

Cornerstone

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"Father, help us to contemplate you, to let ourselves be loved by you.

Only then we will experience the grace which brings liberation. And Lord, as you did, so let us share our table with the despised of this world, the refugees, the sick, the lame, and the helpless. Give us a thirst for justice, a heart for the oppressed and a desire to be like you to all people.

Precious Lord, extend our vision, open our hearts, humble our hardened souls."

Amen.[TOP](#)

"If Israel Wants To Live Securely It Must Do Justice"

by Naim Ateek

Since the beginning of the Oslo peace process and the famous handshake between Rabin and Arafat seven years ago, the Palestinian and Israeli leadership have come to know each other well. The relationship between the two, as an Arabic saying goes, has been like the tide of the sea with its rise and fall. Both sides have been testing each other's endurance and tenacity. To their credit, and in spite of difficult and excruciating negotiations, they have managed, with the help of the American Government, not to break off relations, though they were close to the breaking point a number of times. The basic difficulty is clear. For its part, Israel wants to retain the maximum land area of the West Bank including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip while the Palestinians insist on the return of all those occupied areas.

It is becoming clear to many people that sooner or later all the Arab states around Israel will regain their territory which Israel captured in, or since, 1967. In accordance with UN resolutions, Egypt regained all that it lost to Israel. So did Jordan in 1994. Israel has now left southern Lebanon agreeable with UN resolution 425. The same will inevitably happen with the Golan Heights. The Syrians will, sooner or later, get back their land. Moreover, normalization of relations between Israel and most of the Arab states in the region will eventually become a reality. But what of Palestine? Palestine is and will be the only great loser. It was and continues to be the crux of the whole conflict. From a Palestinian perspective, Palestine has been the victim and the prize of Zionism.

The Zionist dream was to build a Jewish state on a much larger area of the Middle East than they were able to conquer in 1948. The 1967 war and the 1982 invasion of southern Lebanon brought Israel closer to that dream. Some Israeli Jewish extremists still live in the dream of a Greater Israel based on their understanding of the Bible, or their Zionist ideology. Some have even maintained that Israel must not define its final borders but leave it for successive generations to determine the new frontiers.

Pragmatically speaking, however, Israel had to accept what seemed realistic, namely, that it was able to build its state only on Palestinian territory. In 1948, it established its state on 77% of Palestine although it was allotted only 57% according to the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan. A good number of nations, especially in the West, supported Israel and gave it both legal and moral legitimacy. This same international legitimacy, however, was not given to Israel in 1967 when it conquered and occupied the rest of Palestine, i.e. the Gaza Strip and the West Bank including East Jerusalem. In other words, UN resolutions 242 and 338 do not grant Israel either a legal or a moral basis for territorial expansion. The acquisition of territory by force contravenes international law. It is important therefore, to emphasize that in spite of all the support Israel has been receiving from the United States, its closest ally, the international community, has not sanctioned its territorial expansion. Has Israel been under the illusion that through direct negotiations with the Palestinians it can force them to accede more territory?

Due to the Oslo peace process, both sides - the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government - have been trapped. Apparently, the Palestinians cannot achieve a just peace under Oslo that will give them a sovereign state, which is contiguous over

the whole of the occupied territories. Similarly, by building settlements and insisting on keeping them under its control, Israel is promoting an apartheid-like situation for the Palestinians.

No matter how generous Israel wants to be, the perception and the reality will be the same – an Israeli form of apartheid. As the international community is working hard to erase every form of racial and ethnic prejudice in the world, Israel is working hard to legalize it. This smacks the face of justice and international legitimacy and makes a sham of any talk of Jewish ethics and morality in Israel. I am sure that many non-Israeli Jews do not realize that the picture which is emerging in the West Bank resembles more closely apartheid than self-determination and independence. Such a solution is a recipe for violence and bloodshed. It did not work in South Africa and will not work in Palestine.

In order for peace and security to be achieved, Israel needs a vision of peace based on international legitimacy. Israel must withdraw from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip according to UN resolutions just as it has withdrawn from southern Lebanon. Israel cannot be selective in its choice of international law. It needs to be content in its sovereignty over 77% of Palestine, which it conquered in 1948 and to live within those pre-1967 boundaries. The magic words today must be equal partnership in peacemaking, equal neighbors with the same basic rights, and equal humanity and dignity. A vision of a shared Jerusalem for two sovereign states along side each other with territorial integrity and economic inter-dependence is a recipe for peace. An apartheid state is a recipe for perpetual turmoil and violence. Those of us who work for justice out of a strong faith in God believe that peace based on justice is the only way that will guarantee a life of security and reconciliation for both Israelis and Palestinians.

The Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek is president of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, Jerusalem. A version of this article was written for the Boston Globe.

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[TOP](#)

ONE MAN

ONE MAN WHAT IS RIGHT?
BENEVOLENCE, A SERIOUS CALLING
SYMPATHETIC HARBINGER OF THE GIFT OF HEALING
GRANDFATHER, FATHER, DOCTOR, BROTHER

ONE MAN WHAT IS MORAL?
SUDDENLY, "DIE OR NEVER RETURN"
FAMILY FOREVER UPROOTED
EXILE, REFUGE, COURAGE, DISPOSSESSION

ONE MAN WHAT IS JUST?
IMPERFECT SANCTUARY, LONGING FOR RETURN
MEMORIES FADE STRUGGLE
OR THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE?
STRUGGLE, FORGET... STRUGGLE IT SHALL BE

ONE MAN WHAT IS FAIR?
THE PAST HAUNTING LIKE A CURIOUS CURSE
TRAIN BLACK AND WHITE CIRCLING TO OBLIVION
JOY INTERRUPTED CHILDHOOD ROBBED

ONE MAN WHAT IS WHOLE?
THE DAUGHTER BRAVE AS BULLETS FLY BY
MOTHER COURAGEOUS FLIRTING WITH DEATH
GUT, NERVE, SPIRIT, FAITH

ONE MAN WHAT IS DUE?
EXILE FROM THE NOT SO PROMISED LAND
"I AM DISPOSSESSED, WON'T YOU RECOGNIZE IT?"
ONE MAN, ONE PEOPLE, ALL PEOPLE.

