

Response to "Time for Action"

1. Introduction

In December 2009, the Church in Palestine launched a document called A Moment of Truth: A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering. This became known as the [Kairos Palestine document](#). Kairos is a Greek word meaning "a critical moment in time". The document requests the international community to stand by the Palestinian people who have faced oppression, displacement, suffering and apartheid for more than six decades, urging them to work for a just peace in the region, calling on them to revisit theologies that justify crimes perpetrated against the Palestinian people and the dispossession of the land.

In August 2013, a response from a group of British Christians was launched at the Greenbelt Festival. Entitled "[Kairos Britain – Time for Action](#)", this document is a call to British Christians "to be aware of the present situation in Israel and Palestine, to reflect prayerfully on it, and to respond, faithfully and courageously".

The document outlines the historical role which Britain played in allowing anti-Semitism to grow in our churches and more widely in society, as well as the actions of successive British governments in frustrating the legitimate demands of the Palestinian people for dignity and justice. It goes on to examine the inter-faith issues and the theological interpretations that justify oppression, and those that defend and speak up for the oppressed. It also contains a section on the daily humiliation of the Palestinian people as a result of the occupation.

Finally the document calls on Christians to take action. "How do we respond to this "cry from the heart of Palestinian suffering", the cry of hope in the absence of all hope? The Kairos Palestine document is a call to decisive action in the spirit of love and non-violent resistance."

At its meeting in September 2013 the PCC agreed that a draft response be prepared to "Time for Action". This response was approved at the meeting held on 23rd October 2013.

2. Background to the situation in Israel Palestine

*"The present suffering has its origins in political Zionism – the belief that the Jewish people should reclaim Palestine as their national and ancestral homeland."*¹

In 1948, the Jewish State of Israel was created by means of the UN Partition Plan which granted 56% of Palestine to Israel. In 1948-49, 750,000 Palestinians were dispossessed, leading to the 65 year-old problem of Palestinian refugees. Since that time, the government of Israel has steadily encroached, i.e. illegally occupied, most of the Palestinian land, which is now known as the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

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The Israeli Government enforces this occupation of the Palestinian Territory through:-

- Construction of a massive separation wall (700kms long and 8 metres high) on Palestinian territory
- Construction of illegal Israeli settlements with special privileges
- Legal discrimination by removing the rights of Palestinians living in Israel.
- Demolition of Palestinian houses
- Control of the water and electricity supplies
- Restrictions on access to religious places, especially Jerusalem
- Inhuman treatment of those living in the Gaza Strip
- Forced movements of Palestinian to refugee camps
- Restrictions on movements of Palestinians to school, work and hospital
- Restrictions on the Palestinian use of roads built for sole use by the Settlers
- Arrest and imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians
- Disregard for international law
- Rezoning of Palestinian land to military or other Israeli use.

The situation is now such that the remaining Palestinian land is a tiny proportion of that allocated in 1947 and getting smaller all the time. Life is becoming increasingly difficult for Palestinians. The Israeli Government has been accused of creating a modern apartheid.

Unfortunately the historical support of the UK and US Governments for Israel have enabled the Israeli Government to carry out these actions with impunity. Hence the Churches of Palestine are calling on all the Churches in the world to speak out against the injustice in Israel and Palestine.

