

Israeli occupation called 'sin against God' by Palestinian Christians: Kairos Palestine

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Palestinian Christian leaders have issued a call for an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, which they described as “a sin against God and against humanity,” and have appealed for support from the world’s churches.

“The injustice against the Palestinian people, which is the Israeli occupation, is an evil that must be resisted,” the Christian leaders said in a document nearly two years in the making and with backing from the World Council of Churches.

“Resistance is a right and a duty for the Christian. But it is resistance with love as its logic,” they said. “It is thus a creative resistance, for it must find human ways that engage the humanity of the enemy.”

The initiators of the statement, made public December 11 at a meeting in Bethlehem, have referred to the text as the “Kairos Palestine” document. *Kairos* is a Greek word used in the Bible for a God-given time of challenge, grace and opportunity.

Organizers said their statement echoes the Kairos document that South African churches issued in the mid-1980s, which helped galvanize churches and the wider public in a concerted effort that eventually led to the end of apartheid.

“It is a call to the international community worldwide to look at the plight of the Palestinians and put pressure on Israel to conform to international law,” spokesperson and coordinator Rifat Kassis said in an interview.

“Despite the talk about peace and the peace process conducted for 17 years, nothing has happened and the situation continues deteriorating,” Kassis said. “It is the right time for a more ethical perspective on the conflict, and that should come from religious leaders.”

The full title of the document is “A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering.” Signatories include the former leader of the Roman Catholic Church in the region, Latin Patriarch emeritus Michel Sabbah; the Lutheran bishop of Jerusalem Munib Younan; and Arch bishop Theodosios Atallah Hanna of Sebastia from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The initiative was signed by leaders of most Palestinian Christian denominations and prominent Christian theologians, said Kassis.

The signers accused Israel of “disregard of international law and international resolutions.” Issues faced by Palestinians, they said, included the “separation wall” that cuts through Palestinian territories, Israeli settlements and “daily humiliation” at military checkpoints.

Rejecting Israeli justification for Israel’s actions as self-defense, the Christian leaders said, “There would be no resistance, no fear and no insecurity” if there were no occupation.

The Geneva-based World Council of Churches helped facilitate the formation of the document, which also addresses WCC members who may have differing views of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The signatories also called on the world to reject uninformed views of Muslims so that they were neither “stereotyped as the enemy nor caricatured as terrorists.” To their Jewish neighbors, the signatories affirmed the possibility of a shared life despite past struggles. *-Ecumenical News International*