ALLYN AND HOLLY DYHNES

From Allyn Dhyes, "My grandfather was exiled from Palestine in 1948. This is part of my family's story." Allyn was a volunteer at Sabeel for nine months during 1999-2000. He and his wife Holly were teachers at the Friend's School in Ramallah. They have since returned to the United States. We give them our best wishes, thanks and love. God goes with you.

JUSTICE

THE JERUSALEM SABELL DOCUMENT PRINCIPLES FOR A JUST PEACE IN PALESTINE-ISRAEL

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Photo: Rula Halawani.

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Holy Land Apartheid

by Sam Jones

"There is no sovereignty, then. No autonomy. No democracy. No self-government. Nothing but a crude, empty fraud, to bluff the people at home and abroad, and to serve as a pretext for heaping yet more hardships and injustices upon the African people." (Nelson Mandela, May 1959)

1993 witnessed the beginning of the end of apartheid in South Africa, vindicating names like Mandela, Tutu, Biko, and the millions of others who fought tirelessly in that struggle. Yet the same year saw a new beginning, a new life for an apartheid regime in Palestine, hailed and supported as a peace process - the Oslo Accords. Still reeling from the effects of that "historic handshake on the White House Lawn," the Palestinian people now have a new peace memorandum, appropriately named after a river, since it seeks to drown any remaining hopes of self-determination or sovereignty. As the terms and implementation of the Wye River Memorandum continue to stagnate under Israeli defiance (scheduled redeployment, "safe passage," freezes on settlement expansion) Palestinian cities and villages continue to be enclosed, becoming a series of noncontiguous "bantustans." The term bantustan refers to areas, which were given to people of color in South Africa by the ruling Afrikaner minority, in order to provide the indigenous population with "autonomous" areas of self-rule. However, both local South African black and Indian populations as well as the international community quickly rejected the proposal as an obvious attempt to institutionalize apartheid rule, allowing South African whites to retain economic, resource, and political domination, while dispossessing the local communities to barren, uninhabitable wastelands. Facts on the ground in Palestine and Israel suggest a disturbing similarity to this policy as Israel continues to enclose the indigenous Palestinian population through a matrix of settlements and bypass roads, which will ensure Palestinian dependency upon Israel in terms of economy, resource allocation, and mobility. The notion that a Palestinian state comprised of such cantons can hope to enjoy even a semblance of sovereignty is quite simply absurd.

In order to support the critical opinion that apartheid exists and is growing in Palestine, this report will illustrate the apparent parallels between South African apartheid rule and Israeli apartheid rule in terms of enclosure, abusive state practices, and in their governing ideologies. In both circumstances an exclusivist ideology based in nationalism and theology, regarding control of the land, led to the creation of institutions and policies, which sought to dispossess indigenous people from their native home. Subsequently, it was through these "manifest destinies" that a systematic ghettoization could "justifiably" be legalized over those natives who remained. Further, recognizing the success of Christian and Muslim communities in South Africa, regarding international awareness building and anti-apartheid mobilization, this report will offer similar strategies for people of faith in Palestine and Israel.

Of course, comparisons are imperfect analytical tools especially when considering such markedly different historical and cultural backgrounds as in South Africa and Israel. Nevertheless, South African and Israeli rule do offer striking similarities in terms of the foundations and institutions of apartheid; parallels, which are exacerbated by a historic economic and military collaboration between the two countries. Also, in drawing these comparisons, it is the hope of many Palestinians

struggling against oppressive structures that the victory achieved in South Africa will one day be won in Palestine, despite the failings of the ongoing "peace process."

Building a Bantustan

The apartheid regime in South Africa (under the National Party from 1948-1993) first categorized (according to arbitrary standards) and then transferred the indigenous black populations into specified territories (called "bantustans") under the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951. Subsequently, in 1956, the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act classified each specific ethnic group as national units, who would develop their respective homelands apart from the rest of South Africa. Once these "homelands" received their independence, Transkei in October 1976, Bophuthatswana in December 1977, Venda in September 1979, and Ciskei in December 1981, these residents lost their South African citizenship. In total the bantustan territories (10 "homelands" including the four previously noted "independent" territories) amounted to just 13 percent of the whole of South Africa. Thus, white South Africans, while only representing 16 percent of the total population maintained control over 87 percent of the richest, most arable land. Between 1960 and 1984, the South African Government forcibly relocated some 3.5 million blacks from "white areas" to these barren wastelands, known euphemistically as areas of "self-rule" (Cainkar, 1985).

Although the Oslo Accords, signed by President Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in March 1993, stipulate that the West Bank and Gaza Strip are to be viewed as contiguous territory, facts on the ground suggest that Israel is actively pursuing a policy of division. This strategy is being manifested primarily through the illegal expansion of settlements, which seeks: 1) to ensure continued Israeli territorial domination through population and housing development, and 2) the segregation of Israelis and Palestinians through a complex series of bypass roads. While the apartheid regime was not labeled as such by the State of Israel, governing Israeli policy is creating a bantustan system for Palestinian inhabitants, who continue to be quarantined in isolated cantons, continually encircled by Israeli settlements and bypass roads. The population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is a combination of indigenous Palestinian inhabitants and Palestinian refugees (1.4 million) from the 1948 war, in which Israel forcibly expelled residents from their homes in what is now the State of Israel. This territory, constituting 23 percent of the total land of historic Palestine, comprises what Palestinians envision as their future state. However, will this be a sovereign state (like that of Israel) or more accurately, a fragmented chain of bantu homelands?

