

Moving Stories: 206

Responding to the crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory: July 2017

Solidarity Message with Palestinian Christians

The World Communion of Reformed Churches has urged its more than 225 member churches worldwide to examine their mission, education and investment relationships with Israel and Palestine in the light of the witness of Palestinian Christians.

In a resolution adopted by consensus on 7 July, the WCRC's General Council, meeting in Leipzig, Germany, said member churches should respond to this examination,

“as they understand the Reformed communion's commitments to human rights and the protections of international law.”

The General Council, the highest decision-making body of the WCRC, stated

“that with respect to the situation of injustice and suffering that exists in Palestine, and the cry of the Palestinian Christian community, that the integrity of Christian faith and praxis is at stake.”

It urged the WCRC's Executive Committee “to strengthen initiatives for dialogue, civil peace services, mediation, conflict prevention and transformation.”

The resolution adopted at the WCRC General Council stated that the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 had a significant consequence of “the loss of homeland for the Palestinian people, and the creation of 750,000 Palestinian refugees.” It noted that it is also 50 years since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

“It is time for Israelis and Palestinians to live alongside each other in peace, security and justice,” the resolution stated. “Many of us have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears the painful realities of life for Palestinians.”

In its resolution, the WCRC general council stated that the Christian faith has been used to justify the

injustice against the Palestinian people. It rejected any use of the Bible

“to legitimize or support political options and positions that are based upon injustice, imposed by one person on another, or by one people on another.” It encouraged delegations to visit the region “to connect with the present day Christian community ... to witness their situation and express support for their desires for self-determination.”

The resolution instructed the WCRC Executive Committee to a call from the National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine urging solidarity from Christian partners abroad.

During the WCRC's Leipzig meeting, which began on 29 June, a prominent Palestinian Christian from Bethlehem, Mitri Raheb, told delegates of his experience of having been 5 years old when Israel occupied Bethlehem.

“This was exactly 50 years ago, I know what living under occupation means,” Raheb said.

It is important that “not only we as Palestinians are liberated but that Israelis are also liberated as well, because occupiers are not liberated,” Raheb stated. “Occupiers are occupied by their own occupation.”

The WCRC groups more than 225 Protestant churches with a combined membership of about 80 million Christians in Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed, United, Uniting and Waldensian churches in over 100 countries. Its offices are in Hannover, Germany.

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Seek #JusticeAndPeace in the Holy Land

Half a century has passed since the six-day war when Israel occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights. Despite stalled peace processes and the sufferings entailed by the occupation, people still hope for a better future. In

recognition of these events, The World Council of Churches have produced a series of stories called 12 Faces of Hope. Here is just one of them:-

Hope is an essential thing to have. If we lose hope it stops us from doing anything. Even when things seem desperate, you still need to have hope.

My hope is that people will find holiness in life and in each other – not sites or specific places. Only if we put people first, and then everything else after that, we can achieve a fulfilling life together in peace. There is a holy spark in each of us which needs to be kept alive and nurtured. The holiness of people is the most important thing to recognize, and from there everything else will come.

But how do we make our lives holy, and how do we work to create holiness? The answer is that it is our primary mission to keep our lives as holy as possible. We must overcome ethnical, religious and political constraints. We must talk more to each other, encourage more meetings, get to know each other, and strive to understand each other, so that we can find reasons for hope.

We must celebrate diversity and pluralism. I believe that dialogue, courage and tolerance are critical here.

My hope is for people to be able to lead a fulfilling and complete life which is not restricted by governments, religions, terrorism or anything else. Human life and human dignity are the most important things, not physical places. We should care more about how people can find a way to pray, connect with each other and practice their religion, rather than who is in charge or in control.

To deal with hopelessness, we must remind ourselves that we are not alone in our struggle, and that we must work together.

The reality is complicated and it is not an easy task to make sure that people's lives are fulfilling and sacred. But we must continue to convey the message of hope and holiness, and find ways to reach out to more people. We must change the language, we must educate people and try to shift their focus to things that really matter.

Moving Stories is produced by Commitment for Life, the programme of the United Reformed Church that seeks to raise issues around justice and development. To receive **Moving Stories** email linda.mead@urc.org.uk. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the URC

We must try to open people's hearts! **Noa Mazor-Rabbi**

To read the other stories of hope visit <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/12-faces-of-hope>

Articles to read, photos to view and actions to take

Read

An open letter from the National Coalition of Christian Organisations in Palestine has been sent to the World Council of Churches. [Open letter to WCC 2017 final NCCOP](#)

View

Kairos Britain has a Gaza photo gallery where you can see what life in Gaza is really like, and how Christian organisations are seeking to help people be resilient and cope with life under siege.

<http://www.kairosbritain.org.uk/category/news-and-events/interactive-multimedia/>

Action

Voices of the young... visions for the future

A Postcard sharing the theme for the World Week for peace in Palestine and Israel will be in the next Commitment for Life mailing. To see a copy of the postcard visit

<http://paxchristi.org.uk/campaigns/israel-and-palestine/world-week-for-peace-in-pi/> This page also has a link to the petition on demolitions, set up for the 2016 week, that is still active.

Info Maps

Non government organisation, Al Haq, has utilised the power of Google Maps to create interactive presentations that illustrate aspects of the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Areas included are 'Water in the occupied Palestinian territories' and the 'Annexation Wall'. Al-Haq's written and visual documentation of human rights violations is useful for articles or presentations. There are tips on how to use the maps and links to articles to explain more fully the issues involved and relevant statistics.

<http://alhaq.mits.ps/index.php/interactive-map>