A MOMENT OF TRUTH: FAITH IN A TIME OF GENOCIDE

Kairos Palestine II

A Congregational Study Guide

Front cover:

Firas Thabet, ***Gaznica***, 2025 acrylic on canvas, 127 x 152 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.

"Every brushstroke in my paintings carries the pain of a nation."

Firas Thabet's work appeared in the "Gaza Biennale" in an exhibition entitled *From Gaza to the World,* which opened on September 11, 2025 in Brooklyn, NY. Most of the 25 artists remain in Gaza and work amid the rubble of the ruins which Israel has reduced Gaza to. Thabet's *Gaznica*, like Picasso's *Guernica*, shows devastation and despair and illustrates that in a time of war and genocide, art is not a luxury but an essential record of life as well as death.

This study guide was developed by The Palestine Justice Network (PJN) of the Presbyterian Church (USA), with United Methodists for Kairos Response (UMKR), and Friends of Sabeel North America (FOSNA).

Writing and Editing Team:

M. Theresa Basile
Cecilia Blewer
Dr. Pauline Coffman
Rev. J. Mark Davidson
Rev. Addie Domske
Rev. Dr. Hunter Farrell
Noushin Framke
Rev. Marietta Macy
Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe
Rev. Dr. Ron Shive

Book Design: Noushin Framke

©thePJN.org

Published February 4, 2026

This is a free download and may be printed in part or in whole.

For more information, contact project team at:
kp2studyguide@gmail.com

thePJN.org
Palestine Justice Network
of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

UMKR
KairosResponse.org

FOSNA
FRIENDS of SABEEL NORTH AMERICA
A Christian Voice for Palestine

Kairos Palestine
A Moment of Truth وقفة حق

This study guide is a response to the Kairos Palestine II document issued in Bethlehem in November 2025 by the Palestinian Christian community.

Table of Contents

1. Leader's Guide 4
2. Text of Kairos Palestine II 5
3. Session Plans
   - Session 1 - Cultural Assumptions 13
   - Session 2 - The Reality: Genocide, Colonization, and Ethnic Cleansing 16
   - Session 3 - Steadfast Faith and *Sumud* 18
   - Session 4 - Recovering Costly Solidarity 20
   - Session 5 - Faith in a Time of Genocide 22

Supplements

1. Readers' Theater 25
2. Worship Materials
   - Worship Liturgy 29
   - Children's Sermon 30
3. Palestine 101 32
4. Maps & Visuals 44
5. Current Denominational Policies 48
6. Glossary 52
7. Recommended Books 56

Leader's Guide

What Is Kairos Palestine II and Why Should We Study It?

Kairos Palestine II (KP2) is a confessional document written by the Palestinian Christian Ecumenical Initiative and released on November 14, 2025. The title of the document is *A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide.* This ecumenical initiative is a group of Palestinian Christians representing a variety of churches and church-related organizations in Palestine who are united to advocate for justice, peace, and human rights against the Israeli occupation. Using a theology of liberation, they call for international solidarity and promote a theology of love and hope. They challenge silence, highlight the struggles of Palestinian Christians, and work for a just resolution through non-violent resistance and advocacy.

In 2009, the Palestinian Christian Ecumenical Initiative released their first Kairos Document, entitled *A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering.* For sixteen years, this document has guided their work, shaped their theology, and sustained their advocacy. However, much has transpired since 2009. This new document names the reality of the current situation—genocide, settler colonization, and apartheid. It is appropriately titled, *A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide.*

Kairos Palestine II is a contemporary, ecumenical confession of faith and call to action. Its tone and its theology echo similar Christian proclamations written in times of crisis, e.g., during the rise of Nazism (Barmen Declaration, 1934), during the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S.A. (Letter from the Birmingham Jail, 1963), amidst the struggle to end Apartheid in South Africa (Kairos Document, 1985), and in Palestine (Kairos Palestine Document 2009).

Kairos is the Greek word that means "a decisive moment for action." The writers of KP2 declare:

> This moment demands from us a new stand, one unlike any before it. It is both a decisive moment and a moment of truth. Today, we renew our stand for truth and our commitment to fundamental religious, theological and moral principles. We look at our reality and take a renewed stand, responding to the voice of the Holy Spirit deep within us, listening to the call of faith in this time of genocide. We renew our message of faith, hope, and love—offering a faith-inspired vision for the time after genocide.

We study this document to hear these voices from the land of the birth of Jesus. Palestinian Christians trace their roots to the first Christians. We study their confession to stand in solidarity with our suffering—but resilient—Christian siblings and heed the invitation to join them in advocating for justice and peace for every living being between the river and the sea.

Needed Materials and Facilitator Prep:

You will find notes on what you need to prepare at the top of each session. Guidelines on leadership and prompts for facilitators to read during the session are found throughout each session in italics.

You will need the following materials to lead this study: a Bible, the text of KP2 (begins on page 5), a copy of each lesson plan for each participant, and a copy of the Glossary.

Palestine 101 *is designed for digital reading, but can be printed too.*

Settings for Use

This study guide is adaptable for use in a variety of settings: For a 5 week Adult Education class, for study during Lent or Advent, as a 5-session retreat, or as a curriculum for small groups or solidarity circles.

We recommend portions of the **Readers' Theater** (p. 25) to be used prior to each study session. Alternatively, the entire Readers' Theater can be presented in worship or a congregational gathering, or as a standalone event your community opens to the public.

Palestine 101 (p. 32) and a **glossary** (p. 52) are provided as supplementary information.

Each Study Session **has been designed for 45 minutes** and also includes a 15 minute expansion to extend to a 60 minute-session. Sessions can be easily led in person or adapted to online usage.

Guidelines for facilitators

1. Prior to the first gathering, participants should read Kairos Palestine II (p. 5).
2. The first gathering will set the tone for those that follow. Create a space for open, safe conversation by being a non-anxious presence and example for those present.
3. Assure that the voices of our Palestinian siblings present in the text we are studying are loudly heard, even if uncomfortable.
4. Pay attention to equity of voice in the room. Make sure that everyone gets to speak before others share for a second time. Offer some "digging deeper" questions and draw out differing responses from the members of your group. Avoid the temptation to answer questions yourself. Consider your leadership expression as more of a guide than an expert. Act as a moderator if participants too quickly take sides in the conversation. Present possibilities/ground rules for honorable speech when discussing controversial or emotional topics.
5. Recognize that God accompanies you in your work with an opening prayer. (Sabeel Jerusalem offers great weekly prayers.)
6. Do not hesitate to clearly name the reality—genocide, settler colonialism, apartheid, and ethnic cleansing.
7. Expose the harm of promoting dialogue without justice, and peace without justice. Make sure the dangers of calls for balance and neutrality are exposed. Desmond Tutu wisely said, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."
8. Take what you need, leave what you don't! The goal of this guide is to uplift Christian voices in Palestine through the study of their document. Adapt this guide to suit the needs of your group.

Kairos Palestine II

The Palestinian Christian Initiative

A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide

We look toward the day when we shall live free in our land, together with all the inhabitants of the earth, in true peace and reconciliation — founded upon justice and equality for all God's creation, where "mercy and truth meet, and righteousness and peace kiss each other." (Psalm 85:10) ~Bethlehem, Nov. 14, 2025

Introduction

§1
We, the Palestinian Christian Ecumenical Initiative, issued the Kairos Palestine Document in 2009 —"A word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering." The Heads of Churches in Jerusalem heard this cry, welcomed it, and offered their support. Likewise, the document resonated widely, both locally and internationally. Then, as now, we gathered—women and men, clergy and laity—from across the different church families in Palestine. After prayer and reflection on the suffering of our people under occupation, we released that cry of hope in the absence of hope, affirming our faith in God and our love for our homeland, convinced that our struggle is ultimately about human life and dignity.

§2
We live now in a time of genocide, ethnic cleansing and forced displacement unfolding before the eyes of the world. This moment—a moment of truth—demands from us a new stand unlike any before it. It is both a decisive moment and a moment of truth. Today, we renew our stand for truth and our commitment to fundamental religious, theological and moral principles. We look at our reality and take a renewed stand, responding to the voice of the Holy Spirit deep within us, listening to the call of faith in this time of genocide. We renew our message of faith, hope, and love—offering a faith-inspired vision for the time after genocide.

Part I

The Reality: Genocide, Colonization, and Ethnic Cleansing

1.1
We raise this cry from the heart of the assault on Gaza—a war that has left behind hundreds of thousands of martyrs and wounded, and nearly two million displaced people. Many were buried beneath the rubble, burned alive, tortured to death in prisons or forcibly displaced more than once. Others endured starvation, targeted even as they ran in search of food. Tens of thousands of children were killed in the most horrific ways. Gaza's health, education, economic, and environmental sectors —indeed, every component of life—have been destroyed. It will take years to recover from the devastation and catastrophe that have befallen us as a people.

1.2
Human rights organizations, legal institutions and international experts have been unequivocal: the statements of Israeli political leaders and Israel's actions in its assault on Gaza constitute genocide. Many of the war crimes and crimes against humanity have been documented and arrest warrants have been issued against Israeli political leaders based upon rulings of the International Court of Justice.1

1.3
Zionists do not want us to remain on our land. Their plan for us is displacement, death or submission. The genocidal war on Gaza is the continuation of the Zionist project to seize all of Palestine, emptied of its Palestinian people. Ethnic cleansing and the denial of the right of return to those forcibly displaced are ongoing policies practiced in Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and the territories of 1948. The Nakba of our people is our daily reality. This genocide has been carried out by Israel after decades of apartheid, settler colonialism, political repression and the deliberate policy of killing any possibility of a political solution—including the two-state solution. Exposed today is the true face of Zionist ideology: a system that over

decades has entrenched an organized and sophisticated regime of apartheid supported by advanced technologies that exercise total control over every aspect of Palestinian life—fragmenting the land, dividing its people, and turning Palestinian existence into an unbearable hell. Israel's so-called Nation-State Law enacted in 2018 embodies Zionist racism and arrogant Jewish supremacy in Palestine, making apartheid a lived reality. Israel's decision to annex the West Bank has further exposed the true intent of this colonial project.

1.4
While people of the world have stood in solidarity with us, the genocidal war has laid bare the hypocrisy of the Western world, its hollow values and its empty boasts of commitment to human rights and international law. In truth, the Western world has sacrificed us, revealing racism and double standards toward our people. Of course, we distinguish between the architects of these destructive policies and the many leaders, organizations and popular movements that have shown sincere solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza, demanding an end to injustice and bloodshed and the full recognition of our legitimate rights.

1.5
This war has also exposed another reality of Zionism—whether Jewish or Christian—in its justification of violence and killing. We Palestinian Christians are deeply shocked by the positions of many churches that either adopted the colonizer's narrative or remain silent in the face of the genocide of our people. At times, they prioritize Jewish-Christian interfaith dialogue over truth, human dignity and life itself, ignoring the context. They judge one side and excuse the other or simply remain silent. Some even go so far as to take positions complicit in, supportive of, or calling for genocide.

1.6
Israel commits these crimes by invoking the events of October 7, 2023, claiming that its actions are an act of self-defense—forgetting that the Hamas attack of that day was itself born out of decades of injustice, oppression and displacement since the Nakba of 1948, and more than sixteen years of an immoral, suffocating blockade on Gaza. To point to these historical realities—and to the right of a people under occupation to resist their occupier and oppressor—is to acknowledge that the events of October 7 occurred in a particular context. Mentioning the context does not justify the killing or capture of civilians, the violations of international law and norms, and war crimes. The claim of "self-defense" cannot stand. How can a colonizer defend itself against those it has colonized and expelled from their land? International law—if it still retains any moral weight—refutes this claim.

1.7
Settler colonialism, past and present, is built upon genocide, ethnic cleansing and the forced displacement of indigenous peoples—all for the sake of exploiting land, resources and wealth to serve the colonizer's gain. We see deep economic dimensions behind Israel's genocidal war on Gaza—particularly its interest in the natural gas fields off the Palestinian coast. Control over Gaza also means control over one of the world's most vital trade routes and energy supply corridors, enabling vast economic and commercial projects that entrench colonial economic dominance at the expense of the Palestinian people. The world's silence toward the genocide in Gaza is not innocent. It is tied to massive economic interests that value profit above human life and rights.

1.8
In Jerusalem, clear settler-colonial policies of a religious and demographic nature seek to Judaize the city at the expense of its pluralism. There are continuous assaults on Muslim and Christian holy sites, attempts to burn churches, desecrate and destroy cemeteries, and the writing of racist graffiti slogans upon them. Attacks on Christian clergy are increasing, as are restrictions on Christian religious celebrations such as Palm Sunday and the Holy Fire Saturday. Financial coercion, through the imposition of taxes and the freezing of church bank accounts—in violation of the "status quo"—has also intensified. The Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem have described these acts as part of a systematic policy to empty the Holy Land of its Christians.

1.9
Across the occupied West Bank—from north to south—Palestinian towns, villages, and Bedouin communities face relentless assaults by settlers and settlements. They wreak havoc upon the land, destroy crops, poison or seize water resources and attack residents—all under the protection, support and even participation of the Israeli army in acts of violence, killing, home demolitions and forced displacement. Palestinian society lives under a suffocating siege imposed by checkpoints, gates and other mechanisms that deny our people freedom of movement.

1.10
For Palestinians within the state of Israel, blatant racism and discrimination persist. Palestinian communities face intimidation, criminalization of free expression, and persecution of any effort to defend Palestinian rights, along with the deliberate neglect of rampant organized crime in Palestinian towns. Those displaced within Israel in 1948, whose lands

were confiscated, are still denied the right to return to their villages and rebuild their homes. Bedouin communities remain victims of systematic displacement and ethnic cleansing, especially in the Naqab (Negev).

1.11
In recent years, Israel—supported by the United States and other major powers—has constantly attacked the core principles and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. It has sought to erase the refugee question by attempting to destroy the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), accusing it of terrorism and pressuring donor countries to cut its funding. At the same time, several refugee camps in the West Bank have been systematically destroyed, displacing thousands of people once again.

1.12
Palestinian civil society organizations working in the field of human rights have come under fierce assault intended to discredit them, undermine their work, and eliminate them through accusations of terrorism and through political pressure on governments to halt their funding and to prosecute them.

1.13
Since October 7, 2023, Israel has dramatically expanded its policy of abduction and imprisonment. Today thousands of Palestinians—male and female—are being held in Israeli prisons. Roughly one-third are detained without charge or trial under administrative detention. Among them are many children. Numerous deaths have been recorded in prisons since the war began. Human rights organizations have documented systematic practices of torture, sexual violence, starvation policies and the denial of medical care. Prisoners, especially those from Gaza, are subjected to mass detention and complete isolation from the outside world under Israeli military law—resulting in large numbers of enforced disappearances, loss of legal representation and total absence of communication.

1.14
The internal Palestinian situation is in urgent need of reorganization. Political division, rivalry and exclusion have deepened. The majority of Palestinians have lost confidence in their political leadership. As a result of the Oslo Accords and their aftermath, the Palestinian Authority has been trapped in serving the interests of the occupier—managing the daily life of the occupied on behalf of the Israeli occupier, unable to protect its own people from the terror of settlers and the Israeli security apparatus.

1.15
Signs of disorder have begun to spread within Palestinian society and have become part of our reality, largely due to the absence or weak enforcement of the rule of law. This has led to a rise in intimidation, land encroachment, tribalism, favoritism and corruption in its various forms at the expense of the common good, deepening people's frustration and despair. Amid the vast destruction and genocide in Gaza, acts of violence, revenge, chaos and theft have only added to the suffering of the Palestinian people.

1.16
Daily life for Palestinians under military occupation has become consumed by internal concerns: checkpoints, travel restrictions at borders and crossings, the payment of public-sector salaries and many other pressing issues. Significant as they are, these remain symptoms of the larger reality which must remain the central focus of our attention: the system of political and military domination imposed by Israel as an occupying entity over the Palestinian people.

1.17
Our society and political culture suffer from the absence of leadership renewal and a lack of vision through democratic elections and the exclusion of young leaders. Palestine now faces a grave phenomenon of brain drain, including skilled professionals and the young. This is not voluntary emigration. This is forced displacement, born of oppression and a complete lack of opportunity. We affirm, as Palestinians of all faiths, that we are the indigenous people of this land and that our very existence today faces an unprecedented threat. The continuous emigration of Christians does not stop, constituting a real danger to the Christian presence in Palestine which is now at risk of ethnic cleansing and extinction.

1.18
Christians in Palestine and in the diaspora are an inseparable part of the Palestinian people. Their challenges are the challenges of the nation as a whole. The reality of the Church is directly affected by everything that happens on the ground. Facing these realities, the Church continues to work tirelessly—through pastoral care and institutional ministries— to support its sons, daughters and the broader society. The Heads of Churches work together to confront repeated assaults, issuing statements and taking courageous positions, despite the pressures and intimidation they face, in the hope that the world and the global Church will listen. At the same time, some Palestinian Christians feel a growing need for greater closeness between clergy and laity, and for a stronger role for the leadership of the Church in rejecting occupation and its symbols, elevating local theology and giving it broader expression in church pulpits and public stances.

1.19
In recent years, our region—the Middle East—has undergone major political and regional transformations shaped by a deliberate plan to impose Israeli military dominance over the entire area with the support of Western powers, drawing a new political and demographic map. Backed systematically by its allies, Israel has attacked many countries of the region, violating their sovereignty and that of their peoples, flouting international law and entrenching itself as an aggressive, bullying state as if it stands above all laws and conventions — pushing the region and indeed the world to the brink of catastrophe.

1.20
As a result of these external interventions and struggles for dominance, extremist and terrorist religious groups have emerged—groups we condemn, along with those who have supported, financed and/or armed them. These movements have entrenched sectarianism at the expense of citizenship. Many "minorities" including Middle Eastern Christians—especially in Syria and Iraq—have paid a painful price for this extremism. In solidarity and prayer, we stand beside them and all victims of sectarian and religious terrorism.

1.21
At the same time, normalization agreements have been marketed as peace agreements between Israel and some Arab states under the name "Abraham Accords". This naming itself represents the manipulation of religion to serve political, economic and normalization agendas—ignoring the essence of the issue and the priority of achieving a just peace with the Palestinians themselves. These accords have instead normalized occupation and apartheid in Palestine, rendering them acceptable realities. A new phenomenon has also emerged: "Zionist Islam," a recent movement among certain Arabs and Muslims who, for religious, economic or geopolitical reasons, support Zionism and regard Israel as a potential ally.

1.22
In light of all this, we must call things by their proper names: Israel is a colonial, settler, and exclusionary entity built upon the displacement of the indigenous population and its replacement with new settlers. For this reason, we reject the very concept of "conflict." The reality on the ground is tyranny and an oppressive regime of settler colonialism and apartheid. Any denial of this reality is an evasion of manifest truth—one that reinforces and perpetuates the injustice.

1.23
We are now living in a new era—an age in which "might makes right" and peace is imposed through military power in defiance of international law and the rulings of legitimate international courts. We reaffirm our commitment to the respect and authority of international law which guarantees human rights and global peace among nations and peoples. This moment in human history demands a faith-based stance—one that speaks truth to power and tyranny without compromise or evasion. Reaching beyond the Palestinian experience, this is truly a moment of Truth.

Part II

A Moment of Truth for Us

2.1
In the face of this harsh reality and at this decisive moment we raise this cry—first to ourselves, to the sons and daughters of our churches and congregations, and to our entire people in the homeland and the diaspora. It is a cry of steadfastness, a renewed stand for truth, and a call to hear the voice of God within us and to us. This is a time for solidarity and mutual support—a time to take clear and courageous positions built upon principles of faith and national belonging. This is the moment of truth. We affirm that what has been built upon falsehood and historical injustice can never yield peace or sustainability. True solutions begin with dismantling oppressive, racist systems. Only then can we speak of a new horizon that we dream of and long for—one in which we remain in our land together with all who dwell in it on the basis of justice, equality and equal rights, free of supremacy and domination.

2.2
We call for a comprehensive national reevaluation of our reality to draw lessons and insights leading to a unified, collective vision and a clear strategy for future action—grounded in the independence of Palestinian decision-making. This must include a critical review of all proposed solutions and their feasibility within a legitimate representative framework that ensures independence of decision-making and the right to self-determination. We warn against giving our national struggle a religious character or turning it into a religious issue that pits religions against one another.

2.3
This is a time for resistance embodied in costly steadfastness on our land in the face of every attempt at displacement, annexation and genocide, a resistance lived out in our unity, cooperation and commitment to our faith, national principles and all our rights. To hold on to faith and hope is resistance. To pray is resistance. To safeguard the holy places is resistance. To preserve social peace is resistance.

2.4
At a time when Palestinian resistance and global solidarity movements are criminalized, we reaffirm the right of all colonized peoples to resist their colonizers. As we stated in our first document, A Moment of Truth: A Word of

Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering, we remain committed to the principle of creative resistance—a firm and costly stand against ongoing injustice. We see creative resistance embodied in the popular Palestinian movements confronting occupation, settlement expansion, settler terrorism and apartheid as well as in the work of civil society organizations, legal and human rights initiatives, cultural, theological and diplomatic engagement, and in student and labor movements. In all these and more, we recognize effective means of resistance grounded in love—a love that can bring about change and renew hope.2.5 We value the global movements of resistance, advocacy and popular pressure that work to hold governments and international bodies accountable—isolating Israel through boycotts and sanctions until it complies with international law. We view this from a moral perspective. The strategies of boycotts, divestment and sanctions are, in our view, effective forms of creative resistance rooted in the logic of love and nonviolence as affirmed in our original document.

2.6
In the face of the ecocide perpetrated by Israel in Gaza and the repeated assaults and environmental destruction in the West Bank that threaten future generations, we renew our belonging to this land and our rootedness in it. We affirm the sanctity of life and the duty to care for creation. Our calling is to live in coexistence with creation—a shared faith and moral responsibility embraced by individuals and institutions, public, governmental, social and religious.

2.7
We emphasize the urgent need to protect all those who are vulnerable in society: the victims of occupation and colonization; people with disabilities, especially those who have lost limbs; the brokenhearted, the grieving; and all who are marginalized for any reason including victims of domestic or social violence, economic exploitation and gender-based abuse.

2.8
Among the faces of steadfastness and hope in our society stands the Palestinian woman—grandmother, mother, sister and daughter. She is the unbending backbone and an essential partner in the struggle, holding together home, land, memory and future all at once. Her presence is foundational to society as a whole and her contributions are manifold in national, social, economic and spiritual life. The Palestinian woman cannot be reduced to the category of “women and children”, faceless victims stripped of agency and will. Her voice, creativity and leadership are indispensable forces. There can be no true liberation without her full participation at every level of decision-making and nation-building.

2.9
Our message to ourselves as Palestinian Christians is this: We feel the weight of history upon our shoulders and we are determined to preserve the Christian witness in this Holy Land. To all Palestinians, we say: The preservation of the Christian presence is both a national cause and priority. We are neither simply a number nor merely a type of diversity within our society. We are indigenous citizens who embody human values and seek to work and build our homeland alongside all our partners within it.

2.10
In addressing ourselves, we say: We are the sons and daughters of the first Church—descendants of the apostles and the saints of the first Christian centuries—those who cultivated this land, built its cities and villages and drank from its waters. We do not live on the margins of this land. We are woven into its fabric. We carry its history and heritage. Its very soil knows us as its own. Many empires have passed over this land and disappeared, buried in the dust of history, yet the bells of our churches continue to ring—bearing witness to the truth and proclaiming resurrection every day.