Since 1967, Israeli settlers have been actively encouraged and funded by consecutive governments (Likud and Labor) to pursue land aggrandizement and housing construction in what is considered by international law, occupied territory. According to [LAW](#) - The Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment (April 2000), "...over the past twelve months, the Israeli occupying forces have confiscated 40,178 dunums (1 dunum = 1/4 acre) of Palestinian land. 19,691 of these dunums were used for settlement expansion and the establishment of new settlements; 3,830 dunums were confiscated by the Israeli Civil Administration and 16,657 were confiscated to build new settler bypass roads." Although the Fourth Geneva Convention plainly states, "The occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into territories it occupies," the State of Israel, through economic enticement and nationalistic appeals, has encouraged settlement expansion on Palestinian land. Despite

international perception the Barak administration is not halting settlement construction. According to Peace Now, "During its first five months in office, the Barak Administration issued tenders for building 3,200 settlement housing units, exceeding the annual rate under the Netanyahu government." Although Barak issued a preliminary freeze on these construction plans in December, he violated this pact by authorizing the construction of 174 units in the settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim in April. These colonies and the bypass roads connecting them (in reference to settlers "bypassing" Palestinian populations) play a pivotal role in first dissecting and eventually surrounding Palestinian cities and villages.

Based on current settlement expansion plans, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Hebron, the Gaza Strip, other Palestinian population centers and villages will be cut off from one another, becoming Palestinian versions of the South African bantustans. For example, [ARIJ](#) - Applied Research Institute Jerusalem points out that, "...the Har Homa (Jabal Abu Ghneim) settlement would draw the northern boundary of the Bethlehem area, the Gush Etzion bloc of settlements limits Bethlehem's southern expanse. From the west, Bethlehem is surrounded by Bitar Ilite settlement as well as two by-pass roads, from the East by Taqoa settlement and a third by-pass road. The building of Har Homa and the fenced military by-pass road which will connect it with the neighboring Gilo settlement will deprive Bethlehem of the only land left for its future development."

Once enclosed, these bantustans do not allow for the natural growth of Palestinian communities, as Palestinians are not allowed to build within 500m of the roads or settlements. As this policy eliminates Palestinian territorial contiguity, enclaves of "self rule" must continue to rely on Israel for their respective economies, water (and other resource allocation), and their freedom of movement, as the State controls the entirety of the surrounding area.

Creating and Maintaining Dependency: Economic Dependency

As a result of bantustans occupying dry, infertile land, blacks within the bantu "homelands" were dependent upon neighboring white communities for employment in menial labor industries. Due to the lack of agricultural opportunity and unemployment within the bantustans, black laborers were forced to migrate to "squatter" camps located near white neighborhoods, where they could work in mines and homes, or on farms. However, the penetration of apartheid into the labor market resulted in disparate pay between black and white workers. Louise Cainkar notes that, "black workers are paid less than one-third of what whites are paid for doing the same job. Over 60 percent of urban black families earn less than the white government says is necessary to survive." The flow of cheap, black labor was ensured through de-development policies aimed at eliminating employment growth or workers' rights within the bantustan economies. For example, independent black trade unions were illegalized in 1978 (with demonstrations often suppressed through force), resulting in a lack of protective labor laws concerning equal pay, working conditions, etc.

Similarly, in Palestine inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip are dependent on the surrounding Israeli economy in terms of labor force and trade-generated income. While this reliance is due in part to limited opportunities for economic growth resulting from enclosure, it is also the consequence of purposeful Israeli policies designed to de-develop economies within the Occupied Territories (West Bank/Gaza Strip). According to [B'Tselem](#) - The Israeli Information Center for

Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, "The basic components of this [Israeli economic] policy were: restriction on permits for industrial projects, creation of a 'captive market' for Israeli commodities through various trade barriers, and transforming the Palestinian labor into a cheap migrant workforce for the Israeli industrial and service sectors."

However, Israeli policy towards the West Bank and Gaza Strip fluctuates between the monopolization of Palestinian trade commerce/labor force and the restriction of both components through military closure. On one hand, Palestinian day laborers are forced to work within the State of Israel, primarily in an underpaid, construction capacity (53.7 percent in 1999). Forced migration of workers occurs as a direct result of a de-developed industrial sector, as Israel continues to restrict the transfer of industrial supplies and Palestinian products into Israel and between the West Bank/Gaza Strip. Yet on the other hand, Israel imposes general closures at which time Palestinian laborers are prevented from reaching their jobs within Israel, during which time, "unemployment in the WBG (West Bank/Gaza Strip) soars to 50-70%" (PASSIA, 2000).

With regards to trade-generated income, Palestinian companies are dependent upon the surrounding State of Israel, due to territorial control through borders, airspace, and seaports. As [PASSIA](#) notes, "The Palestinian export sector still suffers from... a weak export capacity due to an underdeveloped industrial base; the restriction on the use of the airport and the lack of a seaport; and the Israeli closure and permits policy, which continues to contradict the 1994 Paris Protocol on Economic Relations." Although the Gaza Strip, which borders the Mediterranean Sea (with seaport potential) and possessing an airport, is supposed to (in part) comprise a future Palestinian State, the State of Israel retains final authority in granting goods transfer. Consequently, Palestinian industries exported 94.2 percent of their goods to Israel, 5 percent to Arab countries, and 0.8 percent to the EU and other countries during the past year (PASSIA, 2000). Thus, the Palestinian population within the Bantustans (West Bank and Gaza Strip) is almost completely dependent upon Israel, which dictates the transfer of goods or labor at its discretion through its surrounding border control.

Resource Dependency

Due to the relocation of blacks to 13 percent of the most uninhabitable lands in South Africa, most of the indigenous population who formerly lived as farmers was forced to purchase necessary foodstuffs (which cheap, black labor raised) from white businesses. Further, due to limited water resources and rampant poverty in the Bantustans (results of intentional territorial allotment for the black "homelands" and economic dependence), inhabitants were unable to research and implement adequate water supply initiatives. Consequently, drinking supplies, adequate sewage systems, and irrigation for crops in these barren areas were almost nonexistent. Bantustan officials, appointed by the white government to administer these areas, held only a supervisory role, unable to initiate programs for sustainable water development.

As the State of Israel continues to forcibly control water supplies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, indigenous Palestinians are allowed only a bare minimum of water resources for their daily lives. In comparative terms Israel utilizes over 85 percent of available water (220 liters per capita per day), while Palestinians are allocated a mere 15 percent (39-50 liters per capita per day) (Miftah, The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy). Further, although the

Palestinian Authority fully controls 18.2% of the West Bank and 60% of the Gaza Strip, they are prohibited from developing their own supplies despite the fact most of the aquifers lie within these "autonomous" areas. According to [Miftah](#), "It [Palestinian Authority] does not have the power to dig new wells or to utilize the existing aquifers, has no control over the Israeli water system that passes through its territories, and is not authorized to develop additional water sources."

