



27 August, 2015

Kairos Palestine Statement on Continued Confiscations of Palestinian Land in the Cremisan Valley of the Bethlehem Region

A Call to the Global Church and All People of Conscience

‘The Earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world and all its inhabitants.’ Psalm 24 v.1

Kairos Palestine, representing the voice of Palestinian Christians suffering under Israeli occupation, strongly condemns the pursuit of the colonial settlement expansion in the West Bank and the ongoing construction of the Apartheid Wall. Contrary to Israeli propaganda, the Wall is not a security precaution, especially since 85% of it separates Palestinian Christians and Muslims from their land, and water resources and destroys the socio-economic fabric of Palestinian society. According to international law, these same lands are designated for an independent Palestinian state, a state whose creation will bring about a just and durable peace.

The Land Cries Out

This past week, we have again experienced the pain of further confiscation of land and uprooting of olive trees. This time the drama is unfolding in the Christian Palestinian town of Beit Jala; northwest of Bethlehem.

On Monday August 17, we awakened to the news of an invading Israeli army accompanied by bulldozers and excavators set to confiscate more lands to continue building the Apartheid Wall and annexing more Palestinian land.

Swiftly and with no prior notice, the bulldozers began uprooting olive trees that are centuries old, thus denying 58 Christian families their source of livelihood, violating their rights to their ancestral lands and a normal life. In record time, the landowners and citizens, Christian and Muslim clergy, local and international activists, politicians and officials for the Popular Struggle Committee together joined to

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protest this new crime. They were met with showers of tear gas grenades fired by Israeli soldiers. Landowners and priests were battered and injured by the merciless soldiers, some were detained by the army. More confrontations ensued after holding prayers on the threatened and bereaved land.

In committing its injustice, the Israeli army claims the legal support of the Israeli Supreme Court that provides a legal cover for this continued oppression. Practically, the army may offer special permits for the landowners to access their confiscated land, but will eventually halt their access because these owners are not allowed to what are now Israeli annexed territories, which is considered a criminal act fined and incriminated by law.

In the process, Beit Jala faces the destiny of most Palestinian cities and towns. By losing its surrounding green space to Israeli settlements, it is progressively becoming a ghetto. With this confiscation, Beit Jala loses yet another 3500 dunums of land, already losing thousands of dunums to the previous Israeli settlements of Har Gilo and Gilo. In total, this amounts to 48% of confiscated land. These confiscations are part of an ongoing policy of taking as much Palestinian land as possible while getting rid of as many Palestinians as possible

The Call for Action:

“I came so that all may have life and life abundant” Jesus proclaimed for all human beings, and now for the people of Beit Jala, facing the Occupier’s theft, destruction and killing.

We pray and hope that the Churches around the world will live up to their responsibilities and stand up for justice for the oppressed. The Kairos Palestine document highlights the role and responsibility of the prophetic church in living a costly discipleship. Martin Luther King, Jr. rightly reminded the churches “There was a time when the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society”.

Prolonged injustice and oppression in the Holy land cannot go on with impunity. Our plea addresses all Churches, church organizations and all people of conscience to strive for justice until peace prevails:

- To pursue the implementation of the International Court of Justice Ruling that requires that the Apartheid Wall be demolished and Palestinians compensated for their losses.
- To call the United Nations and all countries to implement the UNGA resolution regarding the Apartheid Wall by excluding from their contracts all companies involved in the construction of the Wall.

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- To condemn the Israeli authorities' clear violations of international law and human rights by sending letters to:
 - ✓ Church councils and synods.
 - ✓ Elected representatives.
 - ✓ The Israeli embassy in your country [List of Israeli diplomatic missions worldwide]
 - ✓ The Prime Minister of Israel
Office of the Prime Minister
37 Kaplan Street, Hakiryia, Tel Aviv 61909, Israel
Fax +972 3 691 6940
Email: minister@mod.gov.il

- To divest from all companies and groups that support the occupation and the oppression of the Palestinian people and the violations of international law. Three companies are explicitly participating in the theft and destruction of the Cremisan valley, namely, JCB from UK, Doosan from South Korea, CAT (Caterpillar) from the USA. Please refer to WHO PROFITS on bulldozers (<http://whoprofits.org/bulldozers>).

It is Kairos time to act now. All good people of conscience can contribute to correct injustice and fight oppression in His Land. Let us labor together on sound moral and ethical grounds so that we may establish the just peace we so much need in the region and in the world.

***Kairos Palestine (kairospalestine.ps)** is a group of Palestinian Christians who authored and/or support “A Moment of Truth” – The Christian Palestinian word to the world about the occupation of Palestine, expressed in hope and faith in God, it is a call for solidarity in ending over six decades of oppression. The document was launched in 2009.*

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