2.11
This is what we say to our young men and women: You are the living Church; you are the treasure of hope. The future is born from your steadfastness and your faith. We believe in you. We see your anger, your sorrow, your fear. We also see your strength. We know that our story has not ended, that our injustice persists. We do not call you to naïve optimism, but to hope that is rooted in action. Hope is not surrender. Hope is a living act of resistance—steadfastly refusing the reality of death imposed upon us, confronting and resisting every form of injustice and occupation. Jesus Christ walked with the poor and the weak, stood beside the oppressed, and never abandoned love or compromised truth and justice. For the sake of the salvation of humanity, he accepted the cross. His resurrection was victory over death and injustice, a sign of hope rooted in faith. This is the hope that sustains us today.

2.12
And we say to you also: You are not alone. There are those who stand with you in Palestine and around the world. Even if silence is imposed now, the day will come when your voices will be heard. Your voices matter. Express yourselves. Write. Sing. Create. Organize. Resist through your humanity in a world that seeks to strip it from you. Dare to love, to dream, and to shape a free and radiant future. We salute your initiatives and your activities—in the church, in national and civic engagement, in scouting, youth, sports, culture, art, politics and human rights—all marked by openness to society, by the spirit of volunteerism, and by faith and hope free of sectarianism. We draw inspiration from your steadfastness

and your love. We see in you the promise of a better future.

2.13
To our people in the diaspora, those who were forcibly displaced: You may be geographically far from Palestine, but Palestine lives within you. We call upon you to engage in communities, movements and coalitions that aim to strengthen our steadfastness and affirm our presence. You play an essential role. Your voice has the power to shift realities. We value your activism. We have heard your voices. Indeed, the whole world has heard them. Share our suffering and our stories of steadfastness and success. Create spaces for dialogue and for building bridges between us and the religious and political leaders in the countries of your diaspora. Act with wisdom, and present to the world the true image of our people. In you also lies the hope of a better future. We will not lose our dream of reunification, nor will we abandon our right of return.

2.14
We extend our support to our spiritual leaders and church institutions that continue to bear their Christian witness even in the darkest and most difficult times, strengthening the steadfastness of their sons and daughters. We especially commend the tremendous work of the churches of Gaza who have sheltered the displaced. We value the courage of our church leaders who have stood with our people in Gaza and supported their steadfastness amid genocide and displacement. The faithful in Gaza have written heroic stories of steadfastness and witness. Some have been martyred. Many have been wounded and bereaved. Our prayers and hearts are with them. We call upon Christians around the world to stand with us in our effort—contrary to what appearances may suggest—to preserve the Christian presence in Gaza dating back to the earliest centuries of Christianity, and to advocate for the right of all who were displaced to return to their homes and rebuild their lives.

2.15
We are witnesses to the Resurrection and to the empty tomb from which the light of life burst forth. We believe that the final word belongs not to death, but to life. Not to darkness, but to light. Not to injustice, but to truth. We proclaim with the Apostle Paul: “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Corinthians 4:8–9).

Part III

A Call to Repentance and Action

3.1
We address our appeal to Christians around the world. We address this call from Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth —from the birthplace of Christ, the land of the Incarnation of the Word, and the cradle of love, mercy and justice. From the land of suffering, death and resurrection—the land of redemption and hope—from where humanity’s call to repentance and a return to the foundations of faith has come. From here the faith spread to the ends of the earth. It is a call to “learn to do good; seek justice; rescue the oppressed” (Isaiah 1:17).

3.2
The God revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures in both Old and New Testaments — the Creator of the Universe and of all humanity — is the One who was incarnate in the Son, Jesus Christ, the God of all peoples (Acts 10:34–35; Romans 10:12–13). God, the Creator and Father of all, stands in solidarity with and takes the side of the oppressed and the downtrodden, the victims of all forms of injustice and tyranny from every nation regardless of race, religion or nationality (Luke 4:18–19). The mission of the Church is thus made manifest in joining the work of God’s Kingdom through the pursuit of peace, the defense of the oppressed, and the doing of good.

3.3
Genocide is a cumulative process —one that began in the minds of the settler-colonial powers of Europe when they denied the image of God in others and legitimized death, domination and slavery. We consider the State of Israel, established in 1948, to be a continuation of that same colonial enterprise built on racism and the ideology of ethnic or religious superiority. This project settled Palestine and worked to displace the indigenous people of Palestine from the time of the Nakba until today. Our present Palestinian reality is the inevitable outcome of Zionist ideology and the supremacist settler-colonial movement, itself a product of the imperial mindset.

3.4
Genocide is a structural sin against God, against humanity, and against creation. It stands in direct opposition to the great commandment of love, the summary of the whole law (Galatians 5:14). Those who deny the genocide committed against the Palestinian people in Gaza—despite the overwhelming evidence, testimonies and even the statements of Zionists themselves —deny the very humanity of the Palestinian people. We have the right therefore to ask: How can one speak of Christian fellowship or communion while denying, supporting, justifying or remaining silent before genocide—especially when such acts are committed in the name of God and Scripture? There must be honest reflection and repentance by all believers, especially by church leaders throughout the world.

3.5
We express our gratitude to all churches that have recognized the injustice inflicted upon us and the genocidal war in Gaza. We salute all the voices that have taken a religious and moral stand against Zionism and so-called Christian Zionism—rejecting genocide and apartheid and calling for an end to arms shipments to Israel and for the prosecution of war criminals. We hear in these voices support of our hope, a sign of the Holy Spirit, and the presence of moral conscience in humanity.

3.6
We call for a global theological movement built on the pillars of God's Kingdom—a movement that arises from the contexts and struggles of peoples suffering from colonialism, racism, apartheid and the structural poverty produced by corrupt economic and political systems that serve the interests of the world's empires. We challenge the false logic of a "neutral" or "balanced" peace as well as forms of ecclesial diplomacy that do not speak truth to power as a way to evade moral and spiritual responsibility. Together with our partners around the world, we have engaged in self-examination to free ourselves from the residues of colonial theologies which we inherited from the West.

3.7
We reject the oppression and injustice produced by the theology of racism, colonialism and ethnic supremacy embodied in Christian Zionism, a theology that has produced apartheid, ethnic cleansing and genocide of indigenous people. Christian Zionism calls on a tribal, racist god of war and ethnic cleansing, teachings utterly alien to the core of Christian faith and ethics. Christian Zionism must therefore be named for what it is: a theological distortion and a moral corruption. After all efforts to invite Christian Zionists to genuine repentance have been exhausted, moral, ecclesial and theological responsibility requires that they be held accountable and that their ideology be rejected and boycotted. The time has come for the churches of the world to repudiate Zionist theology and to state clearly their position on Palestine: this is a case of settler colonialism and ethnic cleansing of an indigenous people.

3.8
We condemn all who exploit and support the charge of antisemitism to silence the Palestinian voice of truth. We reject every attempt to conflate antisemitism with opposition to apartheid and with pressure to hold Israel accountable under international law—particularly through the use of definitions and documents designed to serve Zionist ideologies and interests under the guise of combating antisemitism. The misuse of the term antisemitism distorts and obscures the reality of genuine antisemitism which still exists in our world and which we strongly condemn alongside all forms of racism, exclusion and prejudice including Islamophobia. Zionist ideology claims to represent and protect the Jewish people, but in doing so it has conflated "Jew" and "Zionist" as though they were one and the same. Not every Jew is a Zionist and not every Zionist is a Jew. This confusion has done great harm to Judaism itself and to its image worldwide.

3.9
We call upon all people of conscience—believers in God from every faith and persons of conviction—to join together in coalitions that safeguard humanity from further descent into the reality of injustice, tyranny and domination. We call for the creation of an alternative, just and humane world order as the present global system has failed in its most important responsibilities: to defend the weak and to preserve international peace and security.

3.10
We repeat and emphasize our appeal to the churches of the world—working together with both religious and secular coalitions—to pressure their governments to isolate Israel, hold it accountable, impose sanctions, boycott it, and to ban the export of arms until it complies with international law, ends oppression and tyranny, and adheres to the principles of justice and peace. We likewise call upon the governments of the world: to press for the prosecution of war criminals whoever they may be under the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court; to ensure reparations for the Palestinian people, both in their homeland and in the diaspora; and to work for the immediate return of the displaced through the reconstruction of Gaza and the strengthening of its people's steadfastness.

3.11
More than ever, now is a time for costly solidarity. By its very nature, true solidarity is costly. It has a price. It is a faith-based stance, a human commitment and a moral responsibility. True solidarity is also the embodiment of our shared humanity and fraternity. Either we live together—or we perish together. Today it is Palestine. Tomorrow it will be other marginalized and oppressed peoples.

3.12
In this spirit, we honor the growing number of Jewish voices that oppose the war and confront Zionism from moral, faith-based and human conviction. In them we find partners in our shared humanity and in the struggle for freedom and human dignity—partners also in religious and political dialogue. For too many years such dialogue was monopolized by Zionists and their allies, its premises built upon the reinforcement of Zionist ideology and the persecution of Palestinians. We therefore call on the churches of

the world to distinguish between dialogue with Jews and dialogue with Zionism—indeed, to boycott dialogue with Zionist voices that have supported and continue to support occupation, apartheid and the genocide of the Palestinian people. Instead, we call upon the churches to stand with and amplify prophetic Jewish voices that call for justice and truth.

3.13
Christian solidarity means standing beside and supporting the local church in its steadfastness, strengthening the steadfastness of believers in the land and empowering church and Christian institutions that embody the faith-based and humanitarian mission on the ground. We renew our appeal to Christians worldwide to challenge the siege imposed on the Christians of the Holy Land, to come and visit the living stones, to witness and respond to what you see, and to help strengthen the steadfastness of the Palestinians and the Christian Palestinians among them. This is our call: "Come and see." Then tell what you have seen, respond to it, and stand with the steadfast Church.

Part IV

Faith in a Time of Genocide

4.1
From the land of the Incarnation, the Cross and the Resurrection, we renew our word of hope in the God of the poor, the oppressed and the downtrodden. The genocidal war has sought to strip us of our hope and faith in God's goodness and in life upon our land. Yet we declare our adherence to our faith in a holy and just God, and in the right God has given us to live with dignity on our land and the land of our ancestors. This is our hope. This is our steadfastness. This is our resistance.

4.2
We have heard much talk of political solutions and peace while the reality on the ground says otherwise. To speak of a political solution today is futile unless we first undertake the serious work of acknowledging and rectifying past wrongs—beginning with recognition of the historic injustice done to Palestinians since the rise of the Zionist movement and the Balfour Declaration. Any genuine beginning must involve dismantling settler colonialism and the apartheid system built on Jewish supremacy as codified in Israel's racist Nation-State Law. We also reject proposals for a weakened, conditional state lacking full sovereignty over its borders, waters, airspace and security. What is required is international action and protection, accountability for war criminals, and compensation for survivors of genocide, the Nakba and settler colonialism. Enduring solutions will not rest on the logic of force, but on the foundations of justice, equality and the right to self-determination.

4.3
Our aim is to live as sons and daughters of God in our homeland without barriers, walls, military occupation and apartheid—but in a world in which justice, fairness and equality rule. We envision a future in which our world is free of war, death, sectarianism and tribalism, where the word of truth rises above the word of power, where legitimacy belongs to peace and justice. We draw our hope from the Word of God and from the faith alive in our hearts, refusing to leave the shaping of the future to the voices of extremism, colonialism and supremacy.

4.4
We reaffirm our rejection of a religious state, for it constricts the state within narrow confines, favors one citizen over another, and excludes and discriminates among its people. Our hope is for a civil, democratic state grounded in a culture of pluralism—not numerical dominance—that recognizes the goodness and worth of every person who belongs to this land. Such a culture, rooted in the commandment of love, obliges us to confront every form of extremism and racism in our land—rich as it is in the diversity of its peoples, cultures and religions—on the basis of equality before the law and full citizenship.

4.5
From the heart of pain, genocide and displacement, we raise this cry, a prophetic cry of steadfastness. We declare our commitment to work for the good of this land and of all humanity on the basis of our shared humanity until the day we live free in our land together with all the inhabitants of the land in true peace and reconciliation founded on justice and equality for all God's creation, where mercy and truth meet, and righteousness and peace kiss each other (Psalm 85:10).

Session 1

Cultural Assumptions

(Italics notes facilitator prompts.)

Prep Before Session

Share the first Kairos Palestine (2009) and the text of Kairos Palestine II (page 5) with all participants. For a 60 min session, prepare a writing surface (large newsprint, white board, or Zoom slide to share on screen) to record participant answers to questions.

Welcome, Opening Prayer and Study Overview (4 mins)

In a few sentences, present an overview of the Kairos Palestine II document.

Readers' Theater (10 mins)*

Facilitator explains Readers' Theater (p. 25) in the following way:

> To help us understand some of the tensions present in our society—and perhaps in our own hearts—about the violent conflict in Palestine, we will today use one of our supplementary resources to ground us in a sample narrative to explore through "Readers' Theater" (see glossary). We'll explore an imagined conversation between 1) Nadia, a Palestinian Christian introducing KP2, 2) Elaine, a long-time church member who is accustomed to an Israeli point of view on Palestine and 3) David, a newer church member who has been exposed to a different narrative about Israel and Palestine, especially since October 7, 2023. These characters are fictional. They are meant to offer a sample experience to ground us in the work we are beginning with each other as we explore KP2.

Select three participants to read the script. No prep is necessary. As facilitator, take a look at the Readers' Theater script and decide how far you'd like to read through for Session 1. Topics in Session 1 are covered in Readers' Theater sections 1-14, but you may decide to read through the entire script today."

**Readers' Theater* *is a supplemental resource provided in this study guide. There is value in a reading performance; consider using it in a "Minute for Mission" with three readers, in a gathering with a meal, or in another format. There are also videos of the script being performed found at thePJN.org/kp2studyguide and at kairosresponse.org/kp2guide.html.*

Reflecting on Readers' Theater (10 mins)

Invite the group to reflect on what they just heard in the Readers' Theatre.

- What idea most challenged, intrigued or encouraged you?

Repeat the question and allow a moment of silence for individual reflection before inviting the group to share their responses with the group.

Recognizing Our Own 'Biases' (20 mins)

Invite the group to look at the two images on next page.

- What do you see?

Invite participants to describe details of both photos.

After reflections have been made, have a participant read the following context paragraphs about the first photo.

The power of image 1 is that it takes the horrendous Jewish suffering in Europe to justify Israel's seizing of Palestinian land. This image illustrates the power of the Zionist narrative. Here's a concise description of Zionism, written by Jewish Voice for Peace, an American Jewish group highly critical of Zionism and its impacts on Palestinians and on Judaism itself:

> While it had many strains historically, the Zionism that took hold and stands today is a settler-colonial movement, establishing an apartheid state where Jews have more rights than others. Our own history teaches us how dangerous this can be. Palestinian dispossession and occupation are by design. Zionism has meant profound trauma for generations, systematically separating Palestinians from their homes, land, and each other. Zionism, in practice, has resulted in massacres of Palestinian people, ancient villages and olive groves destroyed, families who live just a mile away from each other separated by checkpoints and walls, and children holding onto the keys of the homes from which their grandparents were forcibly exiled.

Many Americans first heard the Zionist perspective in popular culture forms such as “Exodus” (movie, 1960), “The Chosen” (TV series, 2017) and other examples which portrayed in a positive heroic light, what amounted to the violent seizure of Palestinian homes, fields and communities under the false maxim, “a land without a people for a people without a land”.

If relevant, share your own media experience with Zionist narratives, and then ask the participants:

- When was the first time you heard this story?

After reflections have been made, have a participant read the following context paragraph about the second photo:

The second image comes from the American experience. American artist John Gast painted “American Progress” in 1872 to name another powerful narrative: Manifest Destiny (see glossary p. 54), the idea that Europeans landing on North America’s Atlantic coast and moving west could take, occupy and exploit the land because they were doing God’s will to bring light, civilization and Christianity to the natives of the dark North American continent. While many of those who “settled” the North American continent believed that their actions were, in fact, in the best interests of the indigenous population, these actions resulted in the genocide of tens of millions of Native Americans in what historians call “the Great Dying” as well as the enslavement of millions of Africans. (See Doctrine of Discovery in glossary, p. 53).

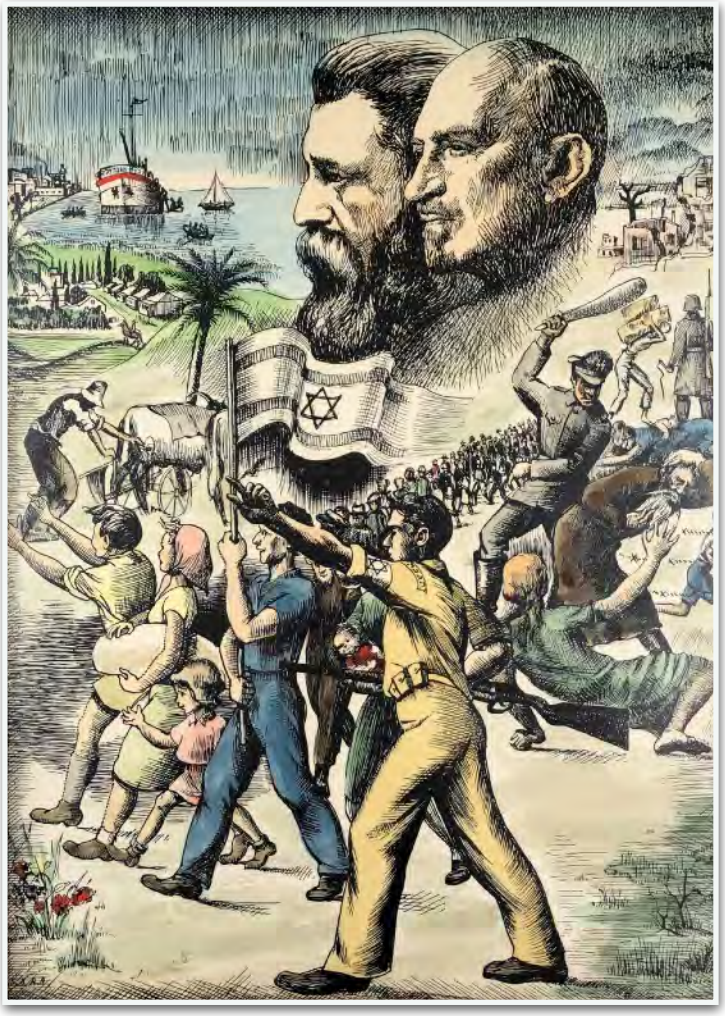


Image 1: “From Holocaust to Revival”, 1948

This propaganda poster was used to increase Jewish immigration from Europe to the newly created state of Israel. It depicts a welcoming Palestine awaiting European Jewry.

Image 2: “American Progress”

by John Gast, 1872

‘Lady Columbia' is the female personification of America and of Manifest Destiny. She is bringing enlightenment and progress from the already enlightened East to the still dark West of North America.

Ask participants to discuss as a group:

- What parallels do you see in these two ideas: Zionism and Manifest Destiny?

After reflections have been made, have a final participant read this paragraph:

> In his 2024 book, *Decolonizing Palestine*, Palestinian Lutheran pastor and theologian, Dr. Mitri Raheb, asserts that, through his years of Biblical study and his observation of American pastors and theologians, he sees that American Christians' unspoken, yet wholehearted, belief in the powerful narrative of Manifest Destiny—that the United States was divinely ordained to spread democracy, capitalism, and Christianity across the North American continent and the world—serves as a blinder that prevent us from seeing the Palestinians as people and from hearing their understanding of the conflict.

Ask participants to give final thoughts as a group, ending with these final questions and prioritizing those who might not have spoken up so far in the session:

- As we begin this study journey together over the remaining sessions, what do you think about Dr. Mitri Raheb's point?
- Do our own assumptions about the spread of the Christian message (and exporting our country's particular form of government and economic development) keep us from seeing Palestinians, hearing their narratives, and protecting their rights?

OPTIONAL EXPANSION (15 MINS)
CHECKING OUR ASSUMPTIONS

Help participants recognize their cultural familiarity with the modern Israeli narrative of the birth of the State of Israel and invite their curiosity about how Palestinian Christians experienced the same events through the following prompts. Record their prompts on white board or zoom slide newsprint so that all can see the group's work.

- Offer any adjective you associate with "Israel" and the Israeli people and list them aloud to the group.

> *Facilitator, the terms may include:*
>
> *"God's people", "persecuted", "victims", "democratic", "alone", "surrounded", "Western", "civilized", "similar to us", etc.*

- Offer any adjectives you associate with "Palestine" and the Palestinian people and list them aloud to the group.

> *Facilitator, the terms might include:*
>
> *"Arab", "Muslim", "terrorist", "violent", "sharia law", "authoritarian", "anti-LGBTQ", "different from us", etc.*

- What do you notice about the two lists?

After participants share their observations, invite them to consider why common assumptions about Israeli Jews are generally positive and about Palestinians are often generally negative. If there are generational or gender or racial/ethnic differences in participant perceptions, note them.

Closing Prayer (1 min)

God of all people, we are grateful that you walk with us as we struggle to understand anew your call to work for a world where all people are treated with dignity and respect. Give us the courage and perseverance we need to continue to walk with you even when we're uncomfortable.

In the healing name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Session 2

The Reality: Genocide, Colonization, and Ethnic Cleansing

(Italics notes facilitator prompts.)

Prep Before Session

Read part 1 (1.1-1.24) of KP2 (page 5). Open Psalm 13 for reading with the group. Prepare a writing surface (large poster, white board, or Zoom slide) to record participant answers to questions within the session.

Welcome, Opening Prayer, and Study Overview (5 mins).

After the welcome and opening prayer, the facilitator presents an overview of the four sections and a very brief summary of section one focusing on the current reality in Gaza, the West Bank, and for the Palestinian citizens of Israel. Use Palestine 101 *(p. 32) for background.*

Context (10 mins)

The authors recall the 2009 document and now say, "We live now in a time of genocide, ethnic cleansing and forced displacement… This moment demands from us a new stand."

Select a participant to read opening paragraphs of KP2 §1 and §2 aloud, then invite the group to consider the following questions:

- What has occurred in the last 16 years between 2009 and 2025?
- Discuss 2018 Nation State Law (See p. 54).

Facilitator may clarify the current geographic/ political reality concerning Gaza, describe the enclave's devastation, the staggering casualty figures and displacement noted by humanitarian agencies, and the continuation of deaths even after the ceasefire.

For the West Bank, facilitator might mention the settlement expansion, settler violence now seen as terrorism, the checkpoints, and the internal Palestinian political crisis described in Part I of KP2 ("internal situation … political division, rivalry and exclusion," and a Palestinian Authority "trapped in serving the interests of the occupier".)
See Palestine 101 *(p. 32) for support.*

In pairs or triads, ask the participants to answer these questions:

- When have you heard someone describe a historical crisis as a 'moment of truth' for the church? *(Examples: Nazi Germany, Civil Rights Movement, Apartheid South Africa)*.
- What made it a 'moment' rather than just a long, slow problem?
- Why is this a Kairos moment for our Palestinian Christian siblings?

Scripture Engagement: Read psalm 13 (10 mins)

Ask a participant to read Psalm 13. Explore these questions with the group:

- What words or phrases describe the experience of the one who prays this psalm?
- Where do you hear anger, protest, or accusation toward God? Where do you hear trust?
- If Palestinian Christians say they are living "in a time of genocide, ethnic cleansing and forced displacement," how might Psalm 13 shape their prayer?
- Are there parts of the psalm many churches in the West might be hesitant to pray, and why? Given our discussion in last session, why might that be?

Connections to Current Reality (15 mins)

Ask participants to read parts 1.1-1.24 in KP2 and identify three key phrases of the current reality. Record them on a board for the group to see.

If not mentioned, point them to KP2 usage of: "genocide," "settler colonialism" and "ethnic cleansing."