Even though the Palestinian economy is driven by agricultural-generated income farmers rarely have sufficient water to tend their crops. ARIJ notes that, only three [of 23 licensed wells since 1967] were authorized for agricultural use by the Israeli military. In terms of domestic consumption, water supplies for families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are limited through insufficient monthly allocations and exorbitant rates, administered by the Israeli water company Mekorot. According to ARIJ, "Whereas settlers pay \$0.40 for domestic consumption and a highly subsidized rate of \$0.16 for agricultural use, Palestinians pay a standard rate of \$1.20 for their piped water." Thus, settlers are given preferential treatment through disparate rates and allotments, water that is often used for swimming pools and manicured lawns within illegal Israeli settlements.

Mobility Dependency

The South African apartheid government dictated black mobility through strict controls on movement and residence outside the bantustan areas. Employing a program of forcible relocation, black families were transferred into specific bantu "homelands" based on their ethnic classification. According to sociologist Louise Cainkar, "If communities resist a government-planned removal, even though they legally own the land on which they live, they are taken from their home-often at gunpoint-and their homes, churches and schools are bulldozed to the ground by the government. Entire families are taken to the designated bantustan and dumped there on small plots of land with only a tin toilet to mark their address." Once transferred to the bantustan, blacks must obtain permission to travel from the government, which is almost categorically denied unless the applicant is supplying cheap labor to white communities. The South African government monitored black movement through a computer network, which required any black person over the age of 16 to carry a "passbook" (Cainkar, 1985). [The use of passbooks by the South African and Israeli governments will be discussed in a future report concerning abusive state practices.] Therefore, black South Africans were completely dependent upon the governing white minority for permission to move within their native country.

As in South African bantustans, the surrounding authority dictates indigenous Palestinians' travel. Due to a lack of territorial contiguity resulting from encircling settlements and bypass roads, Palestinians are subjected to arbitrary closures, restricting their freedom of movement among allegedly "autonomous" areas. As the State of Israel maintains military control between Palestinian zones of self-rule, it is able to declare varying degrees of closure through "security" checkpoints, limiting or eliminating access to jobs, places of worship, or medical facilities within Israel or in other cantons of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The checkpoints, which can be arbitrarily erected at Israeli discretion within the occupied territories, employ invasive and humiliating searches in determining which Palestinians may proceed. For example, traversing the Erez Checkpoint in the Gaza Strip often involves 3-4 hours of delay for Palestinians wishing to worship, work, or visit family members inside of Israel, as they are separated from other travelers into a 600m cattle-style passageway; of course settlers, VIP, and tourists pass expediently

through the main facility. According to B'Tselem, three types of Israeli closure policy are implemented based on "security" demands: general, comprehensive and internal. Whereas, general closure was initiated following the Oslo Accords (and is valid through present day), comprehensive closure is employed as a means of collective punishment (for Palestinian acts of violence), before Jewish holidays, or in anticipation of Palestinian political anniversaries. Internal closure involves the sealing off of cities or villages in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in order to prohibit movement by Palestinian inhabitants (B'Tselem). Following the massacre of 29 Muslim worshippers at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron by a Jewish settler, Hebron was internally closed off, with Palestinian residents placed under a 24-hour curfew.

Perhaps the most tragic result of military closure is the denial of emergency medical care to Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. According to a B'Tselem report, "at least 26 Palestinians died after a delay in receiving medical treatment due to closure or curfew [from February 1996] until the end of January 2000." This figure includes 7 Palestinian infants (who were born in a car/or at home), 2 Palestinian women (giving birth), and others who died due to a closure-based delay. The State of Israel is in direct violation of Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees freedom of movement. Thus, as a result of Bantustan-type isolation (through closure, settlements, and bypass roads), Palestinians effectively remain prisoners in their own land, unable to exercise their freedom of movement, except at the discretion of the surrounding State of Israel.

The implementation of an apartheid regime in Palestine/Israel is wholly unacceptable. Where are the voices in the international community that did not rest until the South African government gave the indigenous people justice? Where are the celebrities, the governments of the world, the international media that, inspired by the indigenous anti-apartheid movement, made the ruling South African regime accountable to international law? Is our global consciousness selective? The Palestinian people, like black South Africans, will continue to live under a state of occupation, as opposed to a state of autonomy, until these institutions find their voices again. Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center calls upon members of the local Palestinian and Israeli populations as well as the international community to recognize the existing system for what it is, apartheid, and in making this realization to bring about its immediate end. Give the Palestinian people their justice.

This article focuses on the implementation of bantustans in South Africa and Palestine. It is the first in a series of reports by Sam Jones comparing South African apartheid rule and Israeli apartheid rule in terms of oppressive policies, governing ideologies, and historic cooperation. These reports along with potential methods of liberation will be regularly added to the [reports section](#) of this site. Sam Jones served as a Peace/Justice Intern with Sabeel Center from September 1999 to July 2000. He returns to Washington D.C. where he will pursue a Masters degree at American University. Our prayers and love are with him as God leads him on his new journey.

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HEBRON: Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep

by *Natasha J. Krahn*
Christian Peacemaker Team

Sitting on the Mount of Olives watching the sun rise on Easter morning, I reflected on the past forty days of Lent.

The CPT Team in Hebron marked Lent this year by fasting and spending the nights with families who are matched in CPT's Campaign for Secure Dwellings.

The families that we stayed with all have either home demolition orders or a home that has been demolished. The spirit with which we entered into this season was one of staying awake, watching and praying, as Jesus commanded his disciples to do in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Often when I laid awake I remembered the warmth and security of my childhood. The children I played with while staying with various families do not have this experience, one that should be a right for each and every child.

At no point was this clearer to me than one night when I stayed with a family who is living eleven people in a rough three room, cinder block house after experiencing previous house demolitions. This particular night it was extremely windy and the tin roof rattled and shook with every gust. It sounded like we were in the middle of a tornado. Just as I was falling asleep it started to rain.

