

**World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel
22-28 September 2013**

**An initiative of the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF)
of the World Council of Churches**

Theme for WWPPI 2013: “Jerusalem, the city of justice and peace”



**A resource for observing a week of prayer, education, and advocacy,
in support of an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine
and a just peace for all in Palestine and Israel**

Introduction

Jerusalem is the home of three world faiths: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Within the Christian tradition, Jerusalem is understood to be a city of unification. In the Christian scriptures, God reveals a vision of Jerusalem as a shared, inclusive city of faith, hope and love. The scriptures also envisage a glorious future for Jerusalem, one that impacts and brings gain to the entire world. The vision is of an inclusive and shared Jerusalem in which all nations are blessed.

Today, we live with the reality of a Jerusalem tragically divided, its Palestinian residents, Christian and Muslim, living under an illegal military occupation. The state of Israel claims exclusive sovereignty over Jerusalem, a claim that can only be sustained by oppression and injustice, the denial of human rights, the disregard for international law, and the refusal of access to religious sites and freedom of expression.

As Christians today, we are challenged to speak out and act for a peace based on justice in Jerusalem and all of Palestine, to bring about this vision of an open and inclusive city for all.

Several years ago, leaders of Christian Churches in Jerusalem rejected the Zionists' exclusive claim to Jerusalem, arguing that it contradicts the biblical message of love, justice and reconciliation.¹ Affirming that Israelis and Palestinians are capable of living together with peace, justice and security, and that Palestinians are one people, both Muslim and Christian, these church leaders asserted that attempts to subvert and fragment their unity must be rebuffed. In the same way, the narrow world view of Christian Zionism and other ideologies that privilege one people at the expense of others must be rendered unacceptable. They warned that Christian Zionism and its alliances, which validate colonization, apartheid and empire-building, create risks for peace and will deprive the Palestinians of a legitimate place in their own land.

World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel 2013 serves as a reminder of the message of these church leaders. We observe the week recognizing the urgency that "God demands that justice be done." We must accept the admonition that "no enduring peace, security or reconciliation is possible without the foundation of justice. The demands of justice will not disappear. The struggle for justice must be pursued diligently and persistently but non-violently....By standing on the side of justice, we open ourselves to the work of peace – and working for peace makes us children of God."²

To assist our partners worldwide to observe the week, the following resource has been created by the international working group of World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel, comprising twelve persons from Palestine and seven other countries. Background materials, links to additional resources, and suggested acts of advocacy have been compiled for each day.

¹ "The Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism," accessed at <http://imeu.net/news/article003122.shtml>.

² Ibid.

Additionally, each day focuses attention on one particular impact of the occupation on Jerusalem and its Palestinian residents.

- Sunday 22 September: We worship and pray for Jerusalem, the city of justice and peace
- Monday 23 September: Jerusalem, an open and inclusive city for Christians, Jews, and Muslims
- Tuesday 24 September: Dismantling settlements, and engaging in just negotiations on the status of Jerusalem
- Wednesday 25 September: Residency for all citizens
- Thursday 26 September: Access to worship, health care, and employment
- Friday 27 September: The call for alternative tourism and pilgrimage to Jerusalem

There are a number of ways in which this resource might be used during the observance of World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel 2013:

- ✓ Read and meditate on each day's theological reflection, as part of one's individual Bible study or a small group gathering.
- ✓ Copy and forward each day's resource to fellow church members or other community groups.
- ✓ Include part of this resource in the congregation's Sunday or mid-week worship service, prayer vigil, or advocacy event.
- ✓ Post a link to this resource on a church home page, and forward the link to other communities of faith.

It is our hope that participants in this year's World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel will experience close and transformative encounters with the dreadful reality that punctuates Jerusalem, and indeed all of Occupied Palestine. Working together across the religious divide in Palestine and Israel, and in unity with people who seek justice across the world, regardless of religion and ethnicity, we can help bring an end to the illegal occupation of Palestine. We can. We must.