Ask a participant to read the descriptions of each separately from the glossary (p. 52).

- If you were living under these conditions, how would you pray to God?

OPTIONAL EXPANSION (15 MINS)
DEEPER REALITY CHECK

Describe and discuss the "system of political and military domination" in the West Bank with regard to home demolitions, settlements, checkpoints, walls, prisoners held without charge, and the Palestinian Authority's constrained role.*

(See Palestine 101 and Glossary for support.)

**There are around ten thousand Palestinian prisoners held by Israel with no rights. Enduring torture and ill treatment, they are held without monitoring from international organizations or visitations.*

- How does learning or updating these facts affect your hearing of the words "genocide" in Part 1?

Closing (5 mins)

End your time together with this question, prioritizing those who might not have spoken up so far in the session:

- What one phrase from Section 1 or from today's Scripture will you carry with you this week?

Ask a participant to close your time with this prayer:

God of all nations and peoples,

We come to you with heavy hearts, crying out from the depths of our souls at the suffering caused by genocide, ethnic cleansing, and settler colonialism. Our hearts ache for the innocent lives destroyed, the families torn apart, and the communities erased by hatred and the lust for power.

For the victims and the oppressed: We pray for protection, safety, and healing for all families, men, women, and children who are enduring such atrocities. Comfort those who have lost loved ones and homes, and grant them strength and hope in the face of impossible circumstances. Be a refuge and a stronghold for the oppressed in their times of trouble.

For the perpetrators and the onlookers: Open the eyes and cleanse the souls of those who perpetuate this violence, that they may see the light of your image in the faces of their victims and repent. Deliver us from the apathy that hinders us from speaking up, and give the international community, our churches, and our leaders the conviction to advocate for change and demand accountability.

For the global community: Strengthen our resolve to dismantle all structures of domination and oppression, and to challenge the ideologies that incite hatred. Teach us to listen to those whose stories make us uncomfortable, to build bridges instead of walls, and to work for a world where all can live in dignity and peace.

Hear our prayer, O Lord!

Amen.

Session 3

Steadfast Faith and *Sumud*

(Italics notes facilitator prompts.)

Prep Before Session

Take prayer requests from the group and open with prayer. Ask the group to pull up writing utensils for today. Prepare a writing surface (large poster, white board, or Zoom slide) to record participant answers to questions within the session.

Welcome, Opening Prayer (3 mins)

Take prayer requests from the group and open with prayer.

Unpack passages (20 mins)

1. ADDRESSED TO *ALL PALESTINIANS* POINTS 2.1-2.8 (10 OF 20 MINS)

- What are the attributes of the society that the writers are working towards? (2.1)
- What are the attributes of the society that the writers are working against? (2.2)
- What kind of society are Palestinians living in now? (2.3)
- How are they proposing to realize their vision? (2.4)
- What is "costly steadfastness"? (2.3)
- What is "creative resistance"? (2.4)
- What must happen before evaluating proposed solutions? (2.5-2.8)

2. ADDRESSED TO *CHRISTIAN PALESTINIANS* POINTS 2.9-2.15 (10 OF 20 MINS)

- Why are the writers committed to staying in the Holy Land? (2.9)
- How are the Palestinians an indigenous people and what rights accrue to this status? (2.10)
- How are young men and women among the indigenous Christians called upon to resist? (2.11 & 12)
- How are those in the diaspora? (2.13)
- What are Church leaders in Palestine and worldwide Christians expected to do in support? (2.14)
- In what way are Palestinian Christians witnesses to the Resurrection?
- Why do you think "truth" is given as the opposite of "injustice" (2.15)

Understanding S*umud* (10 mins)

*Ask a participant to read the following on the Arabic concept of sumud (pronounced soo-**mood**).*

> *Sumud* is an Arabic term for steadfastness and perseverance; it took on a political tone in the 1960s. Human rights lawyer Raja Shehadeh identifies it as a third way that rejects the false choice of exile/ submission to the Israelis or hatred and violent resistance to them.
>
> *Sumud* is a mentality lived out in everyday life. Literary scholar Edward Said observed that "it is a way of turning presence into small-scale obduracy," a tactic suitable for a time when there is no clear way forward.
>
> Palestinian theologians say the presence of the Holy Spirit sustains them in times of colonial violence, but also points them to the ultimate *Samid* (Arabic for "the one with *sumud*") who is Christ, and who identifies with them.

Working in pairs or small groups, ask participants to construct a summary statement for the two main sections just discussed, with a focus on sumud and how Palestinians must interact with Israeli authorities to engage in the sumud of everyday life.

Share the summaries as a group. Open it up to the larger group and ask:

- What other forms can sumud take in enacting nonviolent resistance?

Consider the Role of the Palestinian Church Today (10 mins)

Section (2.9-2.15) speaks to the role of Palestinian Christians today—"the sons and daughters of the first Church"—who carry the history and heritage, bearing witness to the resurrection every day. All are addressed! —the young, those in the diaspora, spiritual leaders and church institutions. They have an important responsibility and this kairos confession conveys how important that role is. Explore how their witness teaches us through the following questions:

- What is the role of the Church in strengthening and joining the sumud of the Palestinians, especially the Christians? How does sumud strengthen faith and hope?
- What is the importance of KP2 to other Christians around the world today? Do we agree? Disagree? Should we modify it? Where do Muslims and Jews come in? Other faith traditions?
- If we are to heed this responsibility as Christians in the U.S., what is our responsibility?

OPTIONAL EXPANSION (15 MINS)
DISCUSS CURRENT REALITY

The prior two sessions of this study have reminded us of the history of the region. Here is the current reality faced by Palestinians:

- *They are faced with elimination from their homes and homeland.*
- *The "ceasefire" in Gaza is being ignored by those in power: both Israeli and U.S. leaders.*
- *The Israeli military does not respond to cries for help from Palestinians; instead, they are there to support the settlers who continue to take more land and oust more Palestinians.*

Select a few of the following positions from KP2 and discuss what they mean to you as a group::

- 2.1: It is a Moment of Truth—and "True solutions begin with dismantling oppressive racist systems."
- 2.2: Things are worse now (than 2009 when Kairos Palestine was issued)! This paragraph concludes with a clear warning: "We warn against giving our national struggle a religious character or turning it into a religious issue that pits religions against one another."
- 2.3: *Sumud* — How do Palestinian Christians suggest people resist? By steadfastly practicing their faith which, in their reality, is an act of resistance.
- 2.4: This point focuses on the rights of all "colonized people" to resist their "colonizers." What are some ways of creative resistance being used by global movements?
- 2.5: Gratitude is expressed for global movements that try to hold governments and international bodies accountable. e.g., the BDS Movement (Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions).
- 2.6, 2.7, 2.8: These affirm the sanctity of life; the duty to care for creation; the vulnerable in society, and Palestinian women, who are described as the "unbending backbone" and foundation of their society as a whole.

Closing Prayer (2 mins)

Ask a participant to close your time with this prayer:

Creator God, We come to you with heavy hearts. Our Palestinian sisters and brothers are faced with annihilation through genocide and we want to respond. But how? We are in awe of their steadfastness in the face of unspeakable acts of violence. Make firm our feeble knees as we seek avenues of solidarity and justice for both Palestinians and Israelis to right this terrible wrong. Embolden us to speak the truth of what we know and see. In the name of your Son, Redeemer of the World, we pray. Amen.

Session 4

Recovering Costly Solidarity

"LORD, IF WE WANT TO BE WITNESSES TO THE RESURRECTION, LET US NOT BE GUARDIANS OF RELICS AND GRAVES." -RAFIQ KHOURY
TRANSLATION BY JOHN S. MUNAYER AND SAMUEL S. MUNAYER

(Italics notes facilitator prompts.)

Prep Before Session

In addition to reading Part III in KP2, please read Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Letter from a Birmingham Jail. *Prepare a writing surface (large poster, white board, or Zoom slide) to record participant answers to questions within the session.*

To gain further insight into the connection between the MLK reading, this section of KP2, and a Palestinian theology of martyrdom, see "Palestinian Theology of Martyrdom" by John S. Munayer and Samuel S. Munayer in The Cross and the Olive Tree: Cultivating Palestinian Theology amid Gaza *in which they note that a "Palestinian theology of martyrdom challenges the theology of survival that prioritizes preservation over witness" (142).* *Book review here* *in* America Magazine.

Welcome, Opening Prayer (5 mins)

Take prayer requests from the group and open with prayer.

Palestinian Christians (10 mins)

Work (in pairs or small groups) to construct a summary statement of the theology presented by our Palestinian Christian siblings in part III of KP2. Record on a board for the group to see each other's answers.

- Where do faith and repentance come from? (3.1)
- Who is God? Jesus? (3.2)
- What are the pillars of God's Kingdom? (3.2 and 3.6)
- What is the mission of the church? (3.3)
- How is sin defined and what are we to repent of? (3.4)
- What is the sign of the Holy Spirit? (3.5)
- What does Christian solidarity look like? (3.11 and 3.13).

Theology of Martyrdom (15 mins)

Facilitate a general discussion in relation to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Letter from a Birmingham Jail, in which he expresses disappointment with the white church, its leadership, and white moderates, noting their silence, support of the status quo, and disagreement over the use of nonviolent direct action.

- What kinds of nonviolent direct action are our Palestinian siblings calling churches and governments to take? What defense of these direct actions does Rev. Dr. King give? (3.10)
- Rev. Dr. King addressed the illogic of his fellow Christian and Jewish leaders condemning nonviolent direct actions because they precipitate violence. What is the false logic addressed by our Palestinian siblings? (3.6)
- Dr. King notes other movements of oppressed people striving for justice and liberation, including national struggles for independence in Asia, South America, the Caribbean, and Africa, early Christians in the Roman Empire, and Jews in Hitler's Germany. How does this relate to the sense of shared struggle expressed by our Palestinian siblings? (3.11-3.12)

Theological Denial and Legitimization (15 mins)

Facilitate a general discussion of the following:

- What theological (a) denial and (b) legitimatization are at the heart of settler colonialism? How is this connected to the establishment of the State of Israel? (3.3)
- In contrast to the Palestinian liberation theology expressed above, what is the theology of Christian Zionism and what has it produced? (3.7)
- What specific actions is the church called to undertake in relationship to Zionism? What specific actions is the church called to undertake in relationship to Jews? Why is a distinction of the different actions important here? What is at stake? (3.3, 3.4, 3.7, 3.8, 3.12)
- Why is it important that genuine antisemitism, along with all forms of racism, exclusion and prejudice, including Islamophobia are strongly condemned together? (3.8)
- What clear position on Palestine are our siblings calling the church to take? What is your position on Palestine? What is your church's position? What about that of your denomination? (3.7)

OPTIONAL EXPANSION (15 MINS)
COSTLY SOLIDARITY AND NEXT STEPS

- How would you describe costly solidarity in your own words? (3.11 and 3.13)
- What, next steps or actions, are you personally committed to doing in relation to:
    - Israel's settler colonialism, genocide, and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people?
    - Your church?
    - Your denomination?
    - Your government?
    - Other secular or religious coalitions?
    - Jewish voices calling for justice and truth?
    - Christian Zionism, Zionist voices and their allies?
    - Palestinians and Christian Palestinians?

Closing Prayer (1 min)

Ask a participant to close your time with this Franciscan Benediction:

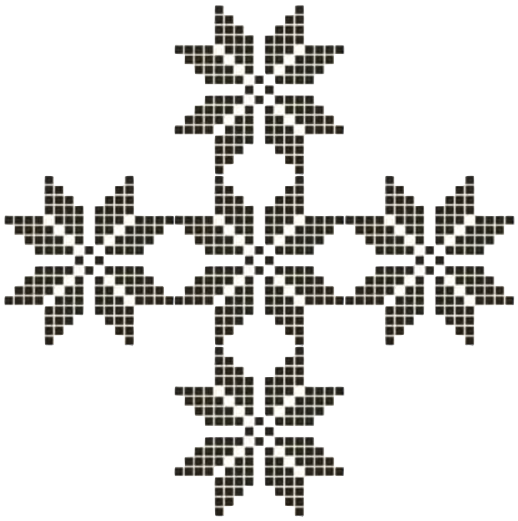
May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain to joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done, to bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.

Amen.



Session 5

Faith in a Time of Genocide

(Italics notes facilitator prompts.)

Prep before session

Review Part IV of KP2. Pack some supplies like writing utensils to underline parts of KP2, and provide a piece of paper to each participant to imagine together.

Welcome, Opening Prayer, and Session Preview (3 mins)

Welcome your group by asking a participant to pray you into the space. Outline what's coming in the final session and tell your group they will be asked to commit collectively to "what's next?" for the group during the closing prayer. Note the list of organizing commitments at the end of this section as potential "what's next?" options to consider.

Reviewing the Text (10 mins)

As facilitator, ask these questions of the group, and collect data on the answers to turn individual answers into collective observations.

- Review Part IV of KP2 and circle the times the word "right" or "righteousness" occurs.
- How do you define "justice"? How does that definition fit into this last section of KP2?
- The timeline of justice is long. The document reminds us that,
    - To speak of a political solution today is futile unless we first undertake the serious work of acknowledging and rectifying past wrongs—beginning with recognition of the historic injustice done to Palestinians since the rise of the Zionist movement and the Balfour Declaration. (4.2)
- Imagine a timeline of "rectifying past wrongs." Where are we in the timeline (arc) toward justice? What needs to occur from a U.S. perspective to lift the boot of empire so that Palestinians can free themselves?
    - How are international law and international mechanisms of seeking justice a tool we might utilize to live into the KP2 call?

Faith as a Technology of Resistance (8 mins)

This study guide has highlighted the ways that the western church and European and American Christian theology have participated in the colonization of Palestine.

And yet… KP1 and KP2 teach us that theology is a technology of resistance.

Discuss as a group the role of the church, the responsibility that folks with Christian lineage have to undo the work of imperial Christianity, and the use of theology as a technology (a tool) in the movement for a free Palestine.

Revolutionary Imagination as Theology (12 mins)

Ask a participant to read the following prompt. If supportive, when you get to the imagining section, have folks draw a scene from a free Palestine on a piece of paper.

KP2 reminds us of realities on the ground and imaginations for the future. Through the lens of Palestinian Christian theology, we are asked to imagine that one day the land will be good for all humanity and that Palestinians will live:

> free in our land together with all the inhabitants of the land in true peace and reconciliation founded on justice and equality for all God's creation, where mercy and truth meet, and righteousness and peace kiss each other. (4.5)

There is an intimacy with this imagined theology – Palestinian imagination is revolutionary in its capacity for tenderness.

- Imagine a free Palestine. What does it look like? What does it smell like? Imagine you are there with your feet on the ground; who is around you? What color are the olive trees and what does the coffee taste like?
- Come back to the room you're in. What needs to happen in your church or faith community to get to that imagined reality? What needs to happen at your dinner table? within your friend group? at your workplace? in your city council? within yourself?

“From the land of the Incarnation, the Cross and the Resurrection” (10 mins)

Ask a participant to read the following:

Part IV of KP2 begins with this:

> From the land of the Incarnation, the Cross and the Resurrection, we renew our word of hope in the God of the poor, the oppressed and the downtrodden. The genocidal war has sought to strip us of our hope and faith in God’s goodness and in life upon our land. Yet we declare our adherence to our faith in a holy and just God, and in the right God has given us to live with dignity on our land and the land of our ancestors. This is our hope. This is our steadfastness. This is our resistance. (4.1)

Consider the Incarnation (Divine Jesus coming to us as human), the Cross (the suffering of God at the hand of empire, biblical Rome), and the Resurrection (the flipped table of death, the compost of our faith.) Ask your group to answer the following.

What does this theological cycle teach you about the movement for Palestinian rights? Compare the timeline you came up with above with this theological cycle of Incarnation, Cross, and Resurrection.

- How does the theology of Palestinian Christians in KP2 teach us how to infuse hope, steadfastness, and resistance into our own faith practice?

OPTIONAL EXPANSION (15 MINS)
IMPERIAL BOOMERANG

Discuss what Section IV: 4.4 of KP2 might teach us about our own context here in the U.S. regarding Christian Nationalism. The Imperial Boomerang, a political science theory used in post-colonial studies (see glossary p. 53) describes how methods first used by empires to control and subjugate their colonies—such as militarized policing, surveillance, and repression—are later brought back and used against populations in the imperial “home” state.

- How does the boomerang affect bring these issues closer to home for you?
- What hope comes from collective struggle?

Closing Prayer (2 mins)

Invite the group to speak the following prayer aloud together as a collective. Prepare participants to, when called upon, name a commitment they have now that this study work is complete. (If you decide to commit to one thing as a group, have each person name it individually and let the repetition fill the air.) Some example commitments with links to organizing resources are provided below, but do personalize these commitments to fit your group context.

Holy Liberator, we honor you when we seek the liberation of all people, including ourselves.

May our study continue and our conviction be deep.

May we live into the invitation of our siblings in Christ to be bold and loving.

May we call for justice, not balance.

May we participate in sacred action, not spoken prayer alone.

May we be wise to differentiate the “peace” of the powerful imposed upon us versus the peace of being Christ’s kin.

May we trade-in complicity for collective care.

We now name our commitments to this work into the circle.

[Participants go around the circle and name individual commitments aloud to the group.]

Until liberation for all. Amen.

You have prayed your next commitments into being, but now you need to express them with your actions. A follow-up meeting or check-in might be required to maintain these commitments.

EXAMPLE COMMITMENTS:

- Begin a formal process to clearly name the reality of genocide, settler colonialism, or apartheid in your networks and institutions.
- Advocate for accountability and international law within your local government.
- Reject and expose theologies that justify oppression, e.g., reject Christian Zionist theological leanings in your local faith community.
- Make a plan to practice costly solidarity through public, active, engagement.
- Support creative non-violent resistance like joining a campaign with the BDS movement like the boycott of Chevron.
- Plan to move from participant to facilitator and run this study again with a new group of people.

Supplements

1. Readers' Theater
2. Worship Material
   - Worship Liturgy
   - Children's Sermon
3. Palestine 101
4. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Policies
5. United Methodist Church Policies
6. Glossary
7. Recommended Books

Readers' Theater

Readers' Theater is a style of theater in which the actors present dramatic readings of narrative material without costumes, props, scenery, or special lighting. Readers use only scripts and vocal expression to help the audience understand the story. Readers' Theater is also known as "theater of the mind", "interpreters theater", and "story theater", and performances might be called "reading hours" or "play readings".

An imagined conversation between 1) a Palestinian Christian introducing the Kairos Palestine Document, 2) a longstanding church member who is comfortable with a pro-Israel perspective and 3) a newer church member who has been exposed to a different narrative about Israel and the Palestinians, especially since October 7, 2023. The setting is the United States, but most of the issues and concerns raised will be relevant in many other places.

These characters are composites. They are meant, most importantly, to give voice to this pivotal moment of Palestinian truth-telling, and to reflect some of the tensions at work in our hearts and our congregations. We recognize there isn't the time or framework for full character development. But we wanted to make the three characters as authentic and credible as possible. We hope when people encounter the interactions in this conversation, they will "sound familiar." Hopefully, engaging with the characters will also help people break new ground. We call the Palestinian Christian "Nadia," the longstanding church member "Elaine," and the newer church member "David."

25 SEGMENTS ADDRESSING 8 TOPICS IN KP2

- 1 - 3 Introducing the characters
- 4 - 5 The statement about antisemitism, Islamophobia, and all forms of bigotry & history of Palestinian support for Jews
- 6 - 7 Distinction between Judaism and Zionism
- 8 – 11 Christian Zionism
- 12 -14 Settler-Colonialism, Israel as a settler-colonial project
- 15 - 17 October 7th, the Palestinian right to resist occupation, the historical context of Israeli injustice and oppression is key to understanding Oct. 7th; why it is not "self-defense", Palestinian resistance is understandable, the American analogy
- 18 - 20 Costly resistance, Christ and the cross, logic of love, nonviolent resistance
- 21 - 22 Abraham Accords, normalization, false peace
- 23 - 25 Genocide

Watch the Video!

thePJN.org/kp2studyguide or

kairosresponse.org/kp2guide.html

A Conversation

Palestinian Christian (Nadia):

1 It's so good to be with you. I welcome this opportunity to talk with you about our Kairos Palestine document and to listen to your concerns and perspectives. Thank you for opening this door for this conversation and deeper understanding. These last two years have been devastating for us. Being connected to our brothers and sisters in the faith means everything to us.

Longtime Church Member (Elaine):

2 I hope no one will mind me saying this, but I'm not sure about this study. I worry about it being divisive. Emotions run hot around these issues, and I don't want to stir things up too much.

Newer Church Member (David):

3 For my part – and with all due respect – I think we could do with some stirring things up. I've been really upset by the things I'm seeing on social media – the horrible destruction, the killing of women and children, the deliberate starvation in Gaza. I can't believe our government is funding these atrocities, and I think as Christians we need to be talking about it. I'm looking to my church for guidance on these issues.

Elaine:

4 Ok, but from what I've been reading in this document, Israel comes off as the bad guy. Don't get me wrong. I certainly don't think Israel is beyond reproach. They've done things that have shocked the conscience. No doubt about it. But don't Christians have an obligation to support the Jewish people, especially in light of the Holocaust?

Nadia:

5 I'm glad to have the chance to address this. We do have an obligation to support the Jewish people. Absolutely. In fact, when boatloads of Jewish refugees came to our shores fleeing persecution, we Palestinians welcomed them, took them into our homes, and extended a helping hand, as the Arab world has done for our Jewish "cousins" seeking refuge from European pogroms for hundreds of years. We have an equally strong obligation to support fellow Christians, especially when they are facing death and destruction, as we Palestinian Christians are in Gaza and the West Bank. And we have an obligation to support our Muslim Palestinian brothers and sisters, and all our fellow human beings, children of God made in the image of God. We are very clear – "We strongly condemn antisemitism and all forms of racism, exclusion, and prejudice, including Islamophobia."

David:

6 I believe in supporting Jews, but I have serious problems with Israel. That's not a contradiction. Some people try to say that it is, but it's not. There's a key difference between the Jewish people and the modern state of Israel. Blurring that difference leads to misunderstanding.

Nadia:

7 We make a distinction between Judaism and Zionism; they're not the same thing. We express it this way in our document: "Zionist ideology claims to represent and protect the Jewish people, but in doing so it has conflated 'Jew' and 'Zionist' as though they are one and the same. Not every Jew is a Zionist, and not every Zionist is a Jew. This confusion has done great harm to Judaism itself and to its image worldwide."

Elaine:

8 The idea that not all Jews are Zionists is very surprising to me. It's not what I was raised with. Yes, I have been hearing about younger Jews here in America cutting ties with Israel, especially since the death and destruction in Gaza. Seeing groups like Jewish Voice for Peace demonstrating in the Rotunda of the Capitol, wearing t-shirts that say "Another Jew Against Genocide" and "Genocide is Now." That's pretty mind-blowing.

David:

9 The other side of that…that not every Zionist is a Jew….is also a thing. I'm thinking of all the Christians who proudly see themselves as Zionists, like former president Joe Biden and Texas senator Ted Cruz, like all these churches that post "Stand With Israel" signs and have the Israeli flag in their sanctuaries. That's pretty mind-blowing to me!

Nadia:

10 These are examples of Christian Zionism. We Christians have a special responsibility for all the damage that Zionism has done, because the first Zionists were Christians, not Jews. We set all this in motion. In the mid-1800's, evangelical Christians who were obsessed with end-times prophecies in the Bible believed that Christ would return once world Jewry gathered in the Holy Land. Rather than view the Second Coming as a distant hope, they set out to force God's hand and make the ingathering of Jews a reality. Christian Zionists promoted the immigration of Jews to Palestine, not because they were interested in a "Jewish homeland", but because they believed it would trigger the apocalypse.

