



## **Call to European Churches:**

Why are you silent in the face of genocide?

*“Blessed are they who observe justice,  
who do righteousness at all times.”*

Psalm 106:3

We, the Global Kairos for Justice coalition, write this letter during a season commemorating God’s intervention in history to bring justice and peace to all nations and creation. The heavenly host proclaimed to the shepherds suffering under the heel of occupation, "Peace on earth!" (Luke 2:14). Yet, in the very land where peace was promised, a catastrophe is unfolding. The Israeli government’s actions against the Palestinians constitute an attempt to establish a false peace by eliminating the Palestinians—using the Hamas actions on Oct 7, 2023, which certainly violated international humanitarian law, as a pretext for genocide.

Numerous international legal bodies, including the [International Court of Justice](#), have concluded that the accusation of genocide against Israel is “plausible”. Additionally, prominent human rights organizations such as [the University Network of Human Rights](#), [Amnesty International](#), and the [Lemkin Institute](#) have provided detailed documentation of the Israeli genocidal intent and action in Gaza. Furthermore, many respected scholars of genocide, including Israeli genocide and holocaust historians [Omar Bartov](#) and [Amos Goldberg](#), have established a compelling case that the Israeli government’s actions in Gaza constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Kairos Palestine and Global Kairos for Justice have always urged Global Churches to recognize the plight of the Palestinian people and the reality of [apartheid](#).

As Christians, who share the values of equality and compassion, and as citizens of states that claim to uphold principles of human rights, we have a moral obligation to take firm and direct action when those principles are violated; therefore, our Christian witness requires that church bodies declare themselves in *status confessionis* in the face of practices that violate core principles of our faith. The integrity of our faith and the cause of Christ is at stake. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said,

*To delay or fail to make decisions may be more sinful than to make wrong decisions out of faith and love ... and in this case it is really now or never. “Too late” means “never” ... Let us shake off our fear of this world—the cause of Christ is at stake; are we to be found sleeping?*

[Kairos Palestine](#) and [Global Kairos for Justice coalition](#) members have issued repeated calls to the churches around the world, beginning with the 2009 [“Moment of Truth”](#) document, followed by the [“Cry for Hope”](#) document in 2020. Both movements have called out, with

increasing urgency and theological clarity, for steadfast witness and for solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for freedom and justice. Yet, even to this day, very few churches have responded with corresponding clarity. Fortunately, however, several churches in Europe, the United States, and South Africa stand out as having spoken with theological directness and courage. As an example, we cite the United Church of Christ in the USA, in a confession that follows the model of the “Barmen Theological Declaration” against National Socialism in Church and Society. The first article of [the United Church of Christ declaration](#) states:

***We affirm*** that the continued oppression of the Palestinian people remains, after more than five decades of oppression of the Palestinian people, a matter of theological urgency and represents a sin in violation of the message of the biblical prophets and the Gospel, and that all efforts to defend or legitimate the oppression of the Palestinian people, whether passive or active, through silence, word, or deed by the Christian community, represent a fundamental denial of the Gospel. ***Therefore, we reject*** the notion that Israel’s occupation of Palestine is a purely political problem outside the concern of the church or that the oppression of the Palestinian people is an inevitable consequence of global or regional geopolitical interest.

**We therefore call on you to:**

- a. Participate in an intensive process of responding to the “Cry for Hope” and to the 2022 resolution of the World Council of Churches Assembly on Peace in the Middle East calling for study and for an urgent decision on the recent reports of human rights organisations documenting Israel’s apartheid system; and challenge those churches who do not join in the process, bearing in mind Bonhoeffer’s statement that to “delay or fail to make decisions may be more sinful than to make wrong decisions out of faith and love”;
- b. Form solidarity and fact-finding missions in Gaza and the West Bank, to witness the Israeli war crimes and evaluate the findings in the light of recent judgements of international law institutions;
- c. Publicly repent of previous inaction, silence, and acceptance of theologies that support apartheid, discrimination, and genocide itself, and renounce previous statements to this effect;
- d. Name Israeli apartheid and genocide in your relevant statements;
- e. Demand that your government immediately and publicly condition further cooperation with Israel on its fulfillment of its obligations under international law;
  - i. Call on your governments to suspend all arms sales, and impose sanctions on Israeli government ministers and on trade with Israel,
  - ii. Call Churches to divest from all companies profiting from the illegal occupation and war in Gaza,
  - iii. Call all individuals in churches to boycott Israel—economically, academically and culturally.

Fifty-one years ago, Rev. Martin Luther King wrote to his fellow clergymen: "The judgment of God is upon the church as never before." The legal and moral force of international law and the imperative of biblical justice come together today in a mighty river of confluence. History will judge your failure to respond to this urgent call. Your failure to respond to this

call will mean that you are directly complicit in clear crimes against humanity, and will put you in direct confrontation and contradiction with international law, the rulings of the ICJ and the ICC, and biblical imperatives describing what the Lord requires of you.

Israel's genocidal actions are in full view of the world. Its intent to possess all of historic Palestine through the dispossession and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people has become inescapably clear. Israel has pursued this goal relentlessly for close to eight decades with the political, military and economic support of the Global North.

**Where are the voices of the churches at this moment in history? What will be the actions that they take in response to this crime to humanity? Will your churches live up to the historic legacy of the churches when called upon to act decisively in human affairs?**

*Righteousness is turned away backwards, justice stands far away, and truth stumbles in the public square; This is my covenant with you, says the Lord: My spirit that is upon you and my words that I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth or the mouths of your children or your children's children from now and forever.*

Isaiah 59:14, 21

Global Kairos for Justice

Patriarch Michel Sabbah  
Chair of Kairos Palestine

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Global Kairos for Justice, a worldwide coalition of concerned Christians from different churches, denominational and national (or people of faith), churches and church related organizations born in response to the Kairos Palestine "Moment of Truth: a word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering, which was launched in 2009. GKJ is committed to non-violent means, calling for ending of the Israeli colonization of Palestine and advocating for the right of self-determination of Palestinian people and peace with justice for all people in the holy land.

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