Ranjan Solomon
Consultant
Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum

John Calhoun
Convener
World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel

May 2013

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Links to Maps, News, UN Resolutions, and WCC Resources

Maps

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, occupied Palestinian territory: <http://www.ochaopt.org/generalmaps.aspx?id=96>

Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (Passia):

<http://www.passia.org/maps.htm>

Occupied Palestine blog: <http://occupiedpalestine.wordpress.com/2011/04/02/maps-of-palestine/>

News and information

Badil Resource Center: <http://www.badil.org/>

Alternative Information Center: <http://www.alternativenews.org/english/>

Middle East Monitor: <http://www.middleeastmonitor.com/>

Institute for Middle East Understanding: <http://imeu.net/>

The International Peace and Cooperation Center: <http://home.ipcc-jerusalem.org/en/ipcc/1#>

Ir-Amim: <http://eng.ir-amim.org.il/>

JNews: <http://www.jnews.org.uk/>

United Nations resolutions and related information

UN Security Council resolution 242, 22 November 1967:

<http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/7D35E1F729DF491C85256EE700686136>

UN Security Council resolution 338, 22 October 1973: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/288/65/IMG/NR028865.pdf?OpenElement>

UN Security Council resolution 1860, 8 January 2009:

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/sc9567.doc.htm>

Fourth Geneva Convention, 12 August 1949: <http://www.icrc.org/ihl/WebART/380-600056>

World Council of Churches programs

WCC home page: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en>

WCC policy on Palestine/Israel: <http://archived.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/churches-in-the-middle-east/pief/world-week/resources/wcc-policy-on-palestine-israel.html>

Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum: <http://archived.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/churches-in-the-middle-east/pief/pief-home.html>

Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre: <http://archived.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/churches-in-the-middle-east/pief/jerusalem-inter-church-centre-jic.html>

A list of additional links to church agencies and organizations, Palestinian and Israeli human rights groups, and international organizations and campaigns

<http://archived.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/churches-in-the-middle-east/pief/links.html>

Sunday 22 September 2013

“Jerusalem, the City of Justice and Peace”

On this opening day of World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel, Palestinians and many international visitors will gather near Jerusalem for a service of worship and prayer. For this special worship service, a liturgy has been prepared by a small group of Palestinian theologians and church laity. The Scripture readings, prayers, and suggested hymns represent the hope of Palestinians that today’s suffering will one day be overcome by justice and peace.

As Christians gather on this day in Palestine to worship and pray, sisters and brothers in faith around the world are invited to join them in this spirit of hope.

Below please find a link to the worship liturgy that has been prepared for today, Sunday 22 September. Congregations are welcome to use this liturgy in full, or to adapt it as required for the local context.

The worship liturgy “Jerusalem, the City of Justice and Peace” can be found on the [Resources](#) page of the World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel website, under the heading “Prayer and worship resources.”

www.worldweekforpeace.org

Monday 23 September 2013

“Jerusalem, an open and inclusive city for Christians, Jews, and Muslims”

Overview

In 1967, Israel waged a military campaign that resulted in the occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. Since then, Israel has claimed an undivided Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish state, and has taken measures to restrict access to the city by Palestinians, both Christians and Muslims.

The dispute over the status of Jerusalem is often cited as the most sensitive, central, and emotive of the conflicts shaking the Middle East region. It is one of the major obstacles in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. Palestinians in the illegally annexed city continue to suffer the daily abuse of occupation in the form of Israel’s discriminatory practices.

Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem are not citizens of Israel; they have the status of permanent resident, subject to forfeiture if they leave Jerusalem for more than seven years and can no longer prove a "connection" to the city. Children of such residents do not inherit citizenship, and non-resident spouses are forbidden to unite with their families in Jerusalem. Today, Jerusalem is a divided city whose Palestinian residents have greatly suffered due to expanding Israeli settlements, confiscation of Palestinian land, demolition of Palestinian homes, revocation of residency rights, and a great disparity in resources between Israeli West Jerusalem and Palestinian East Jerusalem.

The international community has consistently rejected Israel’s exclusive claim to Jerusalem. As early as 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolutions calling for Jerusalem to be internationalized and established as a corpus separatum, a city set apart due to its importance to the three faiths of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.³

The World Council of Churches (WCC) affirms this view: “Jerusalem must be an open, inclusive and shared city in terms of sovereignty and citizenship....The final status of Jerusalem is an international responsibility and must be agreed within the framework of international law and as part of a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement.”⁴

As the authors of the Kairos Palestine document eloquently state, “Jerusalem is the heart of our reality....Jerusalem, city of reconciliation, has become a city of discrimination and exclusion, a source of struggle rather than peace.”⁵

³ Accessed at <http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/7f0af2bd897689b785256c330061d253>

⁴ “WCC Policy on Palestine/Israel,” accessed at <http://archived.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/churches-in-the-middle-east/pief/world-week/resources/wcc-policy-on-palestine-israel.html>

⁵ “A Moment of Truth,” accessed at <http://www.kairopalestine.ps/sites/default/Documents/English.pdf>

Today we join our Palestinian sisters and brothers in their struggle for justice. We will pray, educate, and advocate with the goal of mobilizing the public, developing inter-religious partnerships, and changing government policies to effect real change—the end of the occupation of Palestine and the exclusive claim on Jerusalem by the State of Israel.