David:

11 Today, from what I understand, Christian Zionism is a powerful political movement influencing our nation's foreign policy. They have captured important positions in Congress and the Executive branch. Speaker of the House Mike Johnson and US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee are avowed Christian Zionists. They are strongly pro-Israel: they support illegal settlements in the West Bank and maximum military spending for Israel. I heard Ambassador Huckabee say he doesn't think Palestinians even exist or that they have any rights. What does the Kairos Palestine II document say about this?

Nadia:

12 We use some of our strongest language to denounce Christian Zionism. Let me be very clear: Christian Zionism is a racist, supremacist ideology. It grants privileges to Jews that it denies to Palestinians. It dehumanizes Palestinians while it upholds Jews as specially chosen and entitled. Its theology has supported apartheid, ethnic cleansing, and the genocide of indigenous people. We name it for what it is: a theological distortion and a corruption of the core values of Christian faith and ethics. Dialogue with Christian Zionists and sincere invitations to repent have been exhausted. The time has come to reject and boycott their ideology. We feel strongly that churches throughout the world must "repudiate Zionist theology" in all its forms, beginning with Zionism among Christians. If I may speak personally here, it's shocking and painful for us to see the positions of many churches in America, especially when they adopt the colonizer's narrative or just remain silent in the face of the genocide of our people.

Elaine:

13 When you say "the colonizer's narrative," do you mean Israel?

Nadia:

14 Yes. For us, Israel is what we call a "settler colonial" regime. It's a term from anthropologists. But it means much more than academic jargon to us. It's helped us make sense of our lived experience. It has been going on for over 100 years in Palestine, starting out with the Balfour Declaration in 1917, when the British government decided, without ever consulting us, that European Jews could take over our country, settle it, and make it their own. It's why in the Kairos Palestine document we say, "Israel is a colonial, settler, and exclusionary entity built upon the displacement of the indigenous population and the replacement with new settlers."

David:

15 This sounds an awful lot like what Israel's military is doing in Gaza and the settlers are doing in the West Bank. Genocide and ethnic cleansing.

Nadia:

16 Thank you for making that connection. It's true. It's so outrageous. So devastating. It's been extremely difficult for us to understand why so many churches have been either silent while we have been slaughtered, or are so ready to call these atrocities "self-defense."

Elaine:

17 I hate to say it, but I do think that Israel has a right to defend itself. After all, it was Hamas who attacked Israel on October 7th.

Nadia:

18 Elaine, it's so important to remember that October 7th didn't occur in a vacuum. It occurred in the context of decades of Israeli injustice, oppression, and forcible displacement, and more than 16 years of an immoral, suffocating blockade on Gaza. And I also want to say that mentioning this context doesn't justify the killing or capture of civilians, the violations of international law and norms, or war crimes. In addition to this, we ask how a colonizer can defend itself against those it has colonized and expelled from their land. We insist that Israel can't invoke the right of self-defense as though it is a normal country. It's not. It's a colonial power stealing our land and killing our people. International law does not give a colonial power the right to "defend itself." Instead, it guarantees to colonized, occupied people the right to resist their occupation by any means necessary, including armed resistance. The International Court of Justice has ruled that Israel's occupation is illegal and it must end it.

David:

19 As Americans, in our Revolutionary War against the British, we took up arms to fight for our freedom. It's not hard for me to understand how Palestinians would decide to do the same thing. I don't think of myself as a violent person. But I have to say that I have no idea what it would be like to live in an "open-air prison", to spend essentially my whole young life under a suffocating siege, the losses I would endure, the sense that life was never going to get better, that I really didn't have a future, and what that might lead me to do. I think about that. A violent response to shake off the oppressor is totally understandable. So, it's astonishing that the overwhelming majority of Palestinians, Christian and Muslim, are nonviolent and remain committed to nonviolence. Speaking of which, I really appreciate that the Kairos Palestine document lifts up love and nonviolence. It reminded me very much of Dr. King and the civil rights movement. For the last couple of years, many of our congregations have been wrestling with racial justice. Seminars, sermons, book groups, dismantling racism workshops. I think these experiences can help us see the Palestinian struggle for freedom and justice in a similar light.

Nadia:

20 I appreciate you noticing those connections. They're very alive for us. Kairos Palestine II talks a lot about "costly resistance," which, to my mind, points to the cross. One of my favorite passages reminds me that as Christians our movement is grounded in "the logic of love" and nonviolence: "Hope is a living act of resistance–steadfastly refusing the reality of death imposed upon us, confronting and resisting every form of injustice and occupation. Jesus Christ walked with the poor and the weak, stood beside the oppressed, and never abandoned love or compromised truth and justice. For the sake of the salvation of humanity, he accepted the cross. His resurrection was victory over death and injustice, a sign of hope rooted in faith. This is the faith that sustains us today."

David:

21 I'd like to ask about the Abraham Accords. They seem like a positive development, a real opening for peace in a war-torn region, a win-win. But KP2 is opposed to the Accords. Could you help me understand why?

Nadia:

22 The Abraham Accords promise peace, but it's a false peace based on betrayal. The Accords follow a colonial pattern of failing to acknowledge our humanity and excluding us. American, Israeli, and Arab counterparts met without us, and never seriously engaged our perspectives and longstanding concerns. The Hebrew Scriptures teach us that true peace must be built on a foundation of justice. False prophets are those who cry "Peace! Peace!" when there is no peace. Any "peace" that offers "normalized relations" between Israel and the Arab world without redress for the injustice of Israeli occupation and apartheid, without affirming the right of return, equal rights, and Palestinian self-determination, and without accountability for war crimes, is a false peace. The Abraham Accords is a "normalization agreement" that ignores the brutal, unjust realities of our lives. This is completely unacceptable to us.

Elaine:

23 We touched on genocide earlier in our conversation. Could we stay on that topic for a moment? As I'm sure you're aware, there's a lot of controversy around the word "genocide." My Jewish friends feel insulted when people say Israel is committing genocide. It's hurtful and offensive to them. I know our pastor has worked hard to build interfaith relationships with the Jewish community, and that has resulted in a warm friendship with the rabbi of the Conservative Synagogue in our city. I worry about those hard-won friendships unraveling. I just can't see using a word that's hurtful to people we care about.

David:

24 Before you answer that question, Nadia, let me say that I have Jewish friends, too, and they don't have any trouble using the word "genocide." In fact, they insist on it! Not to deny what Elaine is bringing up, but only to say that, in my experience, the feeling she's describing is not shared by all Jews. I also have to wonder why we're not even asking how all this is landing with Palestinians.

Nadia:

25 Thank you both for your honesty. I have to say it's been maddening to watch so many American Christians allow themselves to be tied up in knots about terminology. It all seems so abstract and far removed from the unspeakable violence and trauma we've been enduring. We're being slaughtered, and you're debating semantics! Genocide is not abstract to us. It's been an ominous shadow in our history for over a century, culminating in the mass death and destruction in Gaza. It began "in the minds of the settler-colonial powers of Europe…a racist, dehumanizing ideology that worked to displace us from the time of the Nakba until today." From a faith standpoint, it's so clear to us that genocide is "a structural sin against God, against humanity, and against creation….opposed to the great commandment of love." As A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide puts it, "Those who deny the genocide committed against the Palestinian people–despite the overwhelming evidence, the testimonies, and even the statements of the Zionists themselves–deny the very humanity of the Palestinian people. We have the right to ask: How can one speak of Christian fellowship or communion while denying, supporting, justifying, or remaining silent before genocide?"

Worship Liturgy

Call to Worship (Luke 4:18-19 & Psalm 85)

One: From near and far we have gathered to hear the Good News!

All: **Good news that proclaims release to the captives and resources for the impoverished.**

One: The Spirit of the Lord is with us; we of all ages and identities!

All: **Proclaiming that neighbors near and far who are oppressed will be set free!**

One: Gathered in this place, we celebrate the coming of God's world where steadfast love and faithfulness will meet.

Call to Confession (Acts 10:34-35)

One: As different as we may be, as many ways as we have fallen short, God shows no partiality between those who honor Her. The confessions that come earnestly from loving hearts are welcomed by our Divine Parent. Trusting in God's grace and mercy, let us confess together.

Prayer of Confession (Psalm 85:4)

All: **Holy One, we have done damage this week and hurt people we claim to love. We come before you as a family to confess our sins, knowing that you call us to help each other in our efforts at repentance.**

One: We confess we have been raised with stereotypes and prejudices we leave unexamined. These lead to us excusing behavior we would never tolerate for ourselves.

All: **We put first the narrative of those we perceive to be more "civilized," those who look and speak more like we do, without really listening to hear if we share values. When we know that challenges will lead to changes, we have put our own comfort and stability over our neighbors' access to justice and peace.**

One: At the same time we are preaching "love your neighbor" in church and "human rights" in society, we have watched a genocidal war lay bare the hypocrisy of our world.

All: **The values we cling to have proven hollow when challenged outright by world powers. The double standards for whose life has value and those who are merely numbers is laid bare in our headlines.**

God of all Creation, help us uproot the invasive perspectives of racism and colonialism, so we can experience our neighbors like you do—through pure love. Restore us again, and again, O God of our salvation. Put away your indignation and we will try again and again to live in your ways. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon (Psalm 85:1-4)

One: Restoring God, you have always shown your favor to your children and have forgiven the iniquity of your people. Withdrawing your wrath and turning from anger, you open your arms to all who ask your forgiveness.

Friends, rest in the comfort and safety that you have been forgiven. And live with the strength to offer that brave love to others.

Passing of the Peace (Galatians 5:14)

One: Jesus gave us an example and a commandment: to love one another as he has loved us. This is how everyone will know we are his disciples, when we love each other. I invite you to greet one another in that same spirit. May the peace of Christ be with you!

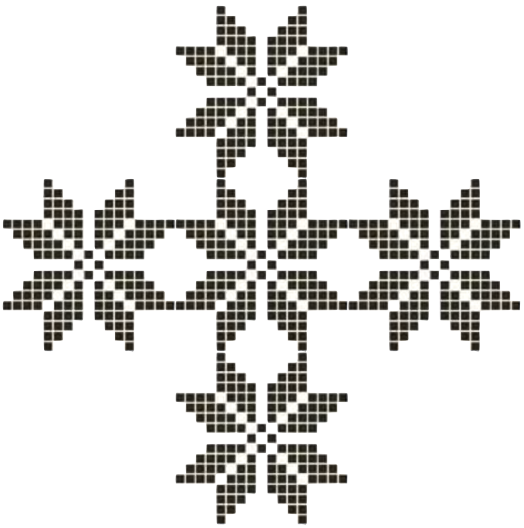
All: **And also with you!**

Prayer for Illumination (Psalm 85:8)

Holy One, we turn from the turmoil of our world, to the sacred stillness of your word. Speak to your people now as you always have, in the midst of our struggles to be faithful. Quiet our hearts and minds so we can hear you with our whole selves and respond to you with clarity and solidarity. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving/Dedication (Psalm 85:12)

Source of All Life, you have given us what is good, to care for and steward. Take the time, talents, and treasures we offer today and multiply them like grapes grown from the same vine. That they too may feed the hungry, quench those who thirst, and bring joy to the downtrodden. Bless these gifts for the prosperity of your creation. Amen.



Children's Sermon

Tips for Preparing:

- Familiarize yourself with the Kairos Palestine Documents and the history of your church's actions related to Palestine and Israel found in this study guide. No need to be an expert, but this will help in case questions come up.
- Some questions may come up that you don't know the answers to. That's ok! This is a great time to model learning as an adult and explain that it's something you are still learning about too.
- Also keep in mind that many of the questions children may ask are, at their heart, less about facts and figures and more about gathering information on how to live in a world where scary or unfair things are happening. It's important to assure children, especially the youngest, that there are lots of adults who love them and will do everything they can to keep them safe.
- Older children may be ready to make comparisons to other historic events they've learned about in school or conditions in their own neighborhoods. During these early stages of childhood development, children are using broad categories to help them make sense of the world. The connections they make can help you learn what the world looks like to them.

Scripture References:

"For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"
~Galatians 5:14

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
~Luke 4:18-19

"... learn to do good; seek justice; rescue the oppressed; defend the orphan; plead for the widow." ~Isaiah 1:17

Time with the Children:

1. After welcoming the children, explain that Bethlehem and other cities they have learned about in the Bible are real places. Many of them have had people living there since before Jesus was born!

- Optional activity 1) Use a modern map and circle some names of places they know together (ex. Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Sea of Galilee, etc.)
- Optional activity 2) Show some pictures of people living in these places, include both during biblical times and modern images.

2. Ask if the children have heard of any current news from these cities (from Palestine, Israel, or Gaza which are the names for these regions many use today). Especially if you've never talked with your church kids about Palestine and Israel, you might be surprised by what they have heard. Children often pick up more about world events than we realize.

Note: no need to address, correct, or explain every answer; use your best judgement as time and circumstances allow. The adults will go through a similar exercise in Session 1 to explore their cultural assumptions around the history and language often used, so learning from the children first may enhance their discussion.

3. Whether they have heard much about current events or not, share with them that there are still Christians living today where Jesus lived, along with people of many other faiths—Jewish, Muslim, Druze, Bahá'í, etc. Many Palestinian Christian leaders gathered together in Bethlehem to write an important message for other Christians around the world—like us and our congregation—called the "Kairos Palestine Document."

Note: Explain the meaning of Kairos:

> "Kairos" is an ancient Greek word for "time," but not the kind of time we measure on a clock or calendar. It's a special moment or season when the time is just right, like harvest time- if you pick fruits and vegetables too soon they aren't ripe, but if you wait too long they go bad. You have to act at just the right moment. Kairos means a special moment that God has ordained; the perfect moment to act. Kronos is the Greek word for quantitative or linear time, the kind we measure with clocks and calendars.

4. The Palestinian Christians wrote this special document (or letter) to explain what life is like for them right now and how they believe God wants us to act as their Christian family. Unfortunately, where they live, some neighbors are not treating each other very well. There is lots of fighting and taking of other people's land and resources. Children aren't able to go to school safely or play outside. Some of them are killed or injured by the fighting and arrested unfairly, just like the adults. They wrote us this letter because it is important for us to know this is going on and do something to help.

> *Note: Do not put pressure on yourself to explain the entire nuanced history to the congregation at this moment; this requires a much longer conversation. Do feel free to go into some more detail here about the current conditions (particularly for children) if this is a conversation your church has been having and if it is appropriate for the ages of children present. You can learn more about the experiences of Palestinian children here: Defense for Children International.*

5. The Palestinian Christians want to live in peace with their neighbors of other faiths like Jesus teaches us, and lots of their neighbors want that too. In their writing, they remind us that of all the rules that God gives us, the Bible tells us that the most important one we should always follow is to 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

Ask the children:

> How can you show love to your neighbors, or to your classmates at school and church? What are some loving/kind things you should do for other people? (ex. Share toys, food, etc.; play together; get help if someone is being bullied or gets hurt.) Affirm all the creative answers they come up with and be prepared to offer some examples in case they are feeling shy. Remind them of programs in your church and community that help your neighbors—food pantries, clothing drives, etc. Maybe they've participated in some themselves.

Explain that those good programs were created after someone took the time to learn about what our neighbors needed.

6. One more way we can love our neighbors is by listening to them and learning about what their lives are like, even if it is difficult and maybe a little scary sometimes. God's love can help us be brave and learn enough so that we can be helpful to our neighbors like Jesus teaches us.

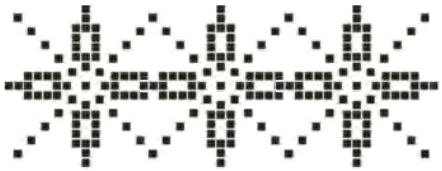
Conclude by explaining that the adults are going to study this special Kairos letter and learn more so we can be better neighbors to our friends in Palestine and Israel. In the meantime, you can all pray for them together.

Closing Prayer:

- Optional activity: ask the children what prayers they would like to say for the people of Palestine and Israel, along with any other prayer concerns they have in their own lives this week. Incorporate them into this closing prayer or one of your own.

Dear God, sometimes it is sad and scary to learn about what's going on in the world. But we want to be brave neighbors and understand what life is like for other people, so that we can love them just like you do. Please be with our friends in Palestine and Israel, and with their families around the world. Help keep everyone safe and healthy and help us share your message of peace and justice. In your many names we pray, Amen.

Palestine 101



Contents

Introduction
1. Historical Narrative
2. Life Under Occupation
3. The Current Reality
4. Gaza, Crucible for the Conscience of the World

On This Land, poem by Mahmoud Darwish

Sources

Introduction

Naming the Genocide

There has been heated debate in society and in political circles about naming Israel's assault on Gaza as genocide (see glossary p.54). It is crucial to identify this "crime of crimes," considered the most grave crime against humanity, because the naming demands global recognition of the intent to eliminate a population. It also prompts legal obligations for governments and institutions to intervene and halt the annihilation. Today, identifying the genocide that has happened in Gaza can help to ensure accountability and justice and prevent "genocide blindness" in future generations.

Some say it is a complicated legal question that has not been settled. We need not be experts ourselves to have an answer. Here are some of the groups who agree that Israel has perpetrated genocide in Gaza:

- UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry
- UN Special Rapporteur, Francesca Albanese
- The International Association of Genocide Scholars
- Amnesty International
- Human Rights Watch
- B'Tselem, Israel's own leading human rights organization
- Al-Haq, the Middle East's oldest human rights center
- Academic authorities on the Holocaust and Genocide

In naming the second Kairos Palestine document *A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide,* Christian Palestinians are challenging us to see the truth of that charge and to act on it.

Christianity and Palestine

Palestine is the cradle of Christianity. The historic Christian population in Palestine is composed of Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians*; a continued existence of a Christian community in the land of Christ's birth is at risk today. This population has shrunk from about 10% of the total population in historic Palestine in the early 20th century to roughly 2% today across the occupied territories and Israel. In the historic West Bank city of Bethlehem and neighboring communities, where Christians once composed 85% of the population, the number of Christians has dwindled to about 10%. Despite their diminishing presence, Christians remain an integral part of Palestinian society.

Christians who are citizens of Israel and those in the Occupied Territories live with all the same discriminatory and oppressive Israeli policies and practices as other Palestinians. Particular dangers and injuries that they suffer include the targeting of Christian sites, clergy and communities. Nearly all Christian institutions in Gaza, including schools and historical sites like the 5th-century Saint Porphyrius Church, have suffered significant damage or destruction. In the West Bank, attacks by Israeli settlers on Christians and their property reached record highs in 2024 and 2025. The all-Christian village of Taybeh in the West Bank has endured escalating Israeli settler violence, including arson, vandalism of homes, cars, and ancient churches. The once-Christian town of Bethlehem is being strangled by ever-expanding settlements; nearby historic Christian properties are being confiscated for Israeli colonization. In Jerusalem, ultra-Orthodox Jews have been spitting on and insulting Christian clergy as a matter of routine. Denial of access to worship at important religious sites is a painful reality for Christians, especially in the seasons of Christmas and Easter. The last Christian-majority town in Palestine, Beit Sahour, is now under threat with a new illegal settlement being built.

For many Palestinian Christians, maintaining a presence in the birthplace of Christianity is essential to their faith and identity. To succeed, their steadfastness (or *sumud* in Arabic) requires effective and vigorous support from the global church. Their voices are calling us to respond.

To understand that call and appreciate the bold and unflinching message of Palestinian Christians in "A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide," readers will benefit from an understanding of current realities of life for Palestinians, as well as the modern history and pivotal issues that have shaped the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice, and equality. We endeavor to provide that grounding here with this “Palestine 101” review of past and present facts and key issues.

The creation of Israel, also known as the Zionist project, was a dream realized for the Jewish people, but it brought death and destruction to the Palestinian people. According to experts and scholars, Israel is now understood as an enterprise of settler colonialism and ethnic cleansing, predicated on racial supremacy and domination. Both the apartheid regime that exists today within Israel and the occupied territories and the genocide that has unfolded in Gaza are predictable results of Zionist goals and plans from its earliest days.

**These are the four Christian families in Palestine, according to the Middle East Council of Churches*

Kairos Palestine II tells us:

> Settler colonialism, past and present, is built upon genocide, ethnic cleansing and the forced displacement of indigenous peoples—all for the sake of exploiting land, resources and wealth to serve the colonizer's gain...Exposed today is the true face of Zionist ideology: a system that over decades has entrenched an organized and sophisticated regime of apartheid, supported by advanced technologies, exercising total control over every aspect of Palestinian life—fragmenting the land, dividing its people, and turning Palestinian existence into an unbearable hell.

1. Historical Narrative

The Zionist Movement Begins

Theodor Herzl, father of modern political Zionism, published his plans for "The Jewish State" in 1896 and convened the First Zionist Congress in 1897, although organized Jewish immigration and colonization in Palestine had already begun in the 1880s. Several waves of Zionist-organized immigration would follow throughout the early 20th century. Early writings and statements of Zionist leaders make clear that they anticipated using force to achieve their goals, at the expense of the indigenous Arab population.

The birth of the Zionist movement was a response to the alarming rise of antisemitism in Europe in the 1800s. The ill-fated solution that Zionist leaders chose was supported by the European powers as a way to solve their own "Jewish problem." The plan was to create an ethno-nationalist Jewish state in the region of Palestine by colonizing it and replacing that land's inhabitants with European Jewry who after centuries were still trying to assimilate and were not accepted by Europeans. This plan reflected the influence of two strong political trends of 19th century Europe: the rise of nationalism as European empires broke into nation-states, often organized according to their dominant ethnicity, and Europeans' racist, patriarchal views and colonialist policies regarding non-European peoples and regions.

World War I and Contradictory Commitments

In the early 20th century, major European powers such as Britain, France, and Russia were seeking to maximize their influence in the Middle East. During WWI, Britain committed itself to three blatantly contradictory agreements. The secret Sykes-Picot agreement with France, endorsed by Russia, laid out their desired "spheres of influence" in the territory of the Ottoman Empire once it was defeated. In that agreement, Palestine and some other Arab territories would be under British rule. However, in a series of correspondence during WWI, Britain also promised Arab leaders that they would have an independent state in territory that included Palestine, in exchange for supporting Britain's efforts to defeat the Ottomans. Finally, in the Balfour Declaration, the British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour committed his government to supporting "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people."

After the war ended, the European powers did establish their desired spheres of influence, with the support of the newly formed League of Nations, which granted Britain an administrative mandate over a portion of the former Ottoman Empire that included Palestine. The British Mandate had the stated goal of preparing the region and people of Palestine for self-governance, while also facilitating the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine as outlined in the Balfour Declaration. This Mandate, with its inherent contradictions, was established without reference to the wishes of the 80-90% majority Palestinian population, referred to by Israel as "the Arabs" of Palestine. (see "Arab" in glossary p. 52)

The British Mandate and UN Partition Plan

Britain received its mandate for the administration of Palestine and Transjordan from the League of Nations in 1920, officially starting in 1923. This era was marked by several waves of European Jewish immigration organized by the Zionist movement and later catalyzed by the tragedy of the Holocaust, resulting in a drastic change in the demographic makeup of Palestine by the mid-1940s. During the Mandate period, Palestinian Arab resistance to British rule and Zionist plans was rising; Palestinian Arabs revolted, mostly nonviolently, against the British in the late 1930s and were brutally suppressed. But Britain also reversed its policy of encouraging Jewish immigration to the region and backed away from its commitment in the Balfour Declaration. Zionist militias began attacking the British authorities and the Arab civilian population, including assassinations and acts of terrorism against civilians, to pressure the British to leave Palestine. Meanwhile, WWII broke out in 1939 at the end of which, in 1945, exhausted and unable to manage the conflict in Palestine that it had largely manufactured, Britain referred the "Palestine problem" to the United Nations and walked away.

