 Samuel 2:1, 7-8)



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 (8) and Zaid (6).



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
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. Contact us for any other reason, too. Our strength and courage are emboldened by our contacts with you.