Theological Reflection

Many years ago, the Psalmist wrote of Jerusalem: “May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels” (Psalm 122:6-7). Yet there is no peace within the walls of Jerusalem today, nor in the many Arab neighborhoods surrounding the ancient citadels.

Throughout the centuries, God has spoken to the people of Jerusalem, and by God’s word, three faiths trace their roots back to this city. Today it is our prayer that Jerusalem, and all of Palestine, may be liberated from the sin of occupation. May Jerusalem become a true city of peace, justice, and hope, where adherents of three faiths – Jews, Muslims, and Christians – may freely gather for worship and prayer. May God grant us all the courage and strength to join the struggle of justice and love over evil and hatred.

Online Resources

- “Jerusalem: Universality Oppressed by Exclusivity,” a PowerPoint presentation from the Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre, available as an “education and advocacy” resource on the Resources page of the WWPPI website: www.worldweekforpeace.org
- “Jerusalem: Issues and Perspectives,” an electronic dossier filled with links to articles, reports, and statistics on Jerusalem, available at: [http://www2.wcc-coe.org/uploads.nsf/index/Jerusalem_dossier/\\$FILE/Dossier_Jerusalem.pdf](http://www2.wcc-coe.org/uploads.nsf/index/Jerusalem_dossier/$FILE/Dossier_Jerusalem.pdf)
- “Faith Under Occupation: The Plight of Palestinian Christians Living Under Occupation,” published in 2012 by EAPPI, the Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre, and the WCC, available at: <http://eappi.org/en/resources/eappi-publications.html>
- Factsheet on Jerusalem, published in 2010 by EAPPI. This and other EAPPI factsheets are available at: <http://eappi.org/en/resources/factsheets.html>
- Online resources from Kairos Palestine, available at: <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/>
- Additionally, the Palestinian and Israeli organizations listed in the introduction to this booklet offer a wealth of online resources.

Suggested Ideas for Advocacy

- Sponsor an inter-faith discourse on the theme: “Jerusalem, an open and inclusive city for Christian, Jews, and Muslims.”

- Organize a public rally to call for an end to the occupation of Palestine and Israel's exclusive claim to Jerusalem.

Tuesday 24 September 2013

“Dismantling settlements, and engaging in just negotiations on the status of Jerusalem”

Overview

Palestinians and Israelis each claim Jerusalem as their capital city. Jerusalem is central to the Palestinian economy, religion and culture. However, since the 1967 war, the government of Israel has constructed settlements in East Jerusalem in violation of international law. The settlements take the form of a “municipal layer” in the heart of the city, a “metropolitan layer” constructed in the wider Jerusalem area, and an “inner layer” of land and property expropriated from Palestinians to create settlements in Palestinian residential areas (the “Holy Basin” area).

Between September 2011 and 2012, Israel planned at least 11,096 housing units for settlements in and around Occupied East Jerusalem. These units will add 44,000 new Israeli settlers to the half a million settlers already living in Occupied Palestinian Territory. In November 2012, the Israeli government announced plans to build 3,000 new settlement units in the “E-1” area of East Jerusalem. Bypass roads, built illegally on Palestinian land for the express purpose of cutting travel time for settlers, are mostly off limits to Palestinian vehicles. Settlements and bypass roads make a viable, contiguous Palestinian state virtually impossible.

Since the beginning of 2012, Israel has destroyed 569 Palestinian buildings and structures, including wells and 178 residences. In all, 1,014 people were affected by those demolitions in Jerusalem and Area C. Because of settlement activity and evictions, several hundred Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem are at risk of forced displacement. Particularly affected are the Old City and Silwan, and 500 people in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood.⁶

This illegal annexation, settlement building and expansion jeopardize the possibility of a just and peaceful resolution on the status of Jerusalem. The legitimate residency and family reunification rights of “Jerusalemite” Palestinians are denied through administrative and bureaucratic measures. This dramatically diminishes the viability of the Palestinian Christian community in Jerusalem.