In November 1947, in the newly-created United Nations, the General Assembly approved a plan to divide Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, against the wishes of the majority of the population. The plan allocated 56% of the land to the proposed Jewish state, although Jews owned only about 7% of the private land in Palestine and made up about one third of the population, most of whom were recent arrivals from Europe. The Palestinian Arabs were allocated just 42% of Palestine, even though they were two-thirds majority of the population and were indigenous to all of the land. Jerusalem was to be governed by a special international administration.

The Nakba

The Nakba ("catastrophe" in Arabic) refers to the deliberate and systematic mass expulsion of Palestinians from their homes and homeland from 1947 to 1949 by Zionist forces for the establishment of the State of Israel. It began soon after the passing of the Partition Plan at the United Nations. This ruthless ethnic cleansing, euphemistically called "transfer" by Zionist leaders at that time, included massacres like that at the village of Deir Yassin. Their purpose was to establish a Jewish-majority state where Jews were still a minority of the population, even after several waves of mass immigration in recent decades. At least 750,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homeland and made refugees by Zionist militias

and the Israeli army; only about 150,000 Palestinians remained within the borders of the newly declared state of Israel.

All that has happened in Palestine/Israel since 1948 can be directly attributed to the ethnic cleansing of Palestine for the creation of the state of Israel. And Israel's ethnic cleansing has never ceased; it has continued to be a cornerstone of Israeli policy, within its own borders and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. A consistent goal of the Zionist movement since its beginnings has been to control the maximum amount of land in historic Palestine with the minimum number of—indigenous—Palestinians.

Palestinian Refugees and the Right of Return

After The Nakba, which Israel calls its “War of Independence,” when an Armistice had been signed to end that war, Israel refused to allow the Palestinian war refugees to come home, instead destroying hundreds of villages to make return impossible and remove the Arab character of the land. This became known as Judaization and as it was a priority, refugees caught trying to cross the newly established border were shot. The Fourth Geneva Convention, UN Resolution 194, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other instruments of international law guarantee the rights of refugees, including the right to return to their homeland when fighting has ceased. Palestinians, the United Nations, human rights experts and organizations, as well as international law are resolute that the right of return of refugees be protected and fulfilled. (Right of Return is addressed in KP2, 2.13)

Because of Israel's policy of refusing this right ever since The Nakba, today there are well over eight million Palestinian refugees, survivors of The Nakba and their descendants, mostly living in the occupied territories and neighboring countries. The Palestinian refugees’ “Right of Return” is an unavoidable issue that must be addressed and resolved in order to achieve a just peace in this land.

Palestinian Citizens of Israel

Palestinians who remained inside the newly formed state of Israel after The Nakba were granted Israeli citizenship and voting rights, but they face systemic discrimination as non-Jewish citizens in an ethno-nationalist state. Israeli courts have distinguished between citizenship (legal status) and nationality, affirming that Israel is the state of the Jewish people. They have created a unique status for Arab citizens who are not considered part of the Jewish nation. From 1948 to 1966, they lived under military rule, and have faced attempts to suppress their Palestinian identity. These citizens have long been treated with distrust and since October 2023, there has been a sharp increase in suppression and arrests of Palestinian citizens of Israel who are suspected of solidarity with Gaza. Some Israeli officials have even called for the revocation of citizenship for those deemed disloyal.

Today, there are over 2 million Palestinian citizens of Israel. Despite having legal rights, they face systemic discrimination in housing, education, and employment. The poverty rate is significantly higher among Palestinian Israelis. Palestinian municipalities within Israel have jurisdiction over only about 3% of Israel's land, despite the community making up 21% of the population. Over 60 laws directly or indirectly discriminate against them, including the 2018 Nation-State Law, which declares Israel the "historic homeland of the Jewish people" with exclusive rights to self-determination.

In East Jerusalem, most Palestinian residents have the status of "permanent resident" rather than citizenship. They may live and work in Israel, but they cannot vote in national elections and do not hold Israeli passports. Unless East Jerusalem Palestinians maintain Jerusalem as their “center of life,” their permanent resident status can be revoked. This means they must continue to live and work within the bounds of East Jerusalem or lose their legal status and access to Jerusalem. This is easier said than done, and since 1967, more than 15,000 residencies have been revoked which is now seen as part of Israel’s ethnic cleansing of families with centuries of history in Jerusalem. (For more on citizenship versus residency, view this explainer from Visualizing Palestine.

The 1967 War and Occupation

On June 5th, 1967, Israel initiated a war with three neighbors, by airstrikes and then ground invasion, with the goal of expanding its territory. When that war ended, Israel had taken over Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights in Syria. That same year, the U.N. Security Council, including the United States, unanimously called for Israel to withdraw from the territories it had taken in that war.

Several instruments of law that Israel is a party to prohibit annexation of territory acquired by military conquest. Israeli leaders knew that keeping these territories and incorporating them into the state of Israel contravened international conventions and agreements they had joined. Nevertheless, ignoring those facts and the UN Security Council, Israel soon began illegally colonizing the newly acquired territories by building Jewish-only settlements and moving their population into them. Today, these territories are not recognized internationally, as belonging to Israel, including by the U.S.; rather they have been militarily occupied by Israel for decades and are harshly governed under military law. The indigenous people have little to no protection from violations of their human rights by settlers who terrorize them and the Israeli military is there to protect the settlers.

2. Life Under Occupation

Jerusalem

In the first Kairos Palestine document, Palestinian Christians declared “Jerusalem is the heart of our reality." It is the spiritual, cultural, and political heart of Palestinian national identity, and East Jerusalem has been envisioned as the capital of a future Palestinian state. It holds deep religious significance as the third holiest city in Islam and is sacred for Palestinian Christians. Jerusalem is irrevocably tied to Palestinian history, faith, and ongoing struggle for self-determination.

The internationally accepted border of Israel runs through the city of Jerusalem. West Jerusalem is within the State of Israel. East Jerusalem is part of the West Bank; it is occupied territory. Shortly after the war of 1967, having occupied all of the West Bank, Israel formally and illegally annexed East Jerusalem and greatly expanded the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem, confiscating surrounding Palestinian lands and declaring all these actions to be “irreversible and not negotiable.” Nevertheless, a shared Jerusalem must inevitably be part of any just solution to this conflict.

In recent years, to eradicate the Palestinian presence and character of the city, the decades-long ethnic cleansing in East Jerusalem has escalated. Palestinian homes are being confiscated or destroyed and Jewish settlers are taking over historic Palestinian neighborhoods by force. Palestinian residents of Jerusalem have not been given Israeli citizenship. They pay taxes but receive few benefits, and they do not have the same residential and voting rights as their Israeli neighbors.

The Settlements Enterprise: Land Confiscation, Destruction, Dispossession

Nothing better illustrates Israel's settler colonialist purpose than the illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory of The West Bank. Since this occupation began in 1967, vast areas of land have been colonized for communities that only Jewish Israelis may inhabit. As of 2025, Israelis have more than 300 settlements and outposts (authorized and unauthorized by Israel) throughout the West Bank, and there are over 750,000 settlers living in Palestinian territory, including those in East Jerusalem.

Ariel Sharon, Prime Minister of Israel from 2001 to 2006, famously said: "Everybody has to move, run and grab as many [Palestinian] hilltops as they can to enlarge the [Jewish] settlements because everything we take now will stay ours.”* Israeli Jews are provided financial incentives to populate the illegal settlements, even though moving an occupying power’s population onto occupied land is considered a war crime under international law (see the 2004 ICJ ruling, International Court of Justice). Since 1967, Israel's illegal colonization of occupied territory, one of the biggest obstacles to a just peace, has been an integral policy of every elected government across the political spectrum, in spite of Israeli promises made through-out the so-called peace process.

Israeli colonization in the occupied territories has entailed massive destruction of Palestinian communities, and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have lost their homes. Neighboring Palestinian communities are being further strangled by continual settlement expansion; in 2024, over 24,000 additional housing units for Israeli settlements were approved. Yet, for decades, permits for expansion of Palestinian homes and communities for a growing population have been nearly impossible to obtain. Building without permits is the only other option, and that risks demolition by Israeli forces that arrive with little warning.

The Israeli colonies and the infrastructure that supports them —including buffer zones, roads, checkpoints, and more— imprison Palestinians in isolated enclaves, wreck the Palestinian economy, and have effectively prevented the creation of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state in this territory, just as they were intended to do.

The Jerusalem Metropolitan Bill, introduced in the Israeli Knesset in 2025, presents a grave threat for the West Bank. This bill would annex five large Israeli settlements into Jerusalem's municipal boundaries to ensure a permanent Jewish majority. In conjunction with this bill, Israel is planning settlement construction in the area known as E1, which lies between the large settlement Ma'ale Adumim and Jerusalem. If that land is developed as the bill plans, it would sever the northern West Bank from the south, further imprisoning Palestinians and isolating East Jerusalem.

Segregated Roads

Israel also expropriates large tracts of Palestinian land for a settler-only network of roads that connects these illegal colonies directly with Israel. These segregated roads, euphemistically called "bypass roads" by Israel to obscure their racist function, comprised over 600 miles/965 kilometers in 2025. They enable freedom of movement for the settlers, but they are prohibited for Palestinians, cutting them off from their farmland, schools, hospitals, markets, and extended families and friends. Palestinians are relegated to inferior secondary roads dating back to the British Mandate era before WWII; they are often restricted by checkpoints and roadblocks. There has been significant expansion of settler-only roads in recent years, a great portion of them passing through privately owned Palestinian land. All this, beyond the so-called Green Line, the internationally recognized border between Israel and the West Bank.

Exploitation and Destruction of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Olive trees are a cornerstone of the Palestinian economy and deeply embedded in Palestinian culture. Since 1967, well over one million trees have been uprooted by Israel, along with thousands of acres of farmland being destroyed, all of which has been devastating to the agricultural economy of Palestine. Other aspects of the Israeli occupation have deepened the agricultural crisis. Palestinians face draconian restrictions on the movement of goods when they need to bring crops to market. Many Palestinian farmers cannot reach their agricultural lands to tend and harvest their crops because of road closures, checkpoints and the Separation Wall, and they also are in danger from vigilante settlers who attack them with impunity when they are attempting to tend their land.

**Sharon was addressing a meeting of militants from the extreme right-wing Tsomet Party and was quoted in Agence France Presse, Nov.15, 1998.*

The settlements have another destructive impact on the land surrounding them. They are built on hilltops and pollute nearby Palestinian farmland and ruin natural water sources with sewage that destroys livelihoods and endangers the health of Palestinian communities. Greatly disproportionate use of landfills in the West Bank by Israelis also negatively impacts the environment and Palestinians' quality of life.

Water Confiscation and Deprivation

Access to safe, sufficient and affordable water is a human right but there is a serious water disparity in the Occupied Territories. Israel controls all of the water, including the West Bank underground aquifers, and they greatly exploit that water supply. Water restrictions have created a humanitarian crisis for Palestinians but Israeli settlers are able to use four times as much water per person as Palestinians, and settlements have swimming pools, green lawns, and lush gardens. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians do not have ready access to running water.

Even in Palestinian cities and towns connected to the water network, the taps can be cut off for extended periods, which does not happen in the Israeli settlements. Israel allocates only about one fifth of the available water supply to Palestinians. To further cement their control, Israeli authorities will not allow Palestinians to develop other water resources, and they destroy dozens of Palestinian cisterns and wells every year. Israel charges Palestinians in the West Bank exorbitant rates that the poor cannot afford and that are not applied to Israeli settlers, for water that comes from their own territory.

Freedom of Movement, an Indispensable Right

Freedom of movement is an essential feature of daily life and an indispensable human right. The Israeli occupation severely restricts the movement of people and goods in the occupied territories, dividing and isolating Palestinian cities and towns from one another and the outside world. At any given time, there are hundreds of Israeli military checkpoints, roadblocks and other obstacles to Palestinian movement on their own lands, gravely limiting Palestinians' access to their homes, businesses, schools, jobs, hospitals, farms and families. Palestinians routinely suffer indeterminate waiting, humiliating treatment, and denial of access at checkpoints. Predictably, the effect on Palestine's economy is devastating. Human lives are frequently endangered when medical care cannot be reached; many lives have expired waiting at checkpoints.

The Israeli military's system of control includes biometric ID cards and travel permits; the population registry monitors Palestinians and limits where and with whom they can live and where they can travel. All Palestinians in the occupied territories are required to have color-coded ID cards which affect everything they do. Through the registry, Israel has a huge database of information on all Palestinians in the occupied territories, thereby controlling their movements, their residency rights, and their ability to travel.

Israeli checkpoints, ID system, the Separation Wall, and other restrictions of movement create a system to imprison Palestinians in isolated reserves or ghettos, reminiscent of the bantustans of South Africa in the apartheid era. All of these restrictions on Palestinian movement are dehumanizing and make anything resembling a normal life impossible. Israel claims these restrictions are for its security, but they primarily impede movement among Palestinian communities. However, these restrictions do maintain tight control over a population that might resist the ever-growing colonization of their land. Enabling and protecting that colonization is the true reason for Israel's systematic erasure of the Palestinians' right to freedom of movement.

The Separation Wall

In 2002 the government of Israel began constructing a barrier to separate Israel from the West Bank. In populated areas, it is a 20-26 feet/6-8 meters high concrete wall, in other areas it is an electronic fence. The Separation Wall is not inside Israel or on Israel's border, and it separates Palestinians from Palestinians. About 85% of the wall is inside the occupied territory of the West Bank, i.e., Palestinian territory. It has a circuitous route that snakes around major Israeli settlements and desirable land, illegally annexing that land to Israel, making it a land grab. When completed, the wall will confiscate roughly 12% of Palestinian land in the West Bank.

There are still large stretches where the barrier does not exist, so Israel's claim that the Wall is responsible for a drop in suicide attacks is not plausible. In the West Bank, much of the Separation Wall is constructed between Palestinian homes and their farmland, businesses, schools, hospitals, and the homes of family and friends. In East Jerusalem the Separation Wall is constructed through the middle of a once contiguous city, much like the Berlin Wall. The Separation Wall has brought great hardship to hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, especially those caught in the "seam zone," the land between Israel's legal border and the Wall. They are being driven into poverty by restrictions on residency, lack of access to farm lands, inability to market their crops, and confiscation of land.

In 2004, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued a finding that Israel's Separation Wall in the occupied Palestinian territory breaches international law in the UN Charter and several long-standing global conventions. The court found that Israel must stop construction immediately, dismantle the wall, and make reparations for the damage caused in building it. The ICJ called on the United Nations to take action and instructed all nations not to accept "the illegal situation...and not give any aid or assistance in maintaining the situation."

Children: Abuse, Imprisonment, and Killings

One of the most disturbing aspects of Israel's military occupation is the toll it takes on Palestinian children. Since the occupation began in 1967, several generations—tens of thousands of children—have been robbed of their childhoods, harassed, detained, abused, tried, and incarcerated, sometimes for years, by the Israeli military.

Each year, Israel detains, interrogates and prosecutes between 500 and 700 Palestinian children, some as young as 12 years old, in military courts. Israel has the dubious distinction of being the only country in the world that automatically and systematically prosecutes children in military courts. The majority of children are detained for allegedly throwing stones, an act that can carry a sentence of up to 20 years in military court. Abuse is widespread and

institutionalized in the Israeli military detention system. About 70% of detained children experience physical violence at the hands of Israeli forces during arrest or interrogation.

Israeli forces have killed more than 15,000 Palestinian children since 2000; that is not including the many thousands killed in the genocide in Gaza that began in October 2023. Since that month, there has been a significant surge in the detention and killing of children in the West Bank, with many more children being held in administrative detention without charge or trial. Palestinian children consistently report appalling and debilitating conditions in Israeli facilities, including denial of adequate food and water, lack of medical care, and being subjected to verbal abuse, beatings, and torture. Since October 2023, Israel has not allowed the International Red Cross to visit Palestinian children held in Israeli detention.

Mass Incarceration, a Tool of Oppression

Since the June 1967 war, Israel has imprisoned over a million Palestinians, including nonviolent human rights activists, to crush resistance to its military rule and theft of Palestinian land. Roughly 20% of the total Palestinian population and 40% of the male population in the occupied territories have been detained by Israeli forces at some point. These extraordinary statistics mean that nearly every Palestinian family has had a loved one imprisoned. Human rights experts have identified this as a system of mass incarceration that serves as a tool of political oppression and control.

While Israeli settlers living in the occupied territory are subject to Israeli civil law, Palestinians adults and children are tried in a military court system that does not meet minimum standards for a fair trial, and has a conviction rate of 99%. Human rights groups have documented numerous reports of torture and abuse in Israeli prisons, including deliberate starvation, denial of medical care, sleep deprivation, and physical and psychological violence.

Since October 2023, with the Knesset declaration of an “incarceration emergency,” prisoners’ conditions have further deteriorated in a Kafkaesque nightmare. Mass arrests and detentions have surged and conditions have reportedly deteriorated significantly, with a rising number of deaths in custody, as well as reports from released prisoners about Israeli prisons becoming “torture camps.” Thousands of prisoners are being held incommunicado. The International Red Cross has not been allowed to visit prisoners since October 2023.

As of late 2025, Israel is holding 9,000 to 11,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees, including an estimated 3000-4000 held without charge or trial in administrative detention. This practice allows for indefinitely extended periods of incarceration based on secret evidence that neither the detainee nor their lawyer is permitted to review.

Settler Violence, State-sanctioned Terrorism

One of the most terrifying conditions of life for Palestinians in the West Bank is the ever-present threat of attack by Israeli settlers, a threat that has existed for decades but has increased alarmingly in recent years. In what now qualifies as terrorism on a daily basis, settlers have been burning and destroying thousands of olive trees, burning crops, homes, businesses, and places of worship. They deface homes, churches and mosques with racist graffiti, most commonly with "Death to Arabs." They poison or steal scant water supplies and injure, and burn or kill livestock. They shoot at farmers as they try to tend their land and invade Palestinian villages by day or night, beating residents and destroying their property.

With the Israeli military there to protect them, this is what complete impunity looks like now. Prosecution of settlers for these attacks is rare, and convictions are even more rare. Racist thugs roaming the land, empowered to attack an oppressed population that is powerless to protect itself —this is the reality today for Palestinians in many parts of the West Bank. Commentators in Israel and worldwide have begun referring to some attacks as "pogroms," the term for the infamous state-sanctioned mob violence against Jews in Russia.

Many Israeli settlers believe it is their right to inhabit the entire West Bank, which Israel calls "Judea and Samaria," and these attacks are intended to force Palestinians to leave. Some attacks extend from the settlers’ irrational "price tag" policy: reprisals on Palestinians for any attempts by Israeli officials to enforce Israeli law against the settlements. Although Israel has claimed these attacks are crimes it does not condone, the Israeli government is arming these settlers who are helping to fulfill the state's goal: the ethnic cleansing of the West Bank.

There has been a frightening escalation in settler violence in recent years. The United Nations has reported over 1600 settler attacks—an average of five per day—in 2025, including at least 9 deaths. The settlers' unrelenting harassment and violence has been a key factor in the emptying of 33 Palestinian communities in the West Bank in the last 3 years.

3. The Current Reality

It Is Apartheid

Another hugely debated issue on Palestine has been Israeli apartheid: has Israel established an apartheid regime in its own borders and/or in the occupied territories? Authoritative reports by human rights experts, legal analysts, and renowned scholars have definitively answered that question with a resounding "Yes." Particularly in the 2020's, the global acknowledgement and understanding of Israeli apartheid has grown enormously. From a UN Commission, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch, to two Israeli human rights monitors who have charged their own country — thousands of pages of documentation from these groups should leave no doubt for those who are willing to hear the truth being reported by Palestinian Christians Kairos Palestine II.

Apartheid is the most extreme system of institutionalized racial domination that the modern world has known. It need not take the exact form that was seen in South Africa. The International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, adopted by the UN as a binding treaty in the 1970s, lays out clearly the pillars of an apartheid regime wherever it may appear. Many South Africa leaders and activists from that nation's apartheid era have visited Palestine/Israel and declared what they see is not only unquestionably apartheid, but a worse manifestation of that crime than they experienced.

Apartheid is named as a “crime against humanity” under international law and its primary features include:

- codifying into law a preferred group of people and giving that group preferential access to resources, benefits and services,
- segregating the population into geographic areas based on identity, and
- establishing laws and policies designed to suppress opposition to the regime and enforcing domination through arbitrary imprisonment, torture, cruel and inhumane treatment, and other violations of human rights.

Within Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), the Israeli government has established its control over the lives of Palestinians with discriminatory laws and policies specifying all these circumstances:

- where they can live,
- whom they can marry,
- where and when they can travel short distances,
- which roads they can drive on,
- how much water they can use,
- when they can access their own farms,
- what land they can purchase,
- which justice system they are subject to,
- whether they will receive due process,
- what kinds of punishment they will receive.

In 2018, Israel blatantly codified a racist governing principle into law. It is known as the Nation State Basic Law and grants self-determination exclusively to the Jewish citizens of Israel, with a different set of laws governing the Palestinians.

This is apartheid.

As the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa said,

> I know firsthand that Israel has created an apartheid reality within its borders and through its occupation. The parallels to my own beloved South Africa are painfully stark indeed. The human community cannot be silent in the face of the gross injustice being meted out to the people of Palestine. If international courts and governments refuse to deal with this matter, we in the churches…really have no choice but to act in small ways and big ways.

International Law

One of the most consistent and universal demands for justice in Palestine/Israel is that Israel comply with international law. International law is the system of rules governing relations between states and peoples of the world, covering areas like human rights, trade, diplomacy, and war, and defining what constitutes a war crime and a crime against humanity.

A struggle over land has been the essence of the conflict in Palestine; clearly, neither racial nor religious claims to land can be the basis for a just, peaceful and mutually accepted solution. The global community needs a shared system of laws, for the same reasons we need that in our local and national communities, including the need to protect vulnerable populations.

Israel is subject to the same requirements of international law as other nations. Deliberately targeting civilians and imposing collective punishment on a population are serious breaches of international humanitarian law, the laws governing warfare and military occupation. Many human rights authorities have issued documented reports on the apartheid regime that Israel has established.

Israel is a party to the Convention on Genocide and has faced charges at the ICJ brought by South Africa, for alleged breaches of this convention in its assault on Gaza. In 2004, the International Court of Justice ((CJ) found that Israel’s Separation Wall is illegal and must be dismantled. In 2024, the ICJ declared that Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territories is illegal, that settlement activity must cease, settlers must be removed, and reparations made. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has an ongoing investigation into alleged crimes in the occupied Palestinian territories and issued arrest warrants for Israeli and Hamas (see glossary) leaders in November 2024, including Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Gallant.

Palestinian Resistance

International law upholds the right of armed resistance for liberation and independence, within certain parameters. World powers and the press too often characterize any form of Palestinian armed resistance as “terrorism” and whitewash Israeli military action against Palestinians as "self-defense." But it is important to know that the majority of Palestinian resistance to Israel has been nonviolent; from the time of the British Mandate to the present, it has included strikes, civil disobedience, noncooperation, and boycotts. Palestinian

towns and villages in the West Bank have long engaged in innovative forms of nonviolent resistance, often with the support of Israeli and international allies. Courageous Palestinian resistance also can be seen in the steadfast determination to remain on ancestral lands, while maintaining their society and values despite all Israeli pressures. This courage is often expressed in such graffiti as "Existence is Resistance."