Rain on a tin roof sounds like angry hail. As I lay awake I noticed that all the children had fallen asleep as if the rain's furious dance wasn't thundering over our heads. I guess they were glad to not be experiencing this weather with only a tent for shelter as they had done a year ago. And yet their house does not have a building permit and this family is still vulnerable to the threat of the bulldozer.

Working with CPT in Israel/Palestine has been very difficult for me these past few months.

There is not much hope. The few acts of resistance are quickly stifled and spirits are low. Here in Hebron I have witnessed the death of hope. For me, unlike the disciples that first Easter, the period of Lent and the sorrow of Good Friday has always been coloured with the knowledge that Easter follows. I am awaiting the resurrection of justice and a true peace and it feels like Easter is a long time in coming.

Until it comes I'll try to stay awake, to watch and pray. U

CPT Hebron has maintained a violence reduction presence in Hebron since June of 1995 at the invitation of the Hebron Municipality.

Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) is an initiative among Mennonite and Brethren congregations and Friends meetings who support violence reduction teams around the world. Contact CPT at: P.O. Box 6508, Chicago, IL 60680 USA; Tel: 312.455.1199; Fax: 312.432.1213; website: www.prairienet.org/cpt email: CPT@igc.org

Great Shepherd
of our souls and bodies,

from age to age You have led Your
people in the paths of righteousness
and truth for Your own Name's sake.

Throughout the years of our lives
You have guided us faithfully
into green pastures and beside still waters
and restored our souls.

Through the blood of Your eternal covenant
You furnish us with every good thing
in order that we may accomplish Your will
and do that which is pleasing in Your sight.

Our cup of blessing runs over.

Even in the valley of the shadow of death,
You are with us there, to find us, to rescue us,
and to restore us to Your flock once more.

Grant to us also,

Good Shepherd of our lives,
in the year and the millennium that lie ahead,
that Your sheep throughout the world
may hear Your voice and follow You,
so that as one flock, under our One Shepherd,

we may glorify You,

with Your Father and the Holy Spirit,

Amen

*Archbishop Demetrios,
Greek Orthodox Church, Jerusalem*

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Eastern Christianity: Development across the two millennia

by Maroun Lahham

This is the full article on Eastern Christianity translated from Arabic. It is an attempt to explain the differences between Eastern and Western theology in hopes of removing any misunderstandings or misjudgments between the two. This article, available in its entirety here, was printed in Cornerstone in two parts: Part 1 in [issue 17](#), Part 2 in [issue 19](#).

Ex Oriente Lux.

Light sprouts from the East. Thus was said and thus it occurred. The light of monotheistic faith spread across the corners of the earth. Eastern Christianity has remained loyal to the essence of the message bestowed upon it by providence although the path was often uneasy.

In this article I will address issues related to Eastern Christianity:

1. The underlying political and religious conditions
2. The theological dimension of the history of the Eastern Church
 - a. A Mystery After the Model of the Trinity
 - b. Combining the Unity of Faith and Diversity of Traditions
3. Prospects for the Future.

I. Political and Religious Conditions

Connecting the political and religious dimensions is a result of what happened on the ground. Through various phases in the development of Eastern Christianity, political conditions have affected religious attitudes and vice versa. The two aspects are largely inseparable.

The Church was established in Jerusalem at Pentecost AD 29 following Saint Peter's Spirit-inspired preaching when thousands, both Jew and Gentile, came to faith. With time, there were more Christians from Gentile backgrounds than Jewish which necessitated the Jerusalem Council in AD 50. Gradually the Eastern Church began acquiring a universal character electing Mark, a non-Jew, as the Bishop of Jerusalem.

Pax Romana allowed the Church to spread easily, especially after the edict of Milano in AD 313, when Christianity was adopted as state religion. Dogmatic discussion persisted. On the one hand, there was a need to mould the Christian faith with the prevailing Hellenistic thought, including devising theological expressions comprehensible by the intellectuals of the day. On the other hand, the diversity of cultures, languages, rituals and traditions resulted in deep disagreements. Successive ecumenical councils were held seeking to find a common theological language on issues related to creed. Consequently, deep divisions tore the family apart and left indelible traces on the Eastern Churches. The controversy included matters related to the essence of faith, such as the Incarnation and Divinity of Christ. Divisions were not always dogmatic but were philosophical, cultural, political, and social as well.

With the spread of Arab rule, the profound political and religious influences affecting the Eastern Churches continued. The Eastern Churches coexisted with Islam. The

churches experienced the tolerance of the Omayyads, the severity of the Abbasids, cruelty of the Fatimids, domination of the Crusaders, corruption of the Mamluks, and the oppression of the Turks. The Church survived all and did not disappear. "The Eastern Church did not have the sense of triumphalist Christendom that emerged at the end of the first millennium in Byzantium and Western Europe. The Eastern Churches had to live in humility and sometimes undergo humiliation. They did not know the glory or delusions of Rome, or the second Rome (Constantinople), or the third Rome (Moscow)."

The current era has not been less painful to the Eastern Churches. Successive wars since the beginning of this century have dispersed people to various Arab countries and the Diaspora. Furthermore, the West focused on recruiting Eastern Christians into new churches. Experience has shown that this was not the ideal way to serve the Eastern church nor did it contribute to the unity between East and West.

To summarize thus far:

1. The Eastern Church has suffered in a way that no other church has;
2. The Eastern Churches have had to adapt to many changes imposed upon them throughout their history. This fact has to be considered before passing any judgement on them;
3. In spite of "the services" offered to the Eastern Church over the years, it continued its journey through its own dynamic power and the efforts of its people. By doing so it remained faithful to what was handed down by the Apostles.

II. The Theological Dimension in the History of the Eastern Churches:

The God of history has a purpose for the life of the Eastern Churches. Discovering this purpose, understanding it, living by it, must be the goal, not only for the Eastern churches, but for the Church universal.

The first thing to be aware of regarding the Eastern Churches is their emphasis on the centrality of Christ. They comprise a portion of the people of God under the authority of a bishop who through the power of the Holy Spirit, and in the light of the word of God, is the successor of the Apostles. It is the Church incarnate in the "here and now," the one, holy, catholic Church throughout the world.