Theological Reflection

Jesus speaks of his weariness and despair for the city of Jerusalem: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your

⁶ The above mentioned statistics and overview are taken from “Jerusalem: Universality Oppressed by Exclusivity,” a PowerPoint presentation of the Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre, available as an “education and advocacy resource” on the Resources page of World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel, at www.worldweekforpeace.org.

house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of God!'" (Luke 13:34-35).

This city, sacred to three world religions, seems again to be a place of despair for many who simply seek to live in peace. Co-existence between people and religions is thwarted by the forcible removal of Palestinians from their homes and the building of Israeli settlements. Just as Jesus called on Jerusalem residents to listen and heed God's call to justice and peace, we call on the government and people of Israel to listen now. We implore them to reflect on the cruel treatment of their fellow citizens, neighbors, and families. We ask them to reflect on the basis of their fear. We ask them to offer the wideness of hospitality and compassion to all God's children. We beseech them to discover the peace of reconciliation, of harmony and co-existence in this city called holy.

Online Resources

- "An Unjust Settlement: A Tale of Illegal Israeli Settlements in the West Bank," published in September 2012 by the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), available at <http://eappi.org/materialien/eappi-publications.html>
- "Monitoring Jerusalem," a monthly online situation report, published by the Jerusalem Center for Women, available at http://www.j-c-w.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=category§ionid=1&id=15&Itemid=46
- Online resources from B'Tselem, The Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, available at <http://www.btselem.org/topic/jerusalem>

Suggested Ideas for Advocacy

Write your government and the Israeli ambassador urging the Israeli government to:

- End the continuing expansion of settlements in East Jerusalem
- Bring an end to all house demolitions as a precursor to peace
- Engage in just and fair negotiations with Palestinians regarding the status of Jerusalem

“Residency for all citizens”

Overview

Since Israel occupied East Jerusalem in 1967 and claimed an undivided Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish state, it has continued to take measures to restrict access to the city by Palestinians, both Christians and Muslims. Palestinians in the illegally-annexed city continue to suffer the daily abuse of occupation in the form of Israel’s discriminatory practices.

The Legal Status of the Palestinian Residents in East Jerusalem

“The Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem are not citizens of Israel: they have the status of permanent resident. Because of this status, they have blue identity cards and are entitled to benefits such as national insurance, health insurance and unemployment allowances; they are also obligated to pay taxes....Permanent residents live under the constant threat of losing their status if they leave the boundaries of Israel for more than seven years and can no longer prove they have a ‘connection’ to Jerusalem. Permanent residence, unlike citizenship, is transferred to the children of the residents only if certain conditions are met. Since the Knesset passed the ‘citizenship law,’ it has been illegal for Jerusalem permanent residents to bring their spouses, who do not have permanent resident status, to live with them in Jerusalem.”⁷

“Between 1948 and June of 1967, Jerusalem was divided in two: West Jerusalem, which covered an area of about 38 square kilometers, was under Israeli control, and East Jerusalem, which contained an area of some 6 square kilometers, was ruled by Jordan. In June 1967, following the 1967 War, Israel annexed some 70 square kilometers to the municipal boundaries of West Jerusalem, and imposed Israeli law there. These annexed territories included not only the part of Jerusalem that had been under Jordanian rule, but also an additional 64 square kilometers, most of which had belonged to 28 villages in the West Bank, and part of which belonged to the municipalities of Bethlehem and Beit Jala. Following their annexation, the area of West Jerusalem tripled, and Jerusalem became the largest city in Israel....Palestinians hold the status of ‘permanent resident’ of the State of Israel. This is the same status granted to foreign citizens who have freely chosen to come to Israel and want to live there. Israel treats Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem as immigrants who live in their homes at the beneficence of the authorities and not by right. The authorities maintain this policy although these Palestinians were born in Jerusalem, lived in the city, and have no other home. Treating these Palestinians as foreigners who entered Israel is astonishing, since it was Israel that entered East Jerusalem in 1967.”⁸

⁷<http://eng.ir-amim.org.il/?CategoryID=242>

⁸http://www.btselem.org/jerusalem/legal_status

Theological Reflection: Prayers of the People

Today our tears are mixed with yours weeping for the cities in the world.