Palestinian appeals to world powers and institutions for protection of their human rights have been largely fruitless thus far. Yet, the Palestinian people have not been powerless to resist the settler colonialism of Zionism. Perhaps their most successful resistance may be seen in the nonviolent global BDS Movement, born from the 2005 Palestinian call to the world to Boycott, Divest and Sanction Israel.

Weaponizing the Charge of Antisemitism

For decades, Israel and its supporters have used the unethical tactic of labeling those who oppose mistreatment of Palestinians as antisemitic; it is a means of silencing criticism of Israel. They have turned the charge of antisemitism into a political weapon and damaged genuine efforts to combat real bigotry against Jews. Perhaps due to rising understanding of the Palestinian struggle and growing opposition to Israel's practices, the use of this dishonest tactic has risen dramatically in recent years. Across the United States and in other Western nations, it is even being codified into law and government policy, thereby threatening the right to free speech, often through the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

Equating antisemitism with opposition to the Israeli government's policies or ideology is inaccurate, unjust, and destructive. In many countries, supporters of Palestinian human rights are losing their jobs, being harassed online, and physically attacked. They face frightening government persecution, including imprisonment and deportation, for defending the rights of those who are suffering oppression and destruction. Academic institutions are being threatened with massive funding cuts and other draconian measures to force them to silence and punish students and faculty who publicly express solidarity with Palestinians.

It is not antisemitic to hold Israel accountable for its actions by the standards of international law. Criticizing the state of Israel for its apartheid regime, its ethnic cleansing, and its genocide against the Palestinian people is not engaging in antisemitism. Anti-Zionism, a rejection of the political ideology of the state of Israel, also is not antisemitic. As defined by Jewish Voice for Peace, "antisemitism is discrimination, targeting, violence, and dehumanizing stereotypes directed at Jews because they are Jewish." (see glossary for more).

Excusing or ignoring grievous violations of Palestinian human rights simply because Israel has a predominantly Jewish population is deeply unjust. Israel does not speak for or represent all Jews; many Jews are opposed to Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, and there are thousands that describe themselves as "anti-Zionist." Furthermore, twenty percent or more of Israel's citizens are not Jewish, and describing Israel as a "Jewish state" erases their existence.

4. Gaza, Crucible for the Conscience of the World

October 7th is a day that will be stamped deeply into the memories of many people; the attack on Israel that sprang from Gaza that day shocked the world. It was a criminal act under international law, committed by a militant force that emerged from a brutally oppressed population, blockaded for decades by a powerful apartheid state, with the permission and aid of the world's major powers.

October 7th did not happen "out of the blue." Some observers would even say it was predictable. To understand these events and the genocidal horrors that followed, it is vital to consider conditions and events in the months and years preceding it.

The Timeline

1949-1967: After The Nakba of the 1940's, Gaza was governed by Egypt until 1967. Large numbers of the refugees of the Nakba ended up in the Gaza Strip; approximately 70-80% of Gaza's population are refugees and their descendants from towns and villages in what is now Israel.

1967-2005: In the aftermath of the 1967 war, the Gaza Strip was under Israeli military occupation. It was being colonized illegally by Israeli settlers, though to a much lesser extent than in the West Bank.

2005: Israel made the unilateral strategic decision to withdraw all settlers and soldiers from Gaza.

2006: Hamas (see glossary) participated in Palestinian elections and, to the surprise of some, won a majority in the legislature. It should have become the governing party in the Palestinian Authority. However, Israel and its allies refused to accept that outcome and placed sanctions on the Palestinian Authority, which then induced struggles between Hamas and Fatah, the previous governing party. As a result of that infighting, Fatah maintained control in the West Bank, and Hamas took over governance of Gaza until today.

2007: With Hamas now running the Gaza Strip, Israel imposed a full blockade, with the cooperation of Egypt, a recipient of considerable financial aid from the U.S., which shares a short border with Gaza to its south.

Even though Israel pulled out of its settlements in Gaza, by the standards of international law, Israel's military occupation of Gaza did not end; it maintained control over Gaza's borders, airspace, and territorial waters.

The Blockade

A number of reasons have been given for Israel's blockade, chief among them being Israel's distrust of Hamas and the desire to pressure Hamas and weaken their governance by limiting resources and movement. Under the blockade, Gaza came to be called an "open-air prison" as millions were subjected to cruel collective punishment, a serious violation of international law that continued from 2007 to 2023. The population's access to food and medicine was dangerously restricted. In some periods, electricity was available for only a few hours a day. Clean water was a luxury, with 90% of available water being unfit for human consumption and causing untold disease and fatalities. Long before Israel's

most recent war on Gaza, 80% or more of the population depended on humanitarian aid for survival.

A United Nations report in 2012 predicted that Gaza would be "unlivable" by the year 2020. Yet the millions of Palestinians in Gaza have had no choice but to go on living there, not being allowed to leave. After a visit in 2021, the UN Secretary-General called Gaza "hell on earth" for children. The blockade of Gaza devastated Gaza's economy, and created an extraordinary humanitarian catastrophe which was amply documented and reported to the world. Yet the world allowed it to continue. It was an unsustainable situation, and it exploded.

Israel's justification for this brutal blockade always consists of references to Hamas and its military actions, and Israel's need to defend itself. This is an inversion; Israel and the Zionist movement are the original aggressors in Palestine, arriving with the intent to dispossess the indigenous population. Without that beginning, no resistance movements, militant or nonviolent, would have arisen. Fighting to maintain control over an oppressed people who have been robbed of their rights is not self-defense. Most importantly, subjecting a population of millions of civilians to such harsh deprivation for 16 years cannot be justified by the desire to weaken a governmental regime or any security considerations.

Hamas is a major political party in Palestinian society, as well as a militant organization focused on resisting the Israeli occupation. Although it is often said that Hamas seeks the destruction of Israel, its revised charter of 2017 (see glossary) and statements by Hamas leaders have made clear a negotiated solution with Israel would be possible under specific conditions.

DATA ON GAZA: OCTOBER 2023 TO OCTOBER 2025

Killed in Gaza	67,000
Children Killed	20,000
Doctors & Healthcare Workers Killed	1,722
Injured People	170,000 with highest number of amputee children anywhere
Journalists Killed	260 - According to the UN, more journalists have been killed than the combined total of all major conflicts since WWI. The intentional targeting of journalists is a war crime according to International Law.
Homes Destroyed	92% - 90% of population (1.9M) permanently displaced
Schools Destroyed	2,300 Educational facilities, incl. 63 University buildings 92% Need complete reconstruction
Hospitals Destroyed	125 Hospitals or Clinics
Malnutrition	1 in 4 Children are Malnourished 2,600 Killed and 19,000 injured while trying to get food from distribution centers
Water and Sanitation	89% of infrastructure destroyed

71,660 recorded deaths and 171,419 injured people as of 1/16/26. Ha'aretz

Sources for above: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UN News, World Health Organization (WHO), and Al Jazeera.

October 7th

On October 7, 2023, Hamas and other militant groups in Gaza launched a large-scale surprise attack on Israel, during which roughly 1,200 people were killed, including military personnel and many civilians. Over 250 people were abducted and taken to Gaza as hostages. The attack targeted military bases, civilian communities, and a civilian music festival. Some Israeli lives were lost due to the nature of Israel's military response to the attacks.

Clearly, the attack on October 7th, where it went beyond military targets, was a serious breach of international law, and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has included Hamas leaders in their investigation of war crimes committed in Palestine/Israel. Looking beyond legality, the civilians that were attacked, the hostages that were taken, and all their loved ones suffered terror and grief that day and for many months to follow, and that suffering must not be ignored or minimized.

The terrifying events of that day understandably outraged the world. The lack of global outrage over the horrific treatment of Palestinians, particularly in Gaza, in the years leading up to that day is not understandable or acceptable. Nor is the refusal of world leaders and journalists even to acknowledge the circumstances that preceded and precipitated the attacks of October 7th. For any nation to treat millions of people with such brutality, to inflict so much suffering for decades, and expect to avoid dire consequences, that is incomprehensible. But it comes from impunity afforded by those in power, not the least of which is successive U.S. administrations.

The War on Gaza

After October 7th, Israel reacted with a lethal combination of fear and rage, expressed in a terrifying thirst for revenge. The Israeli government declared war on Hamas with the ostensible goals of dismantling its military and governing capabilities and rescuing the hostages Hamas had taken to Gaza.

What came next belied those goals.

Immediately after Oct 7th, Israel cut off all food and water supplies and electricity for Gaza, and later used desperately needed humanitarian aid as a weapon, even when widespread starvation had

begun in Gaza. The staggering proportion of civilian casualties, especially women and children, and the pace of killing, tens of thousands in a few months, far surpassed what the world had seen in warfare in recent decades. That mass killing of civilians could not plausibly be described as accidental. Israel systematically destroyed Gaza's health care system and targeted health care workers. It also forcibly displaced most of the population of two million and damaged or destroyed nearly every home, leaving them nowhere to live. Even when telling civilians where they must evacuate to, Israel would bomb that very area.

If their actions were not clear indications of genocidal intent, Israeli leaders declared it in their own words, claiming "there are no civilians in Gaza" and all targets are legitimate, stating that deliberate starvation can be "justified and moral," boasting about the total destruction of Gaza, and calling the people there "human animals." Throughout its war on Gaza, Israel also showed that the need for continued destruction was a higher priority than bringing hostages safely home.

In October 2025, after two nightmarish years of genocide (see introduction and glossary), a ceasefire was declared for Gaza and a peace plan initiated. Although the rate of killing drastically abated, the so-called ceasefire was not a true one, and Israel's killing of Gazans has continued on a daily basis, along with starvation and suffering from inhuman living conditions. Israel's subsequent banishment of dozens of life-saving humanitarian agencies has further threatened civilian life in Gaza. As 2026 begins, the beleaguered people of Gaza are still waiting for rescue and a hope of restoration.

A Just Path Forward

Outrageous plans for international development of Gaza notwithstanding, and despite the callous greed of world leaders eager to exploit the tragedy of genocide, history has taught us to expect Palestinian resistance against further ethnic cleansing of Gaza. They will demand self-determination in the re-development of their homeland.

Israel's genocide in Gaza has been live-streamed to the world and the devastating images and reports have had an unprecedented impact on the public on every continent. That new and unexpected influence can also be found in governmental offices. Now is the time for people of faith and people of conscience to build upon the world's heightened concern for the Palestinian people.

The international community, from the grassroots to the halls of power, must:

- Enforce compliance with the conditions of the Gaza ceasefire.
- Forbid the application of Israel's apartheid system in Gaza.
- Ensure the observance of international humanitarian law.
- Pursue accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- Provide ample resources for recovery and rebuilding.
- Empower Palestinians to determine their own future and oversee the development of their land.

All of these are embodied in the call of Kairos Palestine II.

While the world has been looking at Gaza, there are deep concerns for what has been unfolding in Israel's war on another front: the frightening escalation of destruction and violent dispossession in the West Bank.

By God's grace, the Christian world will heed the call of fellow believers in the Holy Land and rise to this kairos moment.

On This Land

by Mahmoud Darwish
National Poet of Palestine

We have on this land that which makes life worth living
We have on this land all of that which makes life worth living
April's hesitation
The aroma of bread at dawn
A woman's beseeching of men
The works of Aeschylus
Love's beginnings
Moss on a stone
Mothers living on a flute's sigh
And the invader's fear of memories

We have on this land that which makes life worth living
The final days of September
A woman leaving forty in full blossom
with all her apricots
The hour of sunlight in prison
A cloud resembling a pack of creatures
The applause of a people for those who face death with a smile
And the tyrant's fear of songs.

We have on this land all of that which makes life worth living
On this land
The lady of our land
The mother of all beginnings
And the mother of all ends
She was called Palestine
Her name later became Palestine
My lady….
Because you are my lady
I have all of that which makes life worth living.

Watch and listen to this seminal poem
in a mix of Arabic and English,
recited by Palestinian poets and writers.

Palestine 101 - Sources

Organizations

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE (AFSC)
Palestine Activism Program
afsc.org/programs/us-palestine-activism-program
Palestinian Rights afsc.org/topics/palestinian-rights
Gaza Unlocked gazaunlocked.org/
Gaza and Israel afsc.org/topics/gaza-israel

ADDAMEER
Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association
addameer.ps

AL-HAQ
Palestinian Human Rights Organization
alhaq.org

B'TSELEM
The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories
btselem.org

DEFENSE FOR CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL – PALESTINE
DCI-Palestine
dci-palestine.org

FRIENDS OF SABEEL NORTH AMERICA (FOSNA)
Multimedia
fosna.org/multimedia

INSTITUTE FOR MIDDLE EAST UNDERSTANDING (IMEU)
IMEU Fact Sheets and Explainers
imeu.org/resources/resources/fact-sheets-explainers

INSTITUTE FOR PALESTINE STUDIES
Homepage palestine-studies.org/

INTERACTIVE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE PALESTINE QUESTION
palquest.org

NO WAY TO TREAT A CHILD
A DCI-Palestine Campaign
nwttac.dci-palestine.org

PALESTINE JUSTICE NETWORK OF THE PCUSA
Kairos Palestine Study Guide
thepjn.org/kairos-palestine
Steadfast Hope
thepjn.org/steadfast-hope

PALESTINE PORTAL
Learn and Teach section: The Basics; Key Issues
palestineportal.org/learn-teach

UNITED METHODISTS FOR KAIROS RESPONSE (UMKR)
UMKR Quick Facts
kairosresponse.org/quick_facts_series.html
Christian Zionism
kairosresponse.org/christian_zionism.html
Antisemitism
kairosresponse.org/antisemitism.html
The Right to Boycott
kairosresponse.org/right_to_boycott.html

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS (OCHA)
Occupied Palestinian Territory
ochaopt.org

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR)
Homepage - ohchr.org/en/ohchr_homepage
The Independent Commission of Inquiry
ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/co-israel/index

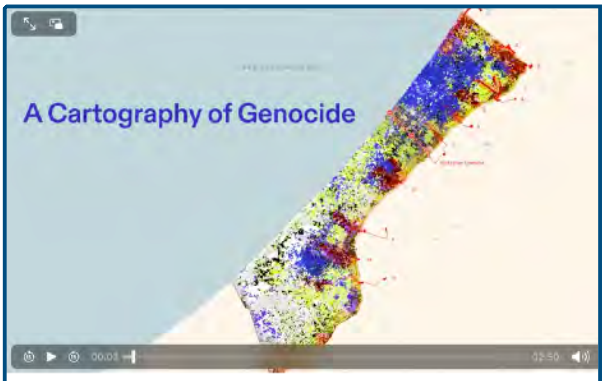
International Law

UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION SYSTEM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE
UN Resolutions and Publications related to Palestine
un.org/unispal/data-collection
General Assembly
org/unispal/data-collection/general-assembly
Security Council
un.org/unispal/data-collection/security-council

A FEW KEY UN RESOLUTIONS
[There are dozens of resolutions related to Palestine/Israel.]
- UNGA Resolution 181 (1947) - proposed a partition plan for Palestine
- UNGA Resolution 194 (1948) - rights of Palestinian refugees
- UNSC 242 (1967) - calls for Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in Six Day War
- UNSC 2334 (2017) - Israeli settlements including in East Jerusalem are "flagrant violation" of international law
- UNGA Resolution ES-10/24 (2024) - calls for Israel to end its illegal occupation within 12 months, withdraw forces, make reparations

INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ) AND THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE
ICJ on Palestine
un.org/unispal/icj-and-question-of-palestine/

A FEW SELECTIONS FROM ICJ RULINGS
- Advisory Opinion on Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall (2004)
- Genocide Case Provisional Measures (January 2024)
- Advisory Opinion on Occupied Palestinian Territory (July 2024)



A Cartography of Genocide: Israel's Conduct in Gaza since October 2023

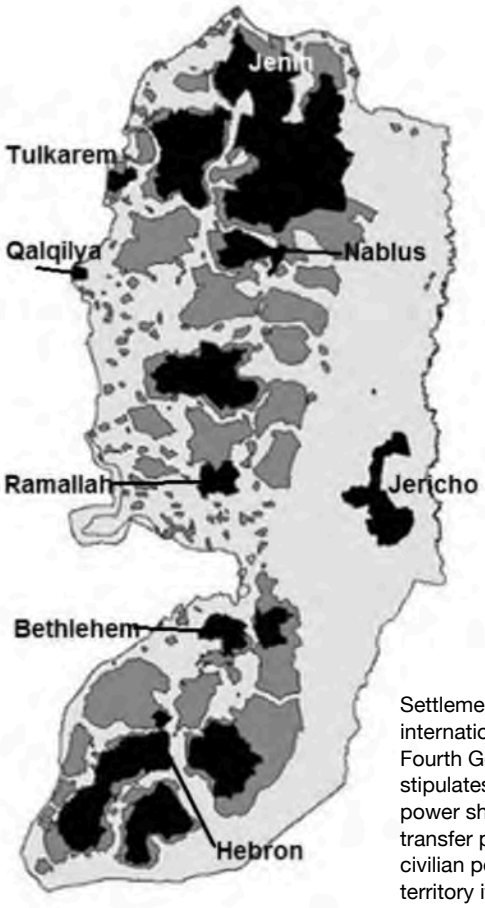
Click to view the Videos

forensic-architecture.org

Forensic Architecture (FA) is a research agency based at Goldsmiths, University of London. Their mandate is to develop, employ, and disseminate new techniques, methods, and concepts for investigating state and corporate violence. Their team includes architects, software developers, filmmakers, investigative journalists, scientists, and lawyers.

Israel is not only killing Palestinian children at astonishing rates since October 2023, but killing the childhood of those who survive. Source: Visualizing Palestine Oct. 2024

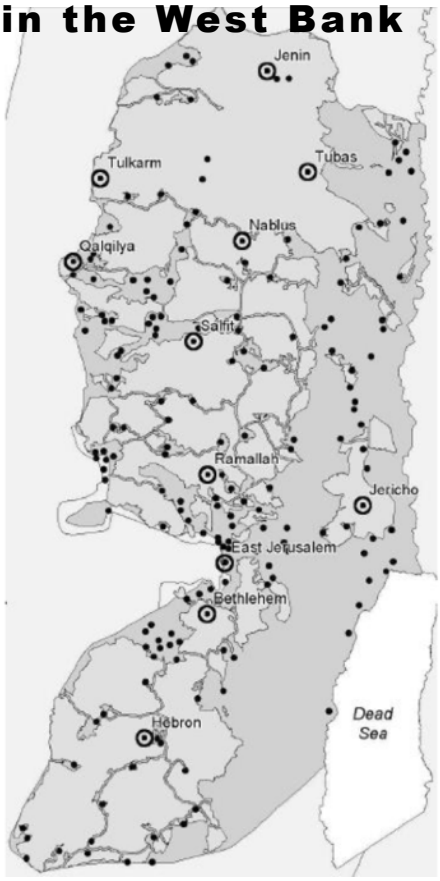
Israeli control of the West Bank



Area A *Full Palestinian control*
Area B *Palestinian civil, Israeli Security control*
Area C *Full Israeli Control*

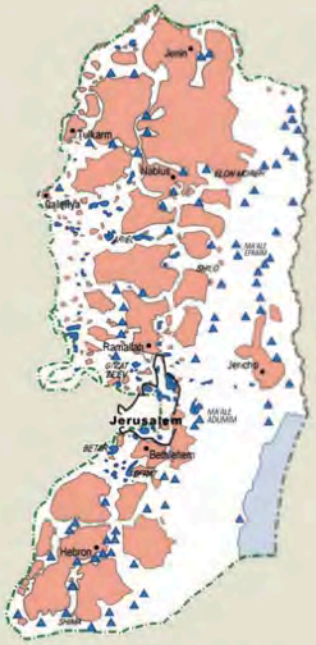
Settlements breach international law. The Fourth Geneva Convention stipulates: "An occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies."

Israeli Settlements in the West Bank

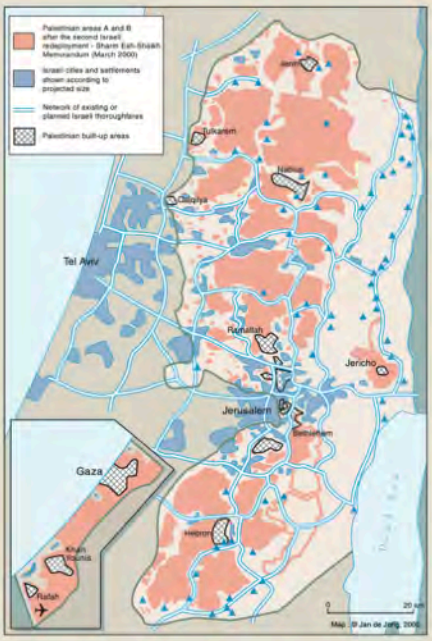


Israeli Occupation of the West Bank

The Separation Wall (blue line) is not on the internationally recognized boundary between Israel and Palestine. Large swaths of Palestinian territory are on the "Israel side" of the Wall.



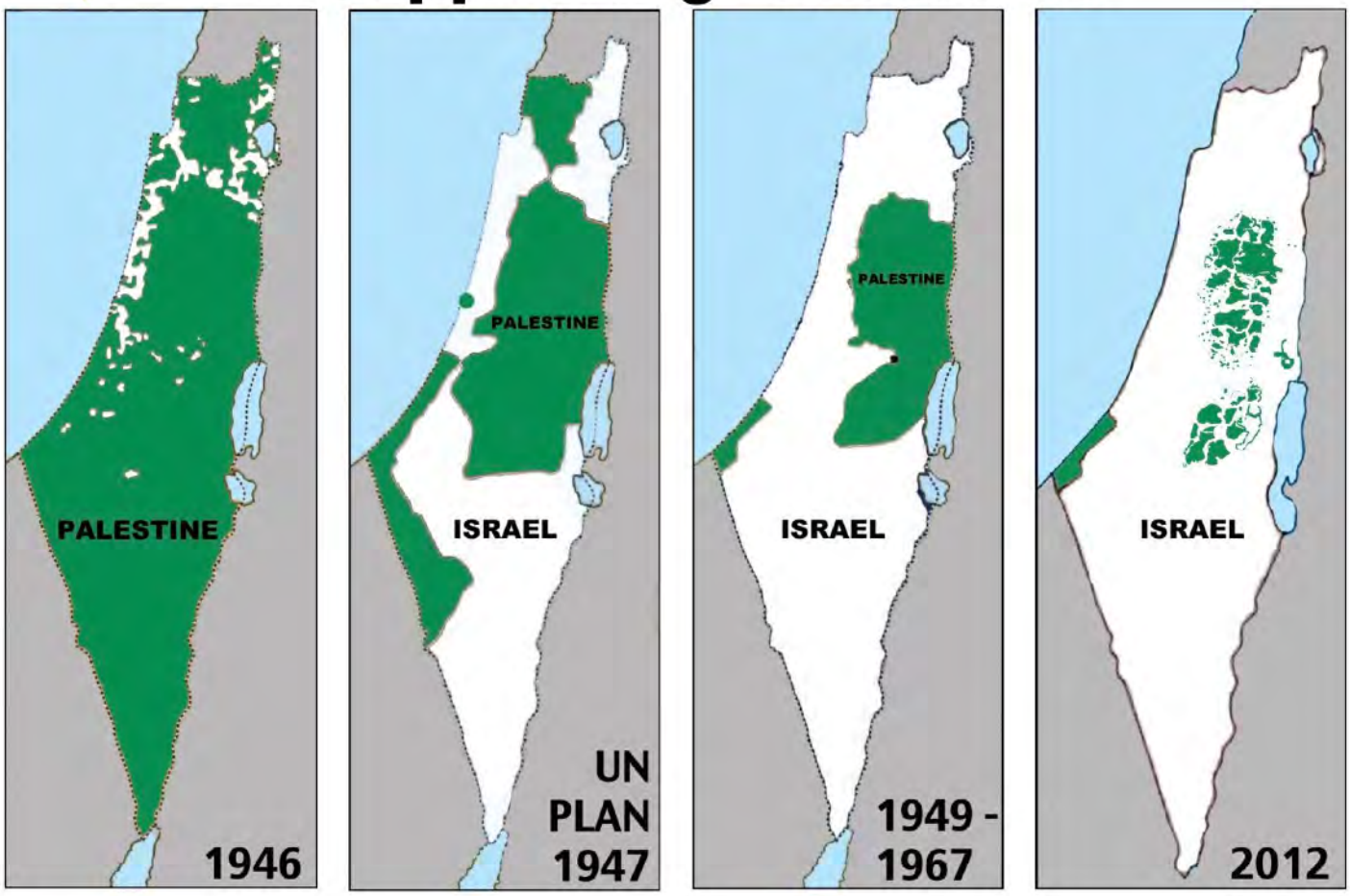
Reserves or ghettos (shown in pink) confine Palestinians into isolated and totally surrounded canton-like reserves in the West Bank. The triangles are major settlement colonies.



