



Date: November 27th, 2020

**To: Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, Council Chair
Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland
Herrenhäuser Str. 12
30419 Hannover
Germany**

**Bishop Georg Bätzing, President
Deutsche Bischofskonferenz
Postfach 29
D-53019 Bonn
Germany**

Dear Bishops Bedford-Strohm and Bätzing,

The board of Kairos Palestine congratulates you on your plans to launch the German churches' 2021 campaign against antisemitism. As written in our founding document, A Moment of Truth (kairospalestine.ps), we have taken a clear stand against antisemitism along with all expressions of hate and exclusion. As Christians committed to the reign of God's love and justice, we pray and work for the human rights, dignity and freedom of all human beings.

At the same time, please allow us to raise a concern we had when we read the World Council of Churches' press release (12November2020) regarding the campaign—specifically the statement by Bishop Neymeyr:

“We must not look away when Jews are insulted or attacked. And we must not ignore it when Jewish jokes are laughed at, when people go on about a supposed Jewish world conspiracy, or when the State of Israel is demonized.” (Bold added.)

We are firmly against demonization of Israel, if what is meant by this casting an evil character on Israel as a state and promoting conspiracy theories about Israel...etc. , then we certainly strongly it oppose when Jews are insulted or attacked, and when Jewish jokes are laughed at. However, Bishop Neymeyr's phrase, “when the State of Israel is demonized”, can also be taken to mean silencing voices critical of Israel's actions, charging that such criticism is antisemitic, and characterizing any resistance to the occupation, including the nonviolent economic measures, as anti-Semitic. **With respect, we kindly ask Bishop Neymeyr—and the committee launching the campaign—to clarify his comment.**

Kairos Palestine; the most extensive Palestinian Christian ecumenical non- violent movement, is based on Kairos Palestine document: A Moment of Truth, launched in 2009, affirming that the Palestinian Christians are part and parcel of the Palestinian nation, calling for peace to end all suffering in the Holy Land by laboring for justice, hope and love, embraced by the Christian community, signed by all historically recognized Palestinian Christian organizations, and endorsed by the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem.

c/o YMCA Street, Beit Sahour, Palestine

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Palestinians draw a clear distinction between Jews and the State of Israel. The one, a people, and a faith deserving the respect of all. The other, a nation, the policies and practices of which are open to both harsh criticism and resistance. We cannot not look away when a Palestinian is killed or oppressed by the state of Israel! What, then, do you tell us Palestinians, who are under Israeli occupation since decades? How should we behave as Christians with the State of Israel? We are firmly against all forms of antisemitism, we are firmly against demonization of Israel. But we Palestinians, we deal daily with a state which is oppressing us under a harsh occupation or treating those of us who are citizens in the state as second-class citizens per the Nation-state law. **We would be pleased to know what do you counsel us: how are we to engage and respond with the State of Israel? And what you, as Christian brothers, should tell the State of Israel, concerning the oppression they impose upon us?**

We pray for the success of your efforts to fight anti-Semitism in Germany, and hope that both the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church in Germany will base its campaign on international law and the Biblical call to recognize the human rights and dignity of *all people*. We welcome a conversation regarding this issue so critical to the lives and aspirations of the Palestinian people.

As we write in our July 2020 Cry for Hope: A Call for Decisive Action (cryforhope.org),

We continue to hold firm to the hope articulated in the Kairos document that Palestinians and Israelis have a common future -- that “we can organize our political life, with all its complexity, according to the logic of love and its power, after ending the occupation and establishing justice.” As followers of Jesus, our response to ideologies of exclusivity and apartheid is to uphold a vision of inclusivity and equality for all peoples of the land and to persistently struggle to bring this about.

We look forward to receiving your response.

In Christ,

Kairos Palestine Board members:

+ Patriarch Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch emeritus of Jerusalem and Kairos Palestine President

H.G Archbishop Atallah Hanna of Sebastia from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem

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Pastor Dr. Mitri Raheb; Founder & President of Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture & former pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem

Fr. Dr. Jamal Khader; Director of Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem Schools in Palestine & former Rector of the Latin Patriarchate Seminary and Dean of Arts at Bethlehem University

Rev. Dr. Fadi Diab; priest of St. Andrew's Anglican Church in Ramallah and St. Peter's Church in Birzeit and the Supreme Judge at the Ecclesiastical Anglican Court in Jerusalem

Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac; pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem, the Academic Dean of Bethlehem Bible College and the director of the Christ at the Checkpoint conferences

Fr. Bashar Fawadleh; Chaplain, Christian Latin Patriarchate Youth in Palestine; Director of Christ the King Bookstore in Beit Sahour

Ms. Nora Qort; Director of Art & Training Center (Arab Orthodox Society) & director of Wujoud Museum & Cultural Center in Jerusalem

Ms. Hind Khoury; former Palestinian Ambassador to France and former Minister for Jerusalem Affairs

Adv. Manal Hazzan- Abu Sinni; Human Rights Lawyer

Ms. Lucy Talgieh; member of Bethlehem Municipality Council and Women Coordinator in Wi'am Palestinian Conflict Resolution and Transformation Center

Dr. Muna Mushahwar; former co-moderator of Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF) of the WCC & board-member of the Arab Orthodox Union Club in Jerusalem

Mr. Nidal Abu Zuluf, manager of the YWCA/YMCA Joint Advocacy Initiative

Mr. Yusef Daher 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

Mr. Omar Harami, the executive director of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem

Mr. Rifat Kassis; General Coordinator of Kairos Palestine and Global Kairos for Justice Coalition

c: Bishop Ulrich Neymeyr

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