We have not loved the things that make for peace.

We weep for the holy cities and especially for Jerusalem:

Where brothers and sisters kill each other,

Where hatred feeds and nourishes anger, where animosity blinds mercy, where religions divide, when children learn to hate and the elderly live in old grudges.

We weep for the oppressed cities and in particular for Jerusalem:

Where rigid laws imprison freedom,

Where thinking is confined and conscience is abated,

Where those who question are branded as traitors,

Where creativity and righteousness are beaten,

Where pluralism is chained.

We weep for our cities and especially for Jerusalem. And we weep for ourselves, for we have not learnt the things that make for peace. O Lord, transform the tears into love and love into action.

O Lord, transform action into justice and teach us the road to peace.

We ask all this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.⁹

Online Resources

- "Jerusalem: Issues and Perspectives," an electronic dossier filled with links to articles, reports, and statistics on Jerusalem, available at: [http://www2.wcc-coe.org/uploads.nsf/index/Jerusalem_dossier/\\$FILE/Dossier_Jerusalem.pdf](http://www2.wcc-coe.org/uploads.nsf/index/Jerusalem_dossier/$FILE/Dossier_Jerusalem.pdf)
- Two Factsheets on Jerusalem: "The right to reside" (2010), and "Identity under Attack" (2011), published by EAPPI. These and other EAPPI factsheets are available at: <http://eappi.org/en/resources/factsheets.html>.
- A presentation on the crisis of residency rights for Palestinian Christians, available at: http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/p3/pief/files/issues/Jerusalem_residency_rights.pdf
- "Jerusalem, Universality Oppressed by Exclusivity," a PowerPoint presentation including issues related to residency, available at: <http://archived.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/churches-in-the-middle-east/pief/world-week/resources.html>

⁹ From "Jerusalem: The City of Justice and Peace," a worship liturgy prepared by Palestinian theologians and laity for World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel 2013, available at www.worldweekforpeace.org.

- Online resources from Kairos Palestine, available at: <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/>
- "Nowhere Left to Go - The Jahalin Bedouin":
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOxwVIGn0R4>
- BBC Panorama "A Walk in the Park":
http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xdreep_panorama-bbc-a-walk-in-the-park-par_shortfilms#.UTcyZ-ZkA0s
- Additionally, the Palestinian and Israeli organizations listed in the introduction to this booklet offer a wealth of online resources.

Suggested Ideas for Advocacy

- Stage an action in your place of worship where half the congregation is denied the chance to stay and join in, then reflect on how it felt and what issues need to be tackled.
- Hold a seminar and show the presentations on Jerusalem, agreeing on joint action to be taken.

Thursday 26 September 2013

“Access to worship, health care and employment”

Overview

"I used to belong to the Anglican Church in Jerusalem and was a volunteer there. I arranged the flowers and was active with the other women. Now I cannot go to Jerusalem; the Wall separates me from my church, from my life. All my life was in Jerusalem! I was there daily: I worked there at a school as a volunteer and all my friends live there. I rented a flat but I was not allowed to stay because I do not have a Jerusalem ID card. We are imprisoned here in Bethlehem. All my relationships with Jerusalem are dead. I am a dying woman." (Testimony offered by a Palestinian living in Bethlehem.)

Freedom of movement is guaranteed by The Universal Declaration of Human Rights; article 13 of the Declaration states that: "Everyone has the right of freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and return to his country."¹⁰

Still, as the story above illustrates, the Separation Barrier, check points, and Israeli permit system and the resulting restrictions of movement and access of Palestinians to the city of Jerusalem are key features of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today. These restrictions have a significant impact on Palestinians' access to worship, health care and employment.

Access to Worship

The World Council of Churches (WCC) affirms the view that the rights of Jerusalem's communities – Muslim, Jewish and Christian, Palestinian and Israeli – are guaranteed, including access to Holy Places and freedom of worship.¹¹ Restriction of access to the Holy Sites inside the Green Line constitutes a denial of the basic religious freedom to worship for Muslims and Christians alike.

The overwhelming majority of Palestinians are Sunni Muslims. The total number of Christians is estimated at about 2% of the Palestinian population.¹² Christians are concentrated primarily in the areas of Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Bethlehem, but smaller communities exist elsewhere, including in Gaza.

