

**Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel**  
By Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Society  
14 May 2018

Israel was proclaimed as the Jewish state in Palestine in May 1948. The United Nations supported the ideology of Zionism – the religious and political movement that sought to recreate Israel as the center of Jewish identity. Proponents of Zionism claimed that a Jewish state was essential for protection from anti-Semitism (hostility toward Jews). The establishment of the State of Israel is critical to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that continues today. There is much suffering and injustice in Palestine-Israel. Christians are called to build peace rather than contribute to persecution in a land that should be holy.

Pilgrims from Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Society (Lott Carey), a global Christian missions community of African-American Baptist heritage, engaged in a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace in Palestine during February 2017. This journey was more than an opportunity to see the beauty of the landscape, marvel at the architecture, and celebrate “walking where Jesus walked and standing where Jesus stood”. It challenged the pilgrims toward deeper and more critical reflection on faith and witness concerning the Holy Land. See *Background Paper on Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel*.

Palestinian Christians, Jews and Muslims shared with us their lives and allowed us glimpses into their realities as residents of an occupied territory. We saw, heard, and felt countless injustices faced by the people of occupied Palestine. The mainstream media in the United States inadequately reports these stories. Consequently, great atrocities go unnamed and unnoticed in America. Instead, we receive mostly propaganda that depicts Palestinian people as aggressive, antagonistic actors with irrational and unfounded hatred for Israeli people. They are rarely portrayed as people longing for justice but subjected to tyranny. There is much more to the complicated story than what the American media normally communicates.

Palestinian people are, with the exceeding generosity of United States taxpayer funding, systemically disenfranchised and oppressed by policies of the Israeli state. A misguided notion of “chosen-ness” and the errant theological sanction Euro-American Evangelical Christianity lend support to

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the Israeli government's use of violence, intimidation and the violation of international law to maintain their dominance. Honest theological exploration and conversation is needed among people of faith – both leaders and followers – rather than the misappropriation of selected scriptural texts that contribute to inhumane behavior and justify evil actions.

The Israeli government imposes a system of injustice similar to Jim Crow laws in the United States that discriminated against African Americans until the mid-1960s and the Apartheid system of racial discrimination against “Black” and “Colored” people in [South Africa](#) that ended in 1994. Many of the young Palestinians endure tensions and angst seen today in many African-American youth who live in fear of violence from law enforcement personnel who are supposed to protect and serve but who are held to little or no accountability when they harass, injure or murder innocent people. The message of both groups is the same: “STOP KILLING US!” Further, the State of Israel, which was created to provide a home for persecuted Jews, is confronting non-Jewish African refugees and asylum seekers with deportation or detention.

Palestinian people have been, and continue to be, forcibly removed from their homeland through systematic land confiscation by Israel. In some cases, Palestinian families have lived on this land prior to the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. Palestinians often have no reliable access to clean water or electricity because of the control of these resources by the Israeli government. Their neighborhoods are vulnerable to arbitrary raids and acts of terror by the Israeli police force and vigilante militias formed by Israeli settlers in nearby settlements. Palestinian people live regularly under the threat of state-sanctioned violence.

The constant expansion of illegal settlements, denied access to quality education, the destruction of schools arbitrarily determined by the Israeli government to be illegal structures, police detainment and interrogation of children without parental consent simply because they are Palestinian are further examples of inhumane and ethnocentric oppression.

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We are obligated to offer this statement during this 70<sup>th</sup> year of the establishment of the modern State of Israel because of our encounter with victimized people in Palestine. We owe people who live under oppression by the Israeli state with support from the United States Government, many North American Evangelicals and members of the Jewish Diaspora to testify to the abuses they endure and to call for humane and sustainable solutions that enable shalom – peace, harmony and wellbeing – for all who live in that land and the region. We accompanied living stones – Palestinian Christians in the land of Jesus. We walked side-by-side with wounded and marginalized sisters and brothers. We seek, with them, liberation and reconciliation in their part of the world.

In this 50<sup>th</sup> year since the assassination of Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., we are reminded of his assertion in *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* that, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”<sup>1</sup> This principle prompts us to offer this statement on justice and peace in Palestine and Israel.

Palestine and Israel is sacred space generally because all of God’s creation is holy, because of its centrality for the Abrahamic traditions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and because of the people who live there that are hungry, thirsty, strangers, needing clothing, sick and imprisoned.

Half a century since the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who died in pursuit of a beloved community, and in this 70<sup>th</sup> year of the creation of the State of Israel,

*We call on our Jewish sisters and brothers:*

- To affirm the sacredness of all human life irrespective of ethnicity or religion and the transforming practice of hospitality asserted in Hebrew Scripture
- To reject policies of racial or ethnic segregation by the State of Israel
- To insist that the State of Israel adhere to United Nations Resolutions 242 and to pursue negotiations intended to establish a just and sustainable peace in the Middle East.

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther King, *Why We Can't Wait*, (New York: Penguin, 1963), 77.

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*We call on the United States Government:*

- To cease military and financial support to Israel until they discontinue the establishment of settlements in Israeli occupied territories in violation of international law
- To pursue adherence to United Nations Resolutions [242](#) and [338](#)

*We call on Evangelical sisters and brothers:*

- To prioritize the Kingdom of God over imperialism
- To promote building justice and peace in Palestine and Israel
- To reject theologies that justify oppression and violence in the Holy Land

*We call on African-American and all Christian people:*

- To advocate for justice and peace for all people with their governments
- To support the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement for freedom, justice and equality
- To engage in justice tourism and pilgrimages hosted by Palestinian Christians rather than investing in tours which support the oppression of Palestinians. See [\*Come and See: A Call from Palestinian Christians\*](#)

*We call on people of all faiths globally:*

- To promote, encourage and support local efforts of peacebuilding by organizations like:
  - [The Parents Circle – Families Forum \(PCFF\)](#), a joint Israeli-Palestinian organization of over 600 families which have lost family members to the ongoing conflict, . Moreover, the PCFF has concluded that the process of reconciliation between nations is a prerequisite to achieving a sustainable peace. The organization thus utilizes all resources available in education, public meetings and the media, to spread these ideas.
  - [Oasis of Peace](#) – *Wahat al-Salam - Neve Shalom* is Arabic and Hebrew for Oasis of Peace, an intentional community jointly established by Jewish and Palestinian Arab

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citizens of Israel that gives practical expressions to its vision of an egalitarian society

with pioneering educational and extracurricular activities for the community's children.

- To urge their governments to pursue just peace for all people in the region to ensure equity and opportunity for coming generations to live together in harmony.

### About Lott Carey

Organized by African-American Baptists in 1897 to ensure intentional and responsible missions in Africa, the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Society helps churches to extend the Christian witness throughout the world. We come alongside indigenous communities engaged in ministries of evangelism, compassion, empowerment and advocacy with prayer partnership, financial support and technical assistance. Together, we are touching lives with transforming love.

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