

# **FAIR** Christians for Fair Witness on the Middle East **WITNESS**

475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1960  
New York, New York 10115  
(212) 870-2320  
www.christianfairwitness.com

## **The Kairos Palestine Document**

*On December 11, 2009, a group of Palestinian Christian leaders issued the “Kairos Palestine” document. They describe this document as “a word of faith, hope and love,” offered at a time when, according to the drafters, Palestinians have “reached a dead end” because of the Israeli occupation. According to this document the only answer is to call for divestment and economic boycott of “everything produced by the [Israeli] occupation.” But is this conclusion sound -- is economic boycott of Israel the only, or the just solution to the conflict?*

**The Kairos Palestine document was written by Palestinian Christians. It is their narrative, their truth and they rightfully express it.**

- But U.S. Churches cannot adopt this narrative without bringing a critical eye and ear to bear upon it and without similarly listening to an Israeli narrative which also has its truth.

**The Kairos Palestine document calls the Israeli occupation a sin that must be removed. (Sec. 4.2.1) We agree . . .**

- The occupation has had a corrosive effect on the lives of both Palestinians and Israelis. One people should never rule over or dominate another.

**The Kairos Palestine document states that “[the Palestinian] connectedness to this land is a natural right.” (Sec. 2.3.4) We agree . . .**

- But the Jewish connectedness to the land is also a natural right. Both Jews and Palestinians have legitimate claims to the land which can and must be accommodated through a negotiated two-state solution.

**The Kairos Palestine document professes that “an end to Israeli occupation . . . will guarantee security and peace for all.” (Sec. 7) . . . But is that true?**

- There was no security or peace prior to the occupation. During the British Mandate period, Arabs responded to Jewish immigration with violent attacks.
- More violence broke out after the November 29, 1947 U.N. partition plan which separated the British Mandate into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. Increasingly violent attacks by Arabs against Jews were followed by violent Jewish reprisals. This was twenty years before the occupation and prior to the creation of the state of Israel.
- One day after Israel declared independence, five Arab states attacked the new Jewish state. The 1948/49 war ended with Armistice Agreements. But there was

no peace. All of Israel's borders were closed and every Arab country boycotted Israel. Hundreds of Israelis were killed and wounded in terror attacks launched mostly from bases in Jordan and the Syrian Golan Heights.

- In 1964 -- three years before the occupation -- the Palestine Liberation Organization was founded. The PLO established a Palestine Liberation Army in order "to attain the objective of liquidating Israel."
- There is no reason to believe that ending the occupation alone would bring security and peace to Israel and Palestine.

**According to the drafters of the Kairos Palestine document the "clear Israeli response [to peacemaking efforts] refusing any solution, leaves no room for positive expectation" and so "economic sanctions and boycott [must] be applied against Israel." (Secs. 3.1 and 7) But is this the truth?**

- No reasonable or honest person would find Israel blameless in this conflict. There is a strong and vocal segment of Israeli society that feels justified in claiming all of historic Israel as their own. But this expansionist mentality and the lack of interest in accommodating Palestinians is not and has not been the majority Israeli position nor has it, for the most part, been the official government position.
- Israel acquired the Palestinian Territories in 1967 defending itself from the massed threat of combined Arab armies amidst escalating provocations. Within days of the war ending, Israel tried to open negotiations for land in exchange for peace. The League of Arab States met in Khartoum and announced that there would be no peace, no recognition and no negotiations with Israel.
- In late December 2000, President Bill Clinton made a proposal in Washington D.C. The Palestinians would get all of Gaza, about 97% of contiguous West Bank territory, East Jerusalem for their capital, three Quarters of the Old City, sovereignty over the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa mosques and \$30 billion. The occupation would end. Israeli PM Ehud Barak accepted. The Palestinian leadership said no.
- On November 25, 2009, PM Benjamin Netanyahu announced a 10-month freeze on construction in West Bank settlements in an attempt to restart peace talks. Palestinian leadership, however, rejected the proposal and refused to restart negotiations because the freeze does not include East Jerusalem.
- There clearly will be a need for further compromise on both sides before a negotiated peace is reached. However, this latest Israeli action should be accepted as a basis to bring the parties back to peace talks. Why do the drafters of the Kairos Palestinian document ignore the opportunity to negotiate an end to the occupation?

**Fair Witness therefore strongly encourages the U.S. Churches to read the Kairos Palestine document with an open heart but not with an uncritical mind. We also encourage our churches to seize the current opportunity to**

act as peacemakers -- and not to fan the flames of conflict by showing contempt and punishing one side through acts of divestment and boycott.