¹⁰ "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights," accessed at <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#a13>

¹¹ "WCC Policy on Palestine/Israel," accessed at <http://archived.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/churches-in-the-middle-east/pief/world-week/resources/wcc-policy-on-palestine-israel.html>

¹² According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2012, the Palestinian population is 4,420,549, comprising inhabitants in the West Bank including East Jerusalem and Gaza.

Since 1993, the security measures taken by Israel have restricted millions of Muslim and Christian worshippers from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from visiting their Holy Sites in Jerusalem. Strict closures imposed by the Israeli government as well as the Separation Barrier negatively affected Christians' and Muslims' ability to worship at Holy Sites.

Worshippers wishing to access Holy Places in Jerusalem are often unable to obtain permits. In some cases, only half of the family members are issued permits. Even if permits are granted, there are frequently days when Jerusalem is closed even to permit holders. This has caused the number of worshippers who can access the Holy Places to decline dramatically. During Ramadan, many Muslims cannot visit the Al-Aqsa Mosque for Friday prayers. During the Easter and Christmas holidays, only limited permits to enter Jerusalem are issued to Palestinian Christians residing in Bethlehem. For example, in April 2011, 15,000 Palestinian Christians applied for a permit to enter occupied East Jerusalem to worship at Old City Holy Sites for Easter, but Israel only granted approximately 2,500 of them.¹³

Access to Health Care and Employment

The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs states that: "Israeli-imposed movement and access restrictions also impede the access of Palestinians from the rest of the West Bank and from the Gaza Strip to services in East Jerusalem, including health facilities which provide specialized and emergency health services unavailable in elsewhere in the oPt. Physical and bureaucratic obstacles impact access of medical staff to hospitals and clinics and access of students to schools."¹⁴

Israel allows a limited number of workers from Palestine to work in Israel; it also enables, with severe restrictions, some Palestinians to enter Israel for necessary medical treatment, trade, and other needs. All of these activities require permits, which are difficult and expensive to obtain. Palestinians who are able to get permits can only use four of the sixteen checkpoints to Jerusalem along the Barrier, according to UN OCHA.

At the check points, which constitute some of the most severe restrictions on movement for Palestinians, private or military security personnel check every person who crosses, frequently resulting in lengthy delays and often hours in line waiting for workers who cross daily into Jerusalem. This system of restrictions obstructs Palestinian access to the East Jerusalem work places, and inhibits patients from traveling by ambulance to health facilities which provide specialized and emergency services.

Theological Reflection

¹³ "Faith under Occupation: The plight of indigenous Christians in the Holy Land," accessed at:

<http://eappi.org/en/resources/eappi-publications.html>

¹⁴ "East Jerusalem: Key Humanitarian Concerns – Update December 2012," accessed at:

http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_Jerusalem_FactSheet_December_2012_english.pdf

The Psalmist declares, "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world and all its inhabitants" (Psalm 24:1). With this we affirm that the earth does not belong to anyone. Not to the occupying state, the military, or any business corporation. The land is a gift from God and everyone, irrespective of religion, nationality, race, or status, must enjoy equal sharing in a community of solidarity and life.

What is happening in Jerusalem is an abuse of power and monopoly of land by Israel, restricting access to the city by Palestinians and denying their opportunity to worship, work, and receive health care. May Jerusalem, as the Kairos Document reminds us, be the place where God reconciles with humanity and where the creatures of God reconcile with each other—Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike. Let us reject all forms of domination and injustice. In solidarity with Palestinians and Israelis, let us struggle for genuine freedom and fullness of life for all.

Online Resources

- Barrier update, UN OCHA, July 2011: http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_barrier_update_july_2011_english.pdf
- West Bank Movement Access Update, UN OCHA, September 2012: http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_movement_and_access_report_september_2012_english.pdf
- "Faith Under Occupation: The Plight of Palestinian Christians Living Under Occupation," published in 2012 by EAPPI, the Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre, and the WCC, available at: <http://eappi.org/en/resources/eappi-publications.html>
- the Humanitarian Impact of the West Bank Barrier on Palestinian Communities: http://unispal.un.org/pdfs/BR_Update30July2007.pdf
- Body scanners, health risk and politics: <http://ihrrblog.org/2011/12/12/body-scanners-health-risk-and-politics/>
- A mock permit to enter Bethlehem: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/106335472/Mock-Permit-Bethlehem>

