

Israel/Palestine Statement 2023

Israel/Palestine Common Concern Network
The Iona Community



This statement is a response to the extreme and accelerating urgency of the existential threat to Palestinians, and the *Cry for Hope* from Palestinian Christians calling us to renewed action. We reflect on developments and on our experience since our previous statement in 2017. By refining our position we hope to support Iona Community Members and Associate Members to come to a deeper awareness and activism which promotes a just future for *all* in Palestine and Israel.

Current Context

2023 is the 75th anniversary of the Nakba (the catastrophe). When the state of Israel was being established (1947-1949), about 750,000 Palestinians were dispossessed and displaced. Many became refugees, thousands were killed and some 500 villages razed. This process of ethnic cleansing has continued ever since.

During the 2020's the situation has been deteriorating rapidly, with increasing attacks with impunity on Palestinian women, men and children, their property and land.

Those Palestinians who remain exist, despite international law, in what amounts to apartheid (see B'Tselem and Human Rights Watch et al) in a *de facto* single state from the River Jordan to the Mediterranean.

Our Commitment

We maintain our position as in 2017: a just future for Palestinians and Israelis is only possible through the establishment, throughout Palestine and Israel, of equal rights irrespective of religious and ethnic background and identity. In building on and expanding the colonial practices of the British and others, the State of Israel violates the human rights of Palestinians in a settler colonial project. We call for decolonisation with an active, peace-making, reconciliatory and reparative process, undoing the harm that the settler colonial project has inflicted on Palestinians.

We again commit to and call for international pressure through the non-violent Boycott, Divestments and Sanctions (BDS) movement. BDS recognises the human rights of all Palestinians suffering from Israeli oppression in Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and beyond. BDS is an act of non-violent solidarity, pursuing equality, freedom and justice. It is consistent with the spirituality and values of the Iona Community as we act in obedience to Jesus' teaching to love our enemies whilst resisting evil.

We join in international solidarity with Palestinian unarmed popular resistance, anti-colonial Israeli peace movements, and like-spirited international organisations. In 2020 we heard the *Cry for Hope*, a plea for renewed and decisive action issued by leading Palestinian Christians. Since *Cry for Hope* was issued, reports from Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, prestigious Israeli Human Rights organisations (B'Tselem and Yesh Din), and the UN have found that the actions of the Israeli State meet the internationally recognised legal definition of apartheid.

We call on our churches, denominational and local, to move beyond passive concern to action. As in South Africa during its own struggle with apartheid, the authors of *Cry for Hope* called for the Church worldwide to be true to itself. Palestinian Christians have been knocking on our door for decades, asking that churches work for justice. Too often they are given charity without justice. In response, we call for the morally responsible investment of church-based

funds and encourage churches to challenge any misuse of religion that promotes oppression or supremacism.

We reaffirm the need to scrutinise Christian theology, repenting for historical antisemitism and condemning Christian Zionism. We oppose any theology or use of Scripture to justify privilege and discrimination, as being contrary to the teaching of Jesus. To oppress, whether with violence or with ideas, dehumanises both the victim and the oppressor.

We deplore and condemn both antisemitism and racism towards Palestinians. With a growing number of Jewish voices worldwide we reject the false equivalence between Judaism and Zionism; doing so is not antisemitic. In challenging Zionism, we refute the false legitimacy and impetus given to anti-Palestinianism which is enshrined in Israel's Nation State Law.

We join with Human Rights Watch and the UN report calling for the rejection of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism. Its negative impact on advocacy is reported by the European Legal Support Center

We reject any characterisation of Palestine and Israel as “a conflict” when the struggle is far from equal. We deplore the way in which the situation is misrepresented in much of the media and political discourse. This is not a religious conflict or struggle but a political issue requiring a political solution based on international law and principles of justice. We call for the inclusion of Palestinian voices and experiences in addressing the issue.

We welcome all interfaith and other initiatives concerning Palestine and Israel which recognise the settler colonial system and desire a future under international law with justice for all. We distinguish between partners in dialogue and those who engage in “peace initiatives” that merely seek to normalise settler colonialism. Dialogue across divisions fosters relationships: a foundation for an ultimate creative and just future for all.

We stand in communion with all people in our shared home Earth. As we affirm and seek equal rights for Palestinians and Israelis we are united with all people across the world especially the displaced, disadvantaged and oppressed. In the words of Maya Angelou, “No one of us can be free until all are free”. This call to unity is made even more urgent by the world-wide ecological crises, felt in Palestine and Israel in extremes of heat and floods with vulnerabilities exacerbated by Israeli policies. We are called to renewed global vision and cooperative action otherwise we all face a global catastrophe.

We reaffirm the 2012 Iona Call, responding to the 2009 Kairos Palestine document, *A Moment of Truth*: ‘We are called to respond boldly to the deepening suffering of our sisters and brothers in Palestine under occupation by Israel. We stand in faithfulness and solidarity with Palestinians and Israelis who are working tirelessly for a peace based on justice.’

Furthermore, we echo the 2015 Kairos Britain document Time for Action: ‘We can be silent no longer. It is time for prophetic faithfulness. It is time for action’.

Contact us

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