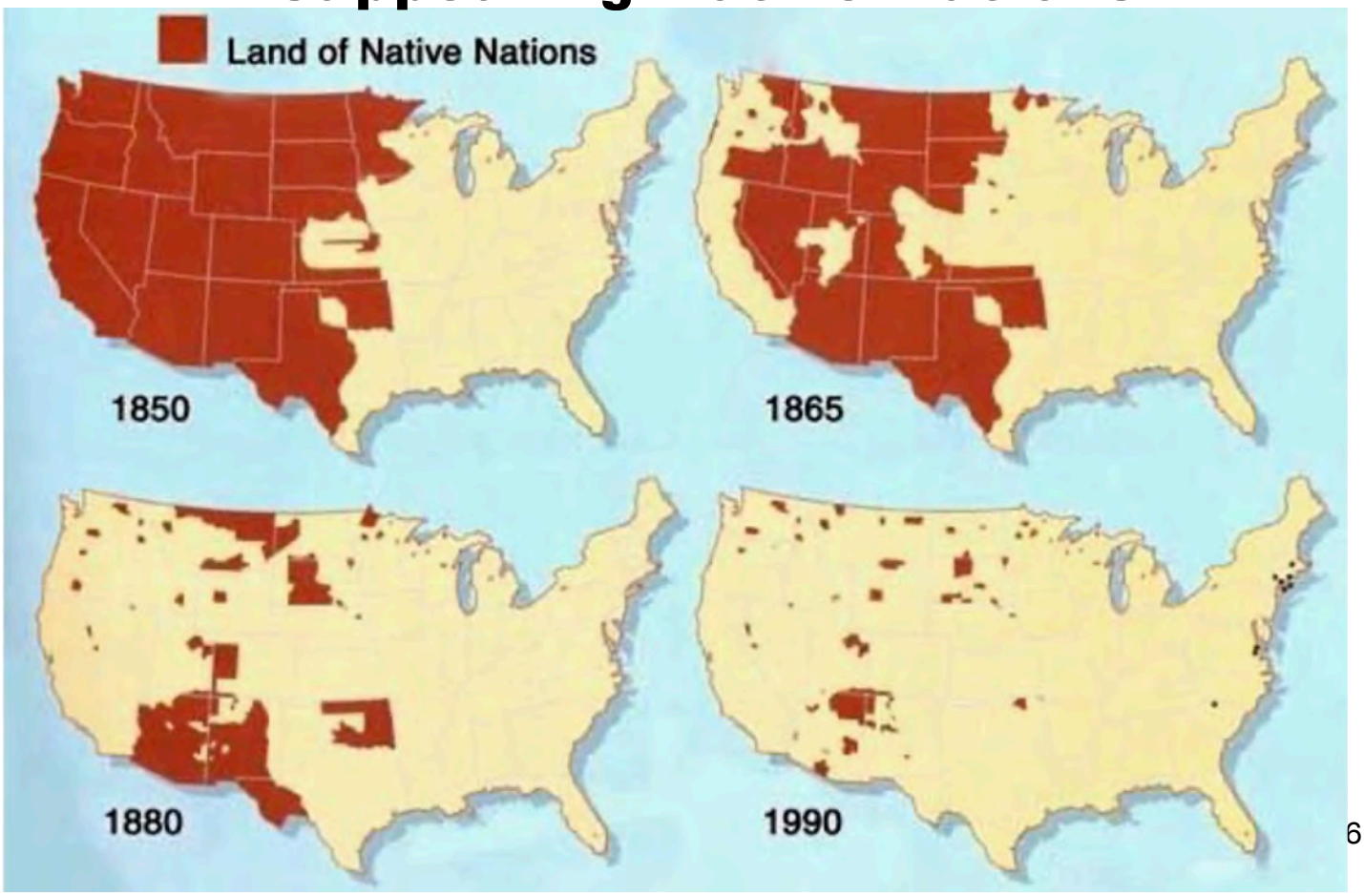
Segregated roads that link settlement colonies in the West Bank with Israel allow unrestricted settler movement but allow limited or no access to Palestinians.

Source for all maps: PASSIA.org - Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs.

Disappearing Palestine



Disappearing Native Nations



As Israel's U.S.-backed genocide in Gaza rages on, anti-Palestinian racism silences, excludes, erases, stereotypes, dehumanizes, or defames Palestinians, those who are perceived as Palestinian, or anyone who expresses support for Palestinian freedom. This visual offers a framework for this distinct form of racism, and how it dehumanizes Palestinian people, erases Palestinian narratives, and represses dissent against Israeli racism and oppression.
Source: Visualizing Palestine. Nov. 2024. See link: visualizingpalestine.org/visual/anti-palestinian-racism/

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Policies and Actions on Palestine

Human Rights

- Recognized that the government of Israel's laws, policies, and practices regarding the Palestinian people fulfill the international legal definition of apartheid. 2022
- Called for an end to the siege of Gaza and an end to collective punishment of innocent people. 2022
- Called for the use of diplomatic tools by the government of the United States to bring Israel into full compliance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by granting full equality to its citizens who are Palestinian, by "changing its laws, policies, and practices that favor its Jewish citizens and discriminate against its Christian and Muslim citizens and other ethnic minorities." 2018
- Affirmed Nonviolent Means of Resistance Against Human Oppression. 2016
- Passed the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy report entitled: For Human Values in the Absence of a Just Peace. 2016
- Advocated for the Safety and Well-being of Children of Palestine and Israel. 2016
- Reaffirmed the commitment of the PC(USA) to the human rights of all children, particularly the children of Palestine and Israel. 2014
    - Directed the Presbyterian Mission Agency to engage in advocacy and public witness for the human rights of children in Palestine and Israel in relation to widespread and systematic patterns of ill-treatment and torture within the Israeli military detention system. 2014
    - Reaffirmed the support of the PC(USA) for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and affirms its support for the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. 2014
- 219th GA (2010) reaffirmed the historical positions of the PCUSA and documented Israeli human rights violations, calling for:
    - The end of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and diversion of water resources. 2010
    - An immediate freeze both on the establishment or expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and on the Israeli acquisition of Palestinian land and buildings in East Jerusalem. 2010
    - Relocation by Israel of the Separation Barrier to the 1967 border. 2010
    - Withholding of U.S. government aid to the state of Israel as long as Israel persists in creating new West Bank settlements. 2010
    - Equal rights for Palestinian citizens of the state of Israel. 2010
    - Cessation of systematic violation of human rights by any party, specifically, practices of admin. detention, collective punishment, torture of prisoners and suspects, home demolitions and evictions, and deportation of dissidents. 2010
- Stated that the Israeli occupation leads to the denial of human rights for Palestinians and is a violation of international law. 2010

Economic Actions

- Divest from governmental debt (bonds) held by countries that are currently maintaining a prolonged military occupation and have been subject to United Nations resolutions related to their occupation: Israel, Morocco, Turkey. 2024
- Urged RE/MAX, LLC to do "everything within its legal and moral power" to stop facilitating the sale and rental of properties in Israeli settlements built on occupied Palestinian land in East Jerusalem and the West Bank in violation of international law and longstanding official US policy. 2018
- Instructed the Presbyterian Foundation and Board of Pensions of the PC(USA) to divest from Caterpillar, Inc., Hewlett-Packard, and Motorola Solutions, in accord with our church's decades-long socially responsible investment (SRI) history; and not to reinvest in these companies until MRTI, the Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee of the PC(USA), is fully satisfied that product sales/services by these companies are no longer in conflict with our church investment policy. 2014
  For full language see: pc-biz.org - 2014 Mideast Committee
- Called for the boycott of ALL Israeli products coming from the occupied Palestinian Territories, including AHAVA Dead Sea Laboratories Beauty Products, and all date products of Hadiklaim, The Israel Date Growers Co-Operative Ltd, often marked by the brand names King Solomon Dates and Jordan River Dates. 2012
- Devise a plan of active investment in projects that will support collaboration among Christians, Jews, and Muslims and help in the development of a viable infrastructure for a future Palestinian state. 2012

- Changed the language of the MRTI mandate from “phased selective divestment” to “corporate engagement,” taking out the word divestment. The mandate itself to engage with US corporations who profit from human rights violations in Palestine remained in place, but the change in language gave rise to the incorrect conclusion that the PC(USA) dialed back its position on economic actions. 2006

- A historic call for MRTI, Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee, “to initiate a process of phased selective divestment in multinational corporations operating in Israel, in accordance to General Assembly policy on social investing, and to make appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly Council for action.” 2004 - This was the beginning of a 10 year process that led to Assembly voting in 2014 to divest from 3 American companies (not Israeli) profiting from the Israeli military occupation. 2004

Solidarity

- Designated May 15 as “Palestinian Nakba Remembrance Day” for the purpose of lifting prayer for peace, giving solidarity for those suffering under occupation, and promoting advocacy among PC(USA) members. 2022

- Expressed “profound grief and sorrow” for the families of Palestinians killed during the Great March of Return protests in Gaza, and prayed for the recovery of those injured. The Assembly further deplored the killing of more than twenty Palestinian medics, and renewed the call of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for an end to the decade- old Israeli blockade of Gaza, which has been condemned by the UN and human rights organizations as a form of collective punishment. 2018

- Upheld the peoples in the Middle East and partners we work with there and in the U.S. 2016

- Affirmed Israel’s right to exist as a sovereign nation within secure and internationally recognized borders in accordance with United Nations resolutions. 2010

- Acknowledged that 24,145 Palestinian homes have been demolished in the West Bank since 1967. The overwhelming consensus of the committee was that “Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is a sin against God and other fellow human beings.” 2010

- Endorses the “Amman Call” regarding Arab-Israeli peace, issued by the World Council of Churches’ conference, “Churches Together for Peace and Justice in the Middle East,” at Amman, Jordan, June 18-20, 2007, including its affirmation of the UN resolutions that are the basis of a projected “two- state” solution, a shared Jerusalem, and the human rights of refugees and occupied peoples, its call to resist extremism and push for reconciliation, and its commitment to imperatives of ecumenical solidarity in action for Just Peace. 2008

- The GA mandated the creation of a Palestine mission network, thePJN.org. In 2004, the GA directed “the formation of a ‘Palestine Mission Network’ as soon as possible, for the purpose of creating currents of wider and deeper Presbyterian involvement with Palestinian partners, aimed at demonstrating solidarity and changing the conditions that erode the humanity of Palestinians living in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza.” 2004

- Directed World Mission (then Worldwide Ministries Division) “to explore the dimensions, costs, appropriate development approach, stability of political conditions, availability of expertise, and possible sources of funding, of an intentional and systematic effort of development and compassionate action in Palestine either by or through a team connected to the WMD-related Palestine Mission Network...” this is now housed in The Palestine Justice Network, thePJN.org. 2004

First Amendment Rights

- Overwhelmingly opposed federal and state laws designed to suppress BDS by Presbyterians. Affirmed that BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) campaigns in support of Palestinian human rights are political speech protected by the First Amendment. ThePC(USA) opposed specifically the muzzling of debate and discussion about Israel’s illegal military occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. 2018

Study and Theology

- Rejected Christian Zionism in all its forms and committed to clarifying, in liturgy and through education, a basic distinction between biblical Israel and the modern State of Israel, and deter conflating of the two. 2024

- Called upon people of faith to advocate for a just peace with full and equal human rights for all the people in Palestine and Israel. 2024

- Approved more study resources: WhyPalestineMatters.org and Focus: Palestine by the WCRC, World Communion of Reformed Churches. 2024 Resolved to Prayerfully Study the Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS, Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions. 2016

- Received for study, A Moment of Truth, aka Kairos Palestine, a confessional document from the Palestinian Christian community. The Assembly commended it “to use by our presbyteries and congregations as an advocacy tool” and called “on the Interfaith Office to include in its discussions with American Jewish and Muslim groups a careful study of the Palestinian Christian Kairos document.” 2010 Repudiated Christian Zionism as an incorrect reading of the Bible and an example of antisemitism. 2004

United Methodist Church Policies and Actions on Palestine

For decades, the United Methodist Church has maintained a presence in the Holy Land, providing support for local humanitarian projects, facilitating peace and justice initiatives, and assisting church members and volunteers to have meaningful engagement during their visits. In 2012, the UMC co-founded the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem, established as a joint effort with the World Methodist Council and The Methodist Church of Britain.

RESOLUTIONS

#4108 Opposition to Israeli Settlements in Palestinian Land

Readopted with amendments ever since 2004. In this foundational statement regarding Palestine/Israel, The United Methodist Church:

OPPOSES the Israeli settlements and all aspects of the Israeli occupation: confiscation of Palestinian land and water, construction and expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, building of the separation wall on Palestinian land, destruction of Palestinian homes. and the vision of a "Greater Israel" that includes the occupied territories and all Jerusalem.

DESCRIBES the impact of the occupation on Palestinians, including economic devastation and increasing hopelessness.

ADDRESSES the U.S. role in providing substantial aid to Israel and enabling the occupation, as well as private foreign donations, some tax-exempt, that support the illegal settlements.

SUPPORTS AND CALLS FOR:

- An international boycott on all products from the Israeli settlements
- Enforcement of international law with protection of human rights.
- Advocacy for Palestinian self-determination
- Studying the Kairos Palestine Document
- An end to Israel's military occupation and violations in the West Bank including East Jerusalem and Gaza: ending settlements, withdrawing military, dismantling the Wall on Palestinian land
- Palestinian leaders to condemn violence against civilians
- Palestinians' ongoing nonviolent resistance
- Prohibiting financial support for settlements and stopping all business operations that support settlements and other human right violations
- The U.S. government to end all military aid to the region
- Church members, particularly in the U.S., to advocate with the government for ending military aid, support Palestinian economic development, educate congregations, and participate in peace and justice advocacy organizations.

#3226 Exclusion of Government Debt of Countries Involved in Prolonged Military Occupations

Calls for the church to avoid investing in the government bonds and other forms of government debt from countries that are engaged in prolonged and oppressive military occupations. The resolution specifies three such occupations that have been identified by United Nations bodies —Israel's occupation of Palestinian Territories, Turkey's occupation of northern Cyprus, and Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara— and describes the human rights abuses the occupied populations experience. The resolution draws upon biblical principles, international law, and the UMC's Social Principles to advocate for this groundbreaking investment screen, the first such policy applied to Israel's bonds by a Christian denomination.

#4217 Church Caring for Palestinian Children
#4219 Israeli Detention of Palestinian Children

In two resolutions, the UMC addresses the abuse and imprisonment of Palestinian children by Israeli military forces. Citing leading human rights and child welfare organizations, these resolutions report the thousands of children that have been taken from their families, subjected to physical and psychological abuse, denied essential rights, and tried in a military judicial system that lacks basic standards for due process and a fair trial.

Res. 4217 urges the United States to ratify the Convention the Rights of the Child. It also directs several church agencies to jointly plan the best way to educate church members on this issue and bring recommendations to the General Conference. Res. 4219 calls on church members to engage with lawmakers, particularly in the U.S., in support of legislation that defends the human rights of Palestinian children and families.

#4120: Right to Peacefully Address Injustice

The UMC is committed to nonviolent economic actions, such as boycotts and divestment, as vital and–in the U.S. and many other countries–historically protected means of addressing injustice. Such activism is grounded in the longstanding tradition of the UMC and other religious communities to advocate for social change using nonviolent methods. The UMC explicitly rejects governmental attempts to curtail the right to engage in such economic action and calls on church members to advocate for the protection of this freedom.

#5206 Holy Land Tours

Adopted continuously since 1994. The UMC recognizes the importance of responsible travel practices throughout the world and calls church members to particular responsibilities when visiting Palestine/Israel: to not focus only on ancient biblical sites, as most Christian pilgrimages to the Holy Land do, rather to meet and learn from the "living stones" of the land, the indigenous Palestinians; to spend quality time with Christian Palestinians; to stay overnight in the area of Bethlehem and support Palestinian businesses; to visit UMC projects and partnerships; to communicate with the Methodist Liaison Office in planning a tour; to prepare for the trip with UMC-recommended resources; and to move beyond traditional tourism by planning for a justice-oriented mission, including sustained justice advocacy after returning home.

#4109 United Nations Resolutions on the Israeli-Palestine Conflict

Adopted continuously since 2000. The UMC affirms its commitment to United Nations resolutions, international law, and rulings of international courts. The UMC recognizes the UN and its related judicial bodies as the most effective instruments existing today for achieving international justice and peace, and calls on Israel, the Palestinian Authority and all states to comply fully with UN resolutions and international law. The resolution identifies key UN resolutions and court rulings that are ignored by Israel. It also criticizes the U.S.

for repeatedly using its Security Council veto power to block international actions aimed at protecting Palestinian civilians, thereby perpetuating impunity and escalating violence.

#5203 United Methodist Guiding Principles for Christian-Jewish Relations
The document affirms a shared belief in one God, the Jewish roots of Christianity, and the continuing covenantal relationship between Jews and Christians. It emphasizes respectful witness, repudiation of coercive or antisemitic evangelism, and mutual learning through dialogue. The statement also calls for repentance for historical Christian persecution of Jews, correction of harmful teachings, and cooperative action for justice, peace, and reconciliation, including concern for peoples in the Middle East. The resolution emphasizes that the church must actively oppose all forms of antisemitism and challenge enduring stereotypes.

Intersectional Resolutions

Many other United Methodist Church resolutions state church policies on issues that intersect with Palestine/Israel justice advocacy. In recent years these include:

- Rejecting historic and contemporary **colonialism and neocolonialism**, and specifically condemning the Doctrine of Discovery and centuries of harm that has come from it.
- Affirming **indigenous peoples' rights**, protect indigenous lands, repenting of complicity in harm to indigenous peoples, and supporting legislative and other measures to defend indigenous rights and make reparation for historic harm.
- Addressing the **rights of refugees and migrants**, emphasizing the need to welcome the stranger in our communities and to care for those in need.
- Addressing many facets of **racism, ethnocentrism and tribalism** and the political systems that enable this disease in our societies.

Regional Resolutions

On each of these topics, resolutions have been adopted in several United Methodist regional bodies, known as Annual Conferences:

- Opposing the unjust theology of **Christian Zionism**, a political ideology that seeks to justify the ethnic cleansing and oppression of the Palestinian people with flawed biblical teaching.
- Opposing **Israeli Apartheid,** as identified by the UN and the world's leading human rights organizations
- Declaring the fact that **Israeli has committed genocide** in its war on Gaza since October 2023.

UMKR
KairosResponse.org

DIVESTMENT AND BOYCOTT

June 2014- Divestment of G4S
The UMC's primary investment arm, the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBPHB, announced it had divested from G4S, a major global security firm, due in part to its complicity in Israeli human rights violations. This was the first such divestment action by a U.S. "mainline" denomination, taken in response to communication from UMKR, an independent justice movement of United Methodists.

January 2016 – Divestment/Screening of Five Israeli banks, one other Israeli Business
GBPHB announced a groundbreaking institutional divestment action: placing the five largest Israeli banks and the Israeli company Shikun & Binui on a No Buy list, barring investment in those businesses due to their support for Israel's settlements enterprise which violates Palestinian rights.

April 2024 and July 2025 - Divestment of Israeli Government Bonds
In 2024, The General Conference of The United Methodist Church called on church investment managers not to invest in bonds issued by Israel, Turkey, and Morocco, because these states are "holding subject populations under prolonged military occupation." This was the first such divestment decision by a major Christian denomination.

In 2025, Wespath (formerly GBPHB), managing the largest reporting faith-based pension fund in the world**,** announced it was implementing the General Conference resolution of 2024 that bars investment in the bonds of three occupier governments. Wespath expanded on that mandate to include other countries involved in severe human rights violations.

March 2014 – SodaStream Boycott
The United Methodist General Board of Church & Society (GBCS) joined the boycott of SodaStream due to its factory's location on confiscated Palestinian land in an illegal Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank. From the global pressure of the boycott, SodaStream moved its main factory from the West Bank to inside Israel in 2015.

2004 to present: Call to boycott settlements products
See above, Resolution #4108, Opposition to Israeli Settlements

March 2024 – Chevron Boycott
The United Methodist General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) joined the global boycott of Chevron due to its natural gas operations off the coast of Palestine/Israel. Chevron's activities directly support the military blockade of Gaza and the occupation of Palestinian territories. Both GBCS and UMKR offer information and actions for United Methodists to support the boycott.

POLITICAL ADVOCACY

The UMC General Board of Church and Society has mobilized numerous opportunities for political advocacy, most often for U.S. members to contact their government for such actions as:

- Opposing U.S. military aid to Israel
- Supporting legislation that would bar specific weaponry being provided to Israel
- Urging U.S. leaders to oppose evictions of Palestinians from East Jerusalem
- Opposing the expansion of colonization and violence against Palestinian communities throughout the West Bank.

Glossary

ANTISEMITISM

As defined by Jewish Voice for Peace, "Antisemitism is discrimination, targeting, violence, and dehumanizing stereotypes directed at Jews because they are Jewish. In the past decade alone, some examples of the horrifying white nationalist antisemitic violence we have witnessed include the murder of 11 congregants at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh in 2018, synagogue shootings at a Chabad synagogue in Poway, California in 2019, Nazi symbols at the January 6, 2021 U.S. Capitol insurrection, antisemitic hate groups and rallies, and the desecration of cemeteries. … We understand antisemitism as historically contextual, situated amidst interrelated conditions and struggles. … For instance, white nationalist violence has been on the rise in the U.S., fueled by anti-immigrant and racist manifestos, sentiments, and conspiracy theories, such as the 'great replacement' theory.* Jews are among the targets of white nationalist violence, along with Black people, immigrants, Muslims, and trans and queer people, among others. … Attacking Jewish individuals or communal spaces for being Jewish, or blaming the Jewish people for the actions of the Israeli government, is antisemitic and unacceptable . . . ."

Additionally, as Arabs of all faiths are Semites, many believe "antisemitism" targeting only Jews should be expressed in terms that doesn't make Semites of other faiths invisible. i.e. Use a more specific term such as "anti-Jewish.

See online: What Antisemitism is NOT: International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism (IHRA-WDA)
See also: Great Replacement Theory

APARTHEID

The word is Afrikaans, meaning "separation" and comes out of the South African experience in the 20th century. Apartheid refers to a system of institutionalized racial segregation and discrimination. In a legal framework, it involves laws and policies that privilege one group over another, often based on ethnicity, race or religion. Various human rights organizations, church denominations (including PC(USA)) and some countries have labeled Israeli policies as apartheid, as there are different systems of law that apply to Palestinians and Israelis —military vs civil. Restrictions on the movement of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are often cited as examples of apartheid practices, which include segregated roads and military courts. Disparities in land ownership and access to resources between Israelis and Palestinians also show apartheid conditions.