The East has its own way of expressing the reality of the Church and its own pattern of understanding it and living it. While the Christian Church is one and the same at all times and places, it is distinguished in the East as being a mystery after the model of the Trinity, one that combines unity of faith with diversity.

a. A Mystery After the Model of the Trinity

The visible features of the Church, whether canonical, existential, or organizational are all important, but have to be closely linked to the Church and reveal its mystery. The divine dimension has to take precedence and must be revealed through what is seen or sensed.

The Church is a mystery. It is that amazing, divine providence "that was kept secret for long ages" (Romans 16:25) and which God revealed to us "when the fullness of time had come" (Galatians 4:4) "in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6) "to gather up all things in

him..." (Ephesians 1:10). This means that the Church was created by God and constitutes a community of people gathered together first and foremost by the grace of God, "who were born, not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God," (John 1:13).

This mystery has two dimensions, divine and human. It starts and ends with God and is directed to human beings. It thus creates communion between God and human beings. This concept of Koinonia is fundamental when it comes to understanding the nature of the Church, the way it was understood in the East for centuries. The Eastern Church lived the mystery of this communion by focusing on the unity which is based on the one faith and the same sacraments. It is a unity symbolized by the office and presence of the bishop, through the liturgy and understanding that the Church is a mystery rather than a human institution. This communion flows from a living theology that changes human beings into a renewed and transformed people, called by God, existing through God, and walking in God's holy way. God is holy and has gathered his people in a way that surpasses human understanding. The Church is a gift which proceeds from the unity of the one and undivided Trinity and offers us a model to live by.

In the theology of the Eastern Church, the Holy Spirit holds a special place because through the power of the Holy Spirit the Church became the body of Christ after Pentecost. The birth of the Church is the same as the motherhood of the Virgin Mary, a mystery. It came to be through the power of God and not by human willpower.

The fact that the Church is created in the image of the Trinity, according to the theology of the Eastern Church, has implications on the life of the believing community who are the backbone of the Church. If every person of the Trinity is in essence "directed towards the other," which means a gift to the other in absolute divine transparency, then every human being is created "in the image of God." This means that the *raison d'être* of every person is to love and be loved in the likeness of the Godhead.

b. Combining the Unity of Faith and Diversity of Traditions

Ever since the light of faith shone on the East, it realized that the mystery of the one God is beyond expression through one language, one culture, or one ritual. It is possibly beyond any human expression. The Eastern Church was able through long and difficult experience, in spite of some failures along the way, to combine unity of faith with diversity of ritual, as well as theological, spiritual, and canonical tradition. The Eastern Church has tried to maintain a delicate balance between unity and diversity. It realized that "unity without diversity is despotic, while diversity without unity is chaotic."

The Eastern Churches were able to maintain their unity through remaining true to their faith, the living and common apostolic traditions handed down by the Apostles. This includes the sacraments of faith and in particular the sacrament of apostolic succession and the fellowship in love especially among bishops who represent, in a mystical way, the twelve disciples. The real measure of truth and unity in the various traditions of the Eastern Church lies in the degree of participation in the one and only apostolic tradition. This is the meaning of the word "catholic" in the theology of the Eastern Churches. According to St. Ignatius of Antioch, who turned the word "catholic" into a Christian term, it literally means: "according to all, or through the participation of all." This means that the "all" is in every part, just as the soul is in every part of the living body.

Unity is guaranteed by the sacrament of apostolic succession. The tradition handed down by the Apostles does not view the local churches mechanically but rather saw in every church a creative dynamic. In Western thinking, the Church, i.e.: "the catholic church," is incarnated in the "here and now" of the local churches. The latter are in turn created "in the image of the one catholic church." In contrast, Eastern thought gives priority to the local church which has all the elements of the "catholic" church because it is both apostolic and catholic, in other words, the whole is embodied in the part. The "catholic" Church is essentially the body of the local churches. The body is held together by one faith, based on one apostolic tradition. That is why churches with diverse traditions recognize each other. Each sees in the other the mystery of the one Church while retaining its own legitimate particularities, provided that the Church stay within the communion of faith and love with the other local churches.

Historically speaking, it was not easy to maintain this delicate balance between the unity of faith and the diversity of ritual, spiritual, and canonical traditions. This is evident in the many divisions and local feuds that exist until this day. The unity of faith was deeply shaken following the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451 when disagreements surfaced over the two distinct natures of Christ. Quite often, what was legitimate diversity of ritual turned into closure, monopoly, ignorance of the other and competition alien to the spirit of the Gospel. Furthermore, churches began to proselytize each others faithful and to lure them in every way.

Most Eastern Churches took on the character of "national churches" and focused on the legitimate autonomy of the local church. Soon, this autonomy came to be associated with a specific country and people. Along with that, each church distanced itself from other local churches with whom it shared a common faith. These difficult conditions lasted for centuries and marked the Eastern Church with a special character of paranoia, closure, suffering and a search for identity.

One of the temptations that the Eastern Churches fell into, because of their strong attachment to the "sanctity" of tradition, is their belief that the Christian faith and tradition give the believer a human nature and a culture which is different from that of the non-baptized. In fact the mother Church is an indigenous church constituted of all the people it ministers to. It does not create a Christian society as opposed to another non-Christian society on the grounds that the two do not share the same faith. The importance of the Christian Church is that it is the yeast of God's kingdom working from within our social and cultural reality. Our ancestors comprehended this fact as evidenced in the great amount of heritage they handed down. It all reflects the incarnation of faith in more than one language, civilization and culture that successively prevailed in the East. This is something that later generations failed to fully understand.

Another challenge which the Eastern Church failed to meet is the need to connect faith with changing reality of everyday life. They did not develop a social outlook or vision based on the Gospel. It assumed that holding onto tradition meant resisting change. As a result, faith failed to influence changing social conditions.

One important explanation of this is the fact that Church tradition has two sources, divine and human. On the one hand it is a gift of grace, while on the other hand it is a fruit of the endeavors of our ancestors in faith. It is also a product of history. As a product of human endeavor it involves dangers which our ancestors attributed to "the spirit of the world." This means the denominational spirit and the literal practice of liturgical ritual and pride in its beauty, while "their hearts are far from me" (Mark 7:6). It also meant forsaking God's commandments and holding onto tradition (Mark 7:7-8).