Suggested Ideas for Advocacy

- Set up a mock check point at a worship service, congregational gathering, or other meeting. Issue mock permits to participants, illustrating the restrictions placed on Palestinians. Force participants to cross through the check points, as Palestinians are compelled to do daily.
- Encourage participants in this exercise to then write their local elected officials, asking them to recognize the illegality of the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Friday 27 September 2013

“Come and See: The call for alternative tourism and pilgrimage to Jerusalem”

Overview

September 27th marks the United Nation’s World Tourism Day, a day to raise awareness on the role of tourism within the international community and to demonstrate how it affects social, cultural, political and economic values worldwide. There are few greater known destinations for tourists and pilgrims from many religious traditions than the Holy City of Jerusalem, with approximately 3.5 million tourists and pilgrims visiting each year. Yet there is little discussion of how tourism and pilgrimages to Jerusalem truly affect the social, cultural, political, and economic situation on the ground, and the prospects of peace and justice for the peoples of Palestine Israel.

Like the rest of the Palestinian economy, tourism faces particular difficulties caused by the occupation. Israel controls all entrances into Palestine and most tourist destinations in Jerusalem, thus favoring its own tourist industry. In addition, tourism to Jerusalem still relies mainly on Israeli guides and guidebooks, leaving the inevitable risk of one-sided narratives of the city or a superficial or biased picture of the political situation on the ground. This can also create the common assumption that Jerusalem is merely a part of Israel itself, rather than a home for both Israeli and Palestinian populations.

Many pilgrims visit the city with a hope of finding spiritual fulfillment or a nearness to God. They do this by visiting the old stones of the city’s rich and long history. Yet, this all too often neglects the important realities of the “living stones” of the city. Christian pilgrimage must therefore comfort the afflicted, and afflict the comfortable; visitors should take sufficient time to listen, reflect, and pray with the local peoples of the land. It is for this reason that the Palestinian Christian community issued a cry to churches around the world in the Kairos Palestine Document: “In order to understand our reality, we say to the Churches: Come and see. We will fulfill our role to make known to you the truth of our reality, receiving you as pilgrims coming to us to pray, carrying a message of peace, love and reconciliation. You will know the facts and the people of this land, Palestinians and Israelis alike.”¹⁵

Theological Reflection¹⁶

The Bible inspires us to see our entire lives as a pilgrimage and to live like a pilgrim every day. The Bible teaches of God’s determination to bring his creation back to a new relation with the divine, to “...a better country, that is, a heavenly one” (Hebrews 11:16). In Hebrews 13 we also

¹⁵ Page 16, Paragraph 6.2

¹⁶ Theological reflection is taken from [“Come and See: A Call from Palestinian Christians.”](#)

learn about "...brotherly love and hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

What should be even more important to Christians than the Holy Sites are the communion of living saints at the pilgrimage places. Journeying to a place of divine blessing, presence, and power should be done in the context of human living. Because we are all members of Christ's body, we cannot be witnesses to other Christians' lives without caring about their expressions of faith, their traditions, their joys and struggles.

"He has told you, o mortal, what is good and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8).

Online Resources

- "Come and See: Guidelines for Christians Contemplating a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land," <http://www.atg.ps/resources/file/pages/Guidelines.pdf>
- "Code of Conduct for Tourism in the Holy Land," http://www.atg.ps/index.php?page=code_english
- Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre: <http://archived.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/churches-in-the-middle-east/pief/jerusalem-inter-church-centre-jic.html>
- Palestine Initiative for Responsible Tourism (PIRT) "Code of Conduct," <http://www.pirt.ps/index.php?lang=en&page=123961689323>

Suggested Ideas for Advocacy

- Coordinate a theological seminar / Bible study on "Pilgrimage for Transformation."
- Contact your local travel agency to ensure that trips to Jerusalem are accurately described as both to Israel and Palestine.
- Encourage your congregation or social circles to listen to the call of local Christians to "Come and See," and plan a trip to the Holy Land.

Join us on a pilgrimage during World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel, September 2013!

In the appendix to this resource that follows, please find an itinerary created by the Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre (JIC) for the World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel.