ARAB

Historically, an Arab is a person whose father is an Arab, whose language is Arabic, and who participates in Arab culture in its many forms. An Arab can be of any religion: Arab Christian and Arab Jew are not contradictions in terms. (e.g., Moses ben Maimon, known to English speakers as Maimonides, was an Arab Jew.) After WWI when new states such as Syria, Lebanon and Iraq were created from the collapsing Ottoman Empire, Palestine was not given statehood. This statecraft by the British Empire is now used as a political tool by Israel which insists on calling the indigenous people of Palestine by the term "Arab" rather than "Palestinian," which is the name they call themselves. It is akin to insisting Syrians are Arabs not Syrians. Palestinians are indeed Arabs, but only using that term denies them their peoplehood.

BALFOUR DECLARATION

Issued in 1917 by Lord Arthur James Balfour, British Foreign Secretary, it expressed British support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Conceived by the British in the heat of World War I, it began to be implemented at the end of the War when the British took control of the area. The vast majority of Palestine's population (almost 90 percent according to the British census of 1922), were primarily Christian and Muslim Arabs. The Balfour Declaration referred to them as "the non-Jewish communities in Palestine," and made no mention of their political or national rights. Palestinians view the declaration as a betrayal of their rights and aspirations for self-determination. It contributed to increased Jewish immigration, leading to "Judaization" of the area and many Palestinians see this as a key factor in the loss of their land and displacement as refugees.

BDS—BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT, SANCTIONS

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) is a Palestinian-led movement for freedom, justice and equality that puts nonviolent pressure on Israel. BDS upholds the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity. Israel is occupying and colonizing Palestinian land, discriminating against Palestinian citizens of Israel, and denying Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homes. Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, the BDS call urges action to pressure Israel to comply with international law. BDS is now a vibrant global movement made up of unions, academic associations, churches, and grassroots movements across the world. Since its launch in 2005, BDS has had a significant impact and is effectively challenging international support for Israeli apartheid and settler-colonialism.
Source: BDS Movement

Boycotts involve withdrawing support from Israel's apartheid regime, complicit Israeli sporting, cultural, and academic institutions, and all Israeli and international companies engaged in violations of Palestinian human rights.

Divestment campaigns urge banks, local councils, churches, pension funds, and universities to withdraw investments from the State of Israel and all Israeli and international companies that sustain Israeli apartheid.

Sanctions campaigns pressure governments to fulfill their legal obligations to end Israeli apartheid and not aid or assist its maintenance by banning business with illegal Israeli settlements, ending military trade and free-trade agreements, as well as suspending Israel's membership in international forums such as UN bodies and FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association).

CHRISTIAN ZIONISM

The Christian and Jewish Zionist Movements were two of the most significant factors leading to realities on the ground today. Institutionalized Christian Zionism preceded Jewish Zionism and dates back to the early 19th century when European (especially British) leaders sought to find ways of expelling their own Jewish populations. For this exclusionary reason, European Jews began moving to Palestine.

Christian Zionism was popularized by John Nelson Darby, a Plymouth Brethren preacher who proposed a dogmatic literal reading of scripture that supported the rebuilding of Biblical Israel as necessary for the second coming of Jesus. This ideology merges theology and politics and was supercharged when Israel became a state in 1948 because Christian Zionists believe that the modern state of Israel is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, and that Christians should help hasten the return of all Jews to the Holy Land in order to bring about Christ's return. For this reason, they believe that Israel should enjoy special privileges, including unconditional support of Israel's policies.

Ironically, in its theology, Christian Zionism is highly antisemitic because when the Messiah returns, Jews are expected to convert to Christianity or be forever condemned to the fires of hell. This theology displaces the primacy of the Triune God as the object of devotion with support for the state of Israel; it ignores the New Covenant proclaimed in the New Testament and

denies the sovereignty of God over world events. (It is an upside down Christology with Christ placed below other priorities.) Importantly, Christian Zionism also appears in "mainstream" Christianity when churches implicitly give Israel support without questioning actions that are against international law and also God's law. Both Christian Zionism and Jewish Zionism use the guise of theology to enact a modern political goal. Both erase the long lineage of Palestinian Christians and rely on the displacement of Palestinians in order to achieve their goals.
For more, See: ChristianZionism.org
See also Zionism in glossary

COLONIALISM

In simple terms, colonialism is the practice of one country controlling another country or area and exploiting its people and resources. It dates back to Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, but the first phase of modern colonialism began in the 15th century during what was called "the Age of Discovery," a term which is now seen as a euphemism. A 1493 Papal Bull by Pope Leo XVI declared any non-Christian land as available to be "discovered, claimed, and exploited by Christian rulers." This became known as the Doctrine of Discovery which was the basis of all European (Christian) colonialism and claims to other lands, and it justified the western expansion of the United States through "manifest destiny." Through this doctrine, European colonialism came into existence as a Christian effort.
See also: settler colonialism in glossary

DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY

This doctrine "is a philosophical and legal framework dating to the 15th century that gave Christian governments moral and legal rights to invade and seize indigenous lands and dominate Indigenous Peoples. The patterns of oppression that continue to dispossess Indigenous Peoples of their lands today are found in numerous historical documents such as Papal Bulls, Royal Charters and U.S. Supreme Court rulings as recent as 2005. Collectively, these and other concepts form a paradigm of domination that legitimates extractive industries that displace and destroy many Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable communities, as well as harm the earth. The Doctrine of Discovery can be seen as a 'power and principality' based on the following ideas that grew out of Christendom:

1."Theologies of Entitlement —Three main scriptural texts undergird the Doctrine of Discovery:

- The Great Commission 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.' ~Matthew 28:19-20
- The divine mandate to submit to government rule 'Let every person be subject to the governing authorities: for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.'~Romans 13:1.
- The narrative of a covenantal people justified in taking possessions of land as described in the Exodus story, out of which Manifest Destiny in the U.S. grew.

2."Justification of Violence: Christendom empowered European governments to use coercion and violence, including genocide and enslavement. The theologies of entitlement legitimized their conquest of both people and land.

3."*Terra Nullius* or Empty Land: *Terra Nullius* is the theological and legal doctrine that 'discovered' lands were devoid of humans if the original people who lived there, defined as 'heathens, pagans, and infidels,' were not ruled by a Christian prince."

Source: The Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery, see here for more.

The United Methodist Church condemned the Doctrine of Discovery and engaged in an Act of Repentance with Native peoples in 2012. The Doctrine of Discovery was formally repudiated by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 2018.

DRUZE

The Druze are Arabs whose faith originated in Egypt as an offshoot of Ismaili Shi'ism. Emerging in the 10th century, they are Abrahamic monotheists with secretive practices and are syncretic with some truth-seeking philosophies. They call themselves *muwaḥḥidūn* (Arabic for "unitarians") and they have maintained a close-knit community for centuries in the region that is now Palestine/Israel, Lebanon and Syria. They do not permit conversion into or out of the faith and strongly discourage marriage outside the faith. In Israel, they number to 150,000 and are allowed to serve in the military; as such, some have risen to high ranks and have more access to power than other non-Jewish citizens (20% of the population of Israel in non-Jewish).

ETHNIC CLEANSING

Ethnic Cleansing is designated today as a crime against humanity with a special tribunal set up in The Hague to prosecute the crimes. The term "ethnic cleansing" is related to genocide and has been defined by a UN Commission of experts as "rendering an area ethnically homogeneous by using force or intimidation to remove persons of given groups from an area." It is "a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas." Forcible transfer of people is strictly prohibited under Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and is recognized as a grave breach that can be prosecuted as an international crime.

In his 2006 book *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine,* Israeli historian Ilan Pappe illustrates the systematic planning that laid the groundwork for the expulsion of more than 750,000 Palestinians from what became Israel in 1948. Pappe elaborates on the "Village Files" project (1940–47) involving the methodical compilation of maps and intelligence for all Arab villages and the development of military plans that culminated in "Plan *Dalet*" and the1948 war. Pappe's research into declassified Israeli archives (now re-classified) uncovered how this planning was done under the direction of an insider "caucus" of fewer than a dozen men, led by David Ben-Gurion who became the first Prime Minister of Israel. Importantly, Pappe makes the case for a paradigm change: ethnic cleansing to replace the paradigm of war in the public debate on 1948.

ETHNIC SUPREMACY

This principle holds that one ethnicity is superior to another and is the basis of racial separation and hatreds based on race and ethnicity. "In 2018, the Israeli parliament approved the Jewish Nation-State Basic Law that enshrines Jewish supremacy over Palestinian citizens. This law—which has distinct apartheid characteristics—guarantees the ethnic-religious character of Israel as exclusively Jewish and entrenches the privileges enjoyed by Jewish citizens, while simultaneously anchoring discrimination against Palestinian citizens and legitimizing exclusion, racism, and systemic inequality." Source: Adalah, Israel's Jewish Nation State Law
See also apartheid in glossary.

IMPERIAL BOOMERANG

The imperial boomerang is the concept that repressive techniques to control colonial territories by governments will eventually "boomerang" when those same techniques are used domestically against their own citizens. This concept originates with Aimé Césaire in his 1950 work Discourse on Colonialism; it also appears in Hannah Arendt's The Origins of Totalitarianism in her 'boomerang thesis,' which describes how imperial practices abroad return to haunt the metropole. In terms of the state of Israel, we can see the imperial boomerang at play when local American police forces trained by the Israeli military use military equipment and tactics and tolerate lethal force in American policing. The boomerang also manifests when weapons tested on Palestinians in Gaza are then deployed on populations here in the U.S.
See: Deadly Exchange, a Jewish Voice for Peace initiative.

GENOCIDE

The term "genocide" was coined after WWII by Polish-Jewish scholar Raphael Lemkin to describe what the Nazis did to the Jews of Europe in WWII. Adopted by the UN in 1948, the crime of genocide is defined in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide in international law. It contains a narrow definition of the crime of genocide, which includes two main elements: Mental and Physical. A mental element is the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group." It is this special intent, or *dolus specialis*, that makes the crime of genocide unique. Importantly, the victims of genocide are deliberately targeted—not randomly—in order to eliminate their group. Genocide scholars have identified ten stages of genocide, with the last stage being denial by the perpetrators.
See the UN Website for more.

HAMAS

Hamas is an acronym in Arabic for "Islamic Resistance Movement" (*Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya*) and is a prominent Palestinian militant Islamist group with roots in Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood that has ruled the Gaza Strip since 2007. It emerged as a significant player in Palestinian politics, promoting armed resistance against Israel, in December 1987, at the onset of the First Intifada (uprising) from 1987 to 1993. That uprising was marked by widespread protests, civil disobedience, and unrest across the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem fueled by frustration over prolonged Israeli occupation and a desire for self-determination.
Source: Middle East Institute.
See more here.

Hamas has evolved over the years as the situation for Palestinians in Gaza has become more and more intolerable. Middle East Eye published in full an English translation of the Hamas Charter in 2017; the text reveals that Hamas is in opposition to Zionism rather than Judaism. (See "Zionism" entry for more on this). Daniel Banoura, Palestinian theologian at the University of Notre Dame, says Hamas now,

> ...advances a rather mature political position that eliminates much of the fervent religious rhetoric of the original charter and corrects earlier antisemitic tropes by framing the struggle as an anti-colonial one against Zionism and not against Judaism and Jews.

Source: *Being Christian After the Desolation of Gaza,* Edited by Fisk and Wagner, Wipf and Stock, 2025

KAIROS

"The term 'kairos' in ancient Greek (καιρός) carries the sense of a divinely appointed or opportune time, distinct from the more general word for time, 'chronos,' which denotes sequential progression. In other words, kairos pertains to a decisive window —an intersection between God's sovereign will and human experience-where a crucial event, transformation, or fulfillment takes place. This idea is woven throughout the biblical narrative. Kairos appears in various passages of scripture while chronos (the succession of minutes, days, or years) emphasizes the regular measurement of time, kairos highlights an appointed moment filled with greater meaning-an intersection where circumstances align with God's plan in a remarkable way."
Source: Biblehub

MANIFEST DESTINY

Manifest Destiny emerged in the 1840s and was popularized by politicians, journalists and missionaries who believed that the United States had a divinely ordained destiny to expand westwards and inhabit the entire continent, "civilizing" the indigenous people. This ideology contributed to significant territorial acquisition but its morality and consequences were not addressed, resulting in American Exceptionalism in foreign policy, which echoes into our times today.
See also settler colonialism in glossary

NAKBA

"The Nakba, which means 'catastrophe' in Arabic, refers to the mass displacement and dispossession of Palestinians during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. Before the Nakba, Palestine was a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society of Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Druze. However, the conflict between Arabs of the Muslim and Christian faiths and Jews of both Ashkenazy and Sephardic ancestry, intensified in the 1930s with the increase of Jewish immigration, driven by persecution in Europe, and with the Zionist movement aiming to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. In November 1947, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution partitioning Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab, with Jerusalem under a UN administration. The Arab world rejected the plan, arguing that it was unfair and violated the UN Charter. Jewish militias launched attacks against Palestinian villages, forcing thousands to flee. … The newly established Israeli forces launched a major offensive. The result of the war was the permanent displacement of more than half of the Palestinian population. … 75 years later, despite countless UN resolutions, the rights of the Palestinians continue to be denied.

"According to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) more than 5 million Palestine refugees are scattered throughout the Middle East. Today, Palestinians continue to be dispossessed and displaced by Israeli settlements, evictions, land confiscation and home demolitions. The Nakba anniversary is a reminder not only of those tragic events of 1948, but of the ongoing injustice suffered by the Palestinians. The Nakba had a profound impact on the Palestinian people, who lost their homes, their land, and their way of life. It remains a deeply traumatic event in their collective memory and continues to shape their struggle for justice and for their right to return to their homes.
Source: The United Nations, The Question of Palestine."
See: About the Nakba

NATION STATE LAW

Passed in 2018 by the Israeli Knesset (parliament), Israel's hugely controversial Nation State Law enshrined special rights for Jewish people and ignored the rights of the Arabs living in the same areas. Supporters call it a "defining moment" while critics say it codifies apartheid into law. This law entrenched supremacy of Jewish settlers, ensured further erasure of indigenous Palestinians, and effectively annexed those parts of historic Palestine that were occupied by Israel in 1967. Those annexed areas were to be a 'future Palestinian state.' Immediately challenged in court, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled in July 2021 that the Nation State Law was "constitutional and did not negate Israel's democratic character." To understand how this law has taken away rights from 20% of the citizens of Israel, we recommend reading explainers by Adalah—The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel— on the enshrining of Jewish supremacy.

NORMALIZATION

In the Palestine/Israel equation, "normalization" is the process through which current realities are accepted and through which groups move towards opening communications, sharing information and technology, as well as sharing of culture and cuisine, etc. without first addressing power differentials and repair. For many, "normalization" is problematic, given current Israeli policies in the region and the treatment of Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem. One example of a normalization is the move by some Arab states to accept the status quo and move towards diplomatic acceptance and trade. Another example at a different level is the promoting of coexistence and understanding between Israelis and Palestinians, such as with the normalization project, Seeds of Peace, which aims to foster dialogue and collaboration without addressing the power imbalances present. Such cross-cultural programs that bring together teenagers in summer camps in order to "normalize" relationships, do not account for the power disparities each community of teens comes from and returns to after these encounters.

PALESTINIAN

The term Palestinian was introduced in the late 19th century as part of the struggle for Arab independence from the Ottoman Empire to distinguish the Arab inhabitants of Palestine from the Ottoman Turks living there. During the British Mandate, the term came to mean anyone residing in Palestine with roots there, including Jews. After the establishment of the state of Israel, "Palestinian" came to describe only non-Jewish inhabitants of historic Palestine. After the Nakba of 1948, it referred to non-Jews who were either living in historic Palestine or who had been ethnically cleansed from Palestine. The Arabic for "Palestine" is "Philistine", which in English is a term of abuse and carries layers of racial prejudice.

PLURALISM

In the Palestine setting, since the demise of the "two state solution" in the region, focus has turned to co-existence and equal rights for all peoples. This brings up the coexistence of diverse groups and perspectives within society and recognizes the legitimacy of multiple national identities, including Jewish and Palestinian narratives. Political pluralism advocates for inclusive governance that represents various ethnic and religious communities and aims to address power imbalances and promote equality among different groups. Pluralism seeks to create a framework for peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution in the region. Contrary to "pluralism" (*See pluralism in glossary), normalization asks for relationships before repair, and collaboration without shared power.

SETTLER COLONIALISM

Successful settler colonialism results in erasure of a people by outsiders settling on their lands. Cornell University's Legal Information Institute defines it this way:

"Settler colonialism can be defined as a system of oppression based on genocide and colonialism, that aims to displace a population of a nation (oftentimes indigenous people) and replace it with a new settler population. Settler colonialism finds its foundations on a system of power perpetuated by settlers that represses indigenous people's rights and cultures by erasing it and replacing it by their own. Settler colonialism is based on the theft and exploitation of lands and resources that belong to the indigenous. History and current conflicts have shown that this ongoing system of oppression is mainly based on racism and white supremacy. Oftentimes, settler colonialism is Eurocentric: it assumes that Europeans and their values are superior to other indigenous cultures, and that therefore it is legitimate to destroy indigenous people's rights by stealing their lands and erasing their traditions.

"Settler colonialism differs from classic colonialism in the following way: on the one hand, colonialism is the act of power and domination of one nation, by acquiring or maintaining full or partial political control over another sovereign nation. On the other hand, settler colonialism has an additional criterion that is the complete destruction and replacement of indigenous people and their cultures by the settlers' own in order to establish themselves as the rightful inhabitants. Therefore, settlers do not only exploit indigenous people's lands and resources, but they displace them, modify the names of the cities and places they colonize in order to completely erase the indigenous' tracks. The different forms of settler colonialism include: apartheid, military occupation, national policies of assimilation or biological warfare."
Source: Legal Information Institute

SUMUD

Sumud (pronounced soo-**mood**) is an Arabic term for steadfastness and perseverance; it took on a political tone in the 1960s. Human rights lawyer Raja Shehadeh identifies it as a third way that rejects the false choice of exile/submission to the Israelis or hatred and violent resistance to them. *Sumud* is a mentality lived out in everyday life.

Literary scholar Edward Said observed that "it is a way of turning presence into small-scale obduracy," a tactic suitable for a time when there is no clear way forward.

Palestinian theologians say the presence of the Holy Spirit sustains them in times of colonial violence, but also points them to the ultimate *Samid* (Arabic for "the one with sumud") who is Christ, and who identifies with them.

ZIONISM

Zionism is the political ideology that emerged in late 19th Century Europe when European racism against their own Jewish population needed to be addressed. Theodore Herzl, a Jewish journalist and lawyer in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, formed The Zionist Organization and promoted Jewish immigration to Palestine in order to create a homeland for the Jews of Europe. This is the origin of the political ideology that culminated in the creation of the modern state of Israel today. The success of Zionism meant the realization of Jewish political and religious self-determination, but what did it mean for the population of the region that was to receive emigrating European Jews. In *Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims* (Vintage, 1979), public intellectual and Palestinian American scholar Edward Said wrote,

> Very little is said about what Zionism entailed for non-Jews who happened to have encountered it; for that matter, nothing is said about where (outside Jewish history) it took place, and from what in the historical context of nineteenth-century Europe Zionism drew its force. To the Palestinian, for whom Zionism was somebody else's idea imported into Palestine and for which in a very concrete way he or she was made to pay and suffer, these forgotten things about Zionism are the very things that are centrally important.

Because Zionism calls for a Jewish State for Jews, it is now considered untenable since it calls for an "ethno-state" which privileges one group of people over another. For this reason, Zionism is debated today as an ideology of an expired time in history. This is best described by historian Tony Judt, founder and former director of the Remarque Institute at New York University, in his seminal article, "Israel: The Alternative." Judt wrote,

> The problem with Israel, in short, is not —as is sometimes suggested—that it is a European "enclave" in the Arab world; but rather that it arrived too late. It has imported a characteristically late-nineteenth-century separatist project into a world that has moved on, a world of individual rights, open frontiers, and international law. The very idea of a "Jewish state"—a state in which Jews and the Jewish religion have exclusive privileges from which non-Jewish citizens are forever excluded—is rooted in another time and place. Israel, in short, is an anachronism.

Source: The New York Review of Books, Oct. 23, 2003

For terms not included in this list, see the PASSIA Dictionary. passia.org/dictionary

The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA) was founded in March 1987 by a group of Palestinian academics and intellectuals in Jerusalem as an independent think tank not affiliated with any government, political party or organization.

Recommended Books

1. *A Very Short History of the Israel–Palestine Conflict,* by Ilan Pappe, Oneworld Publication, 2024.
2. *Being Christian After the Desolation of Gaza,* Edited by Fisk and Wagner, Wipf and Stock, 2025.
3. *Being Jewish After the Destruction of Gaza: A Reckoning,* by Peter Beinart, Knopf, 2025
4. *Beyond the Two-State Solution,* by Jonathan Kuttab, Nonviolence International, 2020
5. *Christ in the Rubble: Faith, the Bible, and the Genocide in Gaza,* by Munther Isaac, with a foreword by Willie James Jennings, Eerdmans, 2025.
6. *Decolonizing Palestine: The Land, The People, The Bible,* by Mitri Raheb, Orbis Books, 2023
7. *Forest of Noise,* by Mosab Abu Toha. Knopf, 2024.
8. *Genocide Bad: Notes on Palestine, Jewish History, and Collective Liberation*, by Sim Kern, Interlink Books, 2025
9. *Homeland: My Father Dreams of Palestine,* by Hannah Moushabeck, Interlink Books, 2023 (children's book).
10. *Hundred Years' War on Palestine,* by Rashid Khalidi, Metropolitan Books, 2020
11. *My Olive Tree by Hazar,* Elbayya, 2024. Anne Schwartz Books (children's book).
12. *One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This,* by Omar El Akkad. Knopf, 2025.
13. *Perfect Victims: And the Politics of Appeal,* by Mohammed El-Kurd, Haymarket Books, 2025
14. *The Cross and the Olive Tree: Cultivating Palestinian Theology amid Gaza,* Editors John Munayer, Samuel Munayer, et al., Orbis Books, 2025
15. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestin*e, by Ilan Pappe, One World Publications, 2007
16. *The First Advent in Palestine, Reversals, Resistance, and the Ongoing Complexity of Hope,* by Kelley Nikondeha, Broadleaf Books, 2022
17. *The Gaza Kitchen, A Palestinian Culinary Journey,* by Laila El-Haddad and Maggie Schmitt, Just World Books, 2021
18. *The Message,* by Ta-Nehisi Coates, One World, 2024
19. *The Other Side of the Wall: A Palestinian Christian Narrative of Lament and Hope,* by Munther Isaac, IVP, 2020
20. *The Politics of Persecution: Middle Eastern Christians in an Age of Empire*, by Mitri Raheb, Baylor University Press, 2021
21. *Theology After Gaza: A Global Anthology,* Editors Mitri Raheb and Graham McGeoch, Cascade Books, 2025
22. *Teaching Palestine Lessons, Stories, Voices,* edited by Bill Bigelow, Jesse Hagopian, Suzanna Kassouf, Adam Sanchez, and Samia Shoman. Rethinking Schools, 2025.
23. *Understanding Palestine and Israel*, by Phyllis Bennis, Olive Branch Press, 2025.
24. *What Does Israel Fear From Palestine?,* by Raja Shehadeh, Other Press, 2024.