Undoubtedly, this caused deep scars that left their imprint on the heart of the Eastern Church. It did not disappear, but suffered and bled because of its internal divisions. It was weakened by the "Dhimmi" system, by Turkish hegemony, by its own liturgy and by simple daily religious practices that failed to express themselves on a cultural level. Furthermore, during the last century, Protestant and Catholic missionary work operated within a mentality that did not take ecumenism into consideration. As a result, fear prevailed within the Eastern Churches and caused it to become closed and isolated which in turn brought forward what it feared most: deterioration, emigration and extinction.

Part II

Prospects for the Future:

"And the gates of Hell shall not prevail..." (Matthew 16:18)

No matter how much the Eastern Church has suffered or was torn apart, it believes without doubt that its founder is alive and that He is the source of her life. Because Jesus is living and because the Church has its life in Him, by Him, and for Him, it must stay alive, open and receptive in order to be light, salt and yeast. The price that the church has to pay for this is summarized in the words of Patriarch Ignatius IV in an address at the Catholic Institute in Paris. He said: "In order to open up to the future we need to break the circuit of fear. The Church is the bride of the spirit and the spirit is fire. Fire is not something to play with. We either extinguish it or throw ourselves right into it thus setting the whole church alight, together with all humanity and the whole universe."

The Church has to be open in two directions: within the Eastern Churches and without. This means first putting its own house in order and then entering with courage and strength into the ecumenical movement.

Putting its own house in order:

It is difficult to understand why the Eastern Churches took so long to realize that the main reason behind their dogmatic differences is not theological but rather cultural and linguistic. The bonds of love between those churches have long ceased to exist; as a result suspicion replaced trust for long centuries. It is noticed that with every schism inside the Eastern Churches as well as the big schism with the West, there has been a loosening in the bond of love, which has separated many churches, and which inevitably justified itself as dogmatic differences. This separation later established itself in a legal structure.

The Eastern Churches must unite around the "sacrament of the bishop." This idea is a rich theological concept within the theology of the Eastern Church. It is believed that the bond of love is a realization of the charisma related to the episcopacy. Nowadays, we find that the pastoral efforts of the Eastern Churches though substantial are fruitless, because they are scattered and un-united. The churches are called upon to repent and turn away from competition and scattered efforts that are lacking in love. The churches are called upon to cherish and love and hold each other in their hearts while accepting each others specificity. This can only be accomplished through the Holy Spirit, which allows real and unconditional love to fill the churches. Therefore, the heads of the Eastern Churches are called upon to meet together again and again in order to develop



real love for each other and to be able to work together.

Ecumenical Dialogue:

Since the beginning of the 20th century the ecumenical movement has been a major feature affecting the Christian Church worldwide. This movement is the main gateway to the future for Eastern Churches.

The general principle is to accept a basic premise, which most Eastern Churches have not yet accepted: that Jesus Christ established One Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Church. Church leaders have not been faithful to Jesus' will. Every single church has to bear part of the responsibility for the various divisions within the Church. So the different churches, including the Eastern Churches, are called upon to do some honest and humble soul-searching before God who sent his son to "gather the scattered children of God" and who prayed on the eve of his crucifixion "that they might be one."

Talk about the ecumenical movement is long and complicated. I will dwell only on some of the aspects of this movement.

The Theological Perspective:

The division among Christians abolishes the very foundation of the Church and its mission. The Church is a communion or a shared spiritual life among people. The mystical communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the paradigm, the source and the purpose of this communion within the Church. As such, every division goes against the Christian call for unity, which is the very foundation of the Church. Eastern Churches have to accept this fact and allow themselves to be led into the ecumenical movement by a desire to unify the children of God. This means getting rid of the complex of "orthodoxy" which desires to unite all Christians within its fold. Perhaps the first practical step to do this is to acknowledge the presence of a real though incomplete communion with all the other churches.

The Ecumenical Mentality:

This means that the Eastern Churches have to go along with the general conviction of the Christian Church that no one church can claim sole representation of the whole of the Christian faith, outside of which there can be no salvation. The ecumenical mentality admits that the Church that Jesus desired is still a long way from realization. Church leaders bear the responsibility for this fact. A divided Church also stands in the way of spreading the Gospel and having a vibrant and effective Christian presence in society. Again, it is the reason behind the fruitlessness of the painstaking efforts to instill a spirit of revival into the life of the Church.

An ecumenical mentality accepts the other and searches for the richness of the other to be used for the good of all.

The Spirituality of Ecumenism:

Christian unity cannot be accomplished through dialogue on the level of theologians. Ecumenism is a spirituality that entails the renewal of the Church, repentance of the heart and a life of holiness and prayer. A change of heart must take place on the level of individuals through inner renewal, modesty, humility and generosity towards others. The whole community must also repent and turn away from structures and social norms that lead to sinfulness and division within the Church.

Individual and collective repentance manifest's itself in the life of the churches, which are the springboards of the movement towards unity. This movement must include the Bible and liturgical studies, preaching the word of God and Christian education. Last but not least is the importance of prayer and asking God's forgiveness, guidance and strength.

This spiritual dimension of the ecumenical movement leads to better knowledge of and solidarity with all Christians. We must all move from an attitude of opposition and conflict to one that sees in the other a brother, a sister and a partner. Every time renewal and change take place in one church, it is reflected in the other churches. Each discovers in the other new paradigms of holiness and experience limitless richness of the communion of saints. New and yet undiscovered methods of Christian commitment are also manifested through the experience of other churches.

Ecumenical Dialogue:

What has been said about the theological, psychological and spiritual dimensions of the ecumenical movement is bound to lead to practical dialogue based on love, truth, and pastoral care. This is the essence of the Holy Spirit, which seeks to gather together eastern churches into one Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church of Christ.