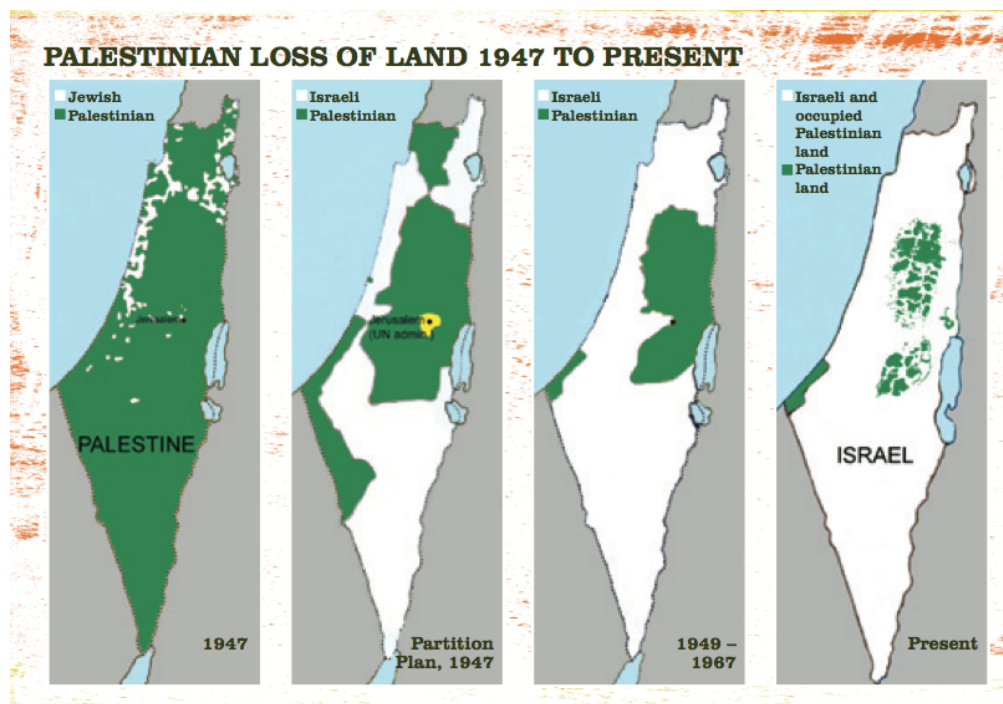


Figure 1: Palestinian loss of land since 1947

3. How can a Parish Church make a difference?

The Kairos Britain "Time for Action" document says *"Difficult though the journey may be, we seize this Kairos moment with conviction and hope. We recognise our responsibility as followers of Jesus Christ to speak the prophetic word with courage."*

Our aim for St John's is that it will consider becoming a Kairos Congregation, and thus join with other Christians in the UK in seeking justice and peace for Israel and Palestine, with equal rights for all.

This plan is not Anti-Jewish - we respect the Jewish people, faith and traditions. It is not pro-Palestinian, whether Christian or Muslim. It is pro-justice and pro-peace.

The implementation of this action plan will be the responsibility of the Kairos Group comprising Ken and Tracy Perrett and Brian and Hazel Berry together with any other interested people with reporting back to the PCC as and when appropriate.

4. What would this involve?

The Time for Action document identifies three steps and we propose that the Church follows these. They are:-

1. to be aware of the present situation in Israel and Palestine,
2. to reflect prayerfully on it, and
3. to respond faithfully and courageously.

1. To be aware of the present situation

It is clear that the present situation is complex, and that there are differing views on who is responsible. There will be a period of six months (November – April) in which we should aim to present the available information in various ways to enable members of our congregation to explore the issues and understand the situation. This should include adequate opportunities for discussion and for different views to be heard.

The following is a possible outline programme:-

- Invitation to others to join the Kairos Group
- Active monitoring, discussion and reporting of the developing situation in Israel/Palestine by the Kairos Group
- A presentation to the PCC by the Kairos Group
- A set of (3?) open presentations/discussions on the issue of Israel/Palestine
- Use of SJN and the website² to provide information
- A visiting speaker on the Israel/Palestine situation, either in a service or on another occasion

² www.crowthorneparishchurch.org.uk

2. To reflect prayerfully on it

At the end of this period, it is hoped that those with an interest will come together, around May 2014, to pray about and to discuss the way forward for St John's. A recommendation would then be made to the PCC around June 2014 on whether to become a Kairos Congregation.

3. To respond faithfully and courageously

If it is the Church's will to become a Kairos Congregation, what would this entail?

The details would need to be discussed and agreed by the PCC, but some or all of the following might be part of the Plan of Action:-

- Signing up as a Congregation to support Kairos Britain
- Maintaining awareness and publicising the developing situation in Israel/Palestine
- Speaking to other Churches in CTC and our Deanery about justice in Israel/Palestine.
- Supporting initiatives by campaigning groups, such as Embrace the Middle East, the Amos Trust, Supporting the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) programme
- Encouraging people from St John's to visit or to volunteer in Israel/Palestine and to tell their stories on return.

5. Further information

The following web links provide further information:-

<http://www.kairosbritain.org.uk>

<http://www.kairospalestine.ps>

[Link to St John's website](#) Other useful links on our website can be found here