Appendix

Come and See – WWPPI Holy Land Tour 2013

September 21 – Saturday – Departure/Arrival day

September 22 – Sunday – Arrival in the Holy Land

Welcoming and briefing

PM: Ecumenical Service with Churches and local community of Palestinian Christians

Dinner with Church leaders of Jerusalem

Overnight in Jerusalem



September 23 – Monday – Introduction – Abrahamic descendants' journey to Jerusalem

This morning we drive up on the Mt. of Olives for a spectacular panoramic view of the Old City of Jerusalem. We then visit The Church of Paternoster, The Chapel of Ascension and walk the "Palm Sunday Road" to The Dominus Flevit, where our Lord wept over Jerusalem. We continue to The Garden of Gethsemane and The Church of All Nations.

Drive south to the city of Al-Khalil/Hebron, the City of our Patriarch fathers and today a striking example of segregation between the grandchildren. Walk with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program (of the World Council of Churches) through the infamous vacated Shuhada Street to the tombs of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca and Jacob and Leah in the Al Ibrahim Mosque.

Evening Reflection on the Word of Faith from Kairos Palestine by Patriarch Emeritus Michel Sabbah

September 24 – Tuesday – Universality of Jerusalem

We start sightseeing on foot in the Old City of Jerusalem, to The Wailing Wall, and then enter The Haram-al-Sharif, to view The Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa Mosque, if permitted.

In the afternoon, we first enter the Old City of Jerusalem on foot through St. Stephen's Gate, and visit The Church of St. Anne, The Pool of Bethesda, The Chapel of Flagellation, The Lithostrotos and The Ecce Homo. We follow Via Dolorosa (The Way of the Cross) past narrow alleys and bazaars to The Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and we will visit Golgotha and The Tomb of Jesus.

Evening panel with local Christian and Muslim and Jewish speakers, followed by dialogue under the motto: "Living together the Word of Faith":
Interfaith panel of speakers, on the universality of Jerusalem with Nora Carmi and Dr. Nazmi Jubeh, and a Rabbi.

Dinner and overnight stay in Jerusalem.

September 25 – Wednesday – The Birth of the Word – Access between Jerusalem and Bethlehem

We travel through the Separation wall and military check points to Bethlehem. Visit The Basilica of the Nativity, and The Grotto of Jesus' Birth. Tour the Manger, the Grotto of St. Jerome, the Church of St. Catherine and the Shepherds' Fields.
After lunch, we will visit the YMCA Beit Sahour to learn about the Olive Planting project of the Joint Advocacy program by Nidal Abu Zuluf from YMCA.
PM: the Kairos Palestine Document and the current situation in The Holy Land – presented by Rifaat Kassis and Nora Carmi, Kairos Palestine Coordinators: Reflection on the Words of Hope and Love by Kairos Palestine.

Dinner and overnight stay in Beit Lehem/Bethlehem

September 26 – Thursday – Settlements on confiscated land

Way of the Cross on Settlements with Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center

Other options:

PM: Tent of Nations (Christian family isolated and surrounded by settlements)
Or, Settlement tour around Occupied East Jerusalem with Israeli guide from B'Tselem

September 27 – Friday – Jericho and Displacement (refuge and refugees)

After breakfast, pass by the Samaritan Inn and drive below sea level to the city of Jericho, visit Tel Al Sultan and the Mount of Temptation by cable car. A trip to the Dead Sea for a short stop, then back to Jerusalem.
Optional upon early return if possible to join demonstration:
1- At Sheikh Jarrah, with displaced people from East Jerusalem homes
2- At Cremisan Convent Fields, which is to be divided by the wall

September 28 – Saturday – Land of miracles and multiplication

Trip north takes us to Nazareth and Sea Of Galilee

PM: back to Bethlehem

September 29 – Sunday – Advocate Peace and Justice when back home

Leaving Jerusalem

Package Includes

- Accommodation in double room occupancy at
 - 3 nights Capitol Hotel in Jerusalem
 - 4 nights Bethlehem Star Hotel in Bethlehem
- All transportation in an air-conditioned and heated bus
- Well experienced licensed tour guide and escorts
- Speakers and thematic tours with different organizations as indicated in the itinerary
- All entrance fees to places visited
- Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily

COST USD 990

Per person in Double room occupancy

For single room supplement it is additional: USD 280

Contact: Yusef Daher at the Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre for booking info:
00972 505 545 179, yusef66jrs@yahoo.com