A Dialogue of Love:

Patriarch Ignatius IV of the Orthodox Church of Antioch has said that the ecumenical movement is not a matter of theological or dogmatic compromise but rather a story of love. When love is lacking or misdirected, it can hurt and lead to suspicion which in turn kills love. Hence, it is imperative that a dialogue of love between the churches is preceded by a dialogue of truth that can provide support, nurture, and spirit in order to overcome human limitations and inhibitions.

The Dialogue of Truth:

The dialogue of truth or theological dialogue involves a methodological study by delegates of the different churches, of the revelation of truth and the different ways of its expression and practice. The purpose is to overcome inherited stereotypes and misunderstandings and to reach, if possible, a common understanding of the mystery of the Christian faith while allowing for a diversity of tradition. Pope John XXIII summarized the issue beautifully when he said: "In basic issues: unity; in side issues: diversity; in all issues: love.

Eastern churches have a basic role to play in this dialogue of truth. Although, at first glance, they fear getting involved in such dialogue because of an accumulation of suspicion and "closure" and the fear of being assimilated by churches that have fallen into the temptation of authoritarianism. The areas in which the Eastern Churches can contribute in the dialogue of truth are its invaluable perspectives on the sacrament of episcopacy, the theology of the local Church, the theory of the "universality of the bishop and the theology of the Holy Spirit." In this way eastern churches will share their rich theological and spiritual heritage with the other churches and be enriched by them so that both can understand more deeply the "mystery of God" and the "mystery of the Church."

Dialogue on the Pastoral Level:

Pastoral work is the "theological context" that opens the way for churches to work



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together and complement the ecumenical dialogue that is already being held between them. It is important to point out that churches must refrain from trying to convert the faithful from one church to another for the sake of "their salvation." They should be helped to discover and develop their mission in their own mother Church. This has been emphasized by representatives of Catholic and Orthodox Churches at the Balamand meeting in 1993: "Efforts towards reunification should not aim at converting people from one Church to another. It is rather a joint effort for the fulfillment of the will of Christ in those who believe in him, as well as the fulfillment of God's purpose for God's Church. It is a joint effort of all the churches in order to reach total agreement on the meaning of faith and all that it entails.""

Conclusion:

In this article I have tried to give a glimpse of the history of the Eastern churches over 2000 years. It is important to point out that the mere fact that these churches carry such a long history places them in a position of respect, admiration and love.

Eastern Churches in the Holy Land are the historic continuation of the first Church of Jerusalem, the mother of all churches. In spite of all their weaknesses, divisions and sins they remain the mother church that loves her children, prays for them, receives them with an open heart and asks for their support and prayers.

Eastern churches have seen more difficult times than they are going through nowadays. They have been strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit and survived. Although they are sometimes overshadowed by the human sinfulness of their members, they remain the light and guidance in the context that God has chosen for their witness, their mission and their worship.

Eastern Churches are called upon to take a leap of faith into the fire of the spirit – the master of history – and be purified and purged of historical flaws that burden them and stop their process towards the Trinity. If they succeed in achieving that, they can move forward freely towards complete unity. They can put their hand in that of the other sister churches and proclaim to the whole world that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). It is then that the world will discover that Christ is its heart.

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NOTES:

1. Acts 15.
2. Historian Eusepius 4 - 6.
3. Council of Catholic Patriarchs of the East, *So that they will all be one, Ecumenical movement*, Easter 1999, No 10-11.
4. Patriarch Ignatius IV, *From Antiochian Experience To Its Mission*, p. 21.
5. *Catholic Orthodox Encounter*, Balamand (Lebanon) 1993.
6. Koinonia is a basic concept of the second Vatican Council concerning the Church ... Gathering the faithful as one people.... "The light of nations," No. 9.
7. Rebelief's Icon of the Trinity.
8. Rev. Jamal Khader, *Identity of the Local Church across the ages*, p. 4.
9. Acts of the Second Vatican Council, *Creed Dogmatic of the Church*, light of nations, 23.
10. Council of Catholic Patriarchs of the Church, *Mystery of the Church* no. 33
11. Message of the Catholic Patriarchs of the Orient, "So that they will be one", April 1994.
12. Patriarch Ignatius IV , *The Ecumenical Issue in Light of the Antiochian Experience*, p. 34.
13. *Ibid.* p. 34.
14. Patriarchs of the Orient, *So that they will all be one*, April 1994, p. 20.
15. *Ibid.* p. 29.

16. Ibid. p. 15.

17. Patriarche Ignatius IV, lecture in Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, 1984, p. 44.

18. *So that they will all be one*, p.34.

19. For example, Eastern Churches regard the local Church as Christ's Church in this country, which is the right way to see it. What those churches cannot as yet comprehend fully is a clear understanding of the Church Universal which is a visible communion of the local church, under one leadership that can gather all the Churches in the communion of faith and love. This is the cause of the difficult and futile debate over the role of the Bishop of Rome and his position as the first among equals.

20. Balamund document, 15.



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THE JERUSALEM SABELL DOCUMENT PRINCIPLES FOR A JUST PEACE IN PALESTINE-ISRAEL

"Seek Peace and Pursue it." (1 Peter 3:11)

In pursuit of peace and out of our faith commitment, Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, Jerusalem has formulated a set of principles by which we, as Palestinian Christians, feel a just, secure, and lasting peace can be achieved.

THEOLOGICAL BASIS

Our faith teaches us that,

1. God, creator and redeemer, loves all people equally (John 3:16, Acts 17:24-28).
2. God demands that justice be done. No enduring peace, security, or reconciliation is possible without the foundation of justice. The demands of justice will not disappear; and the struggle for justice must be pursued diligently and persistently but non-violently (Jeremiah 9:23-24, Isaiah 32:16-17, Romans 12:17-21).
3. The Holy Land is God's gift to Palestinians and Israelis. They must live justly and mercifully and be good stewards of it (Micah 6:8).
4. "Love your neighbor as yourself" is an inclusive principle that must be honored and sought after (Mark 12:31). The Golden Rule continues to apply, "Do to others what you want them to do to you" (Matthew 7:12).
5. Faithfulness to God obliges us to work for justice, peace, forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing (Matthew 5:9, 43-45).

MORAL BASIS

1. We acknowledge the sufferings and injustices committed against Jews by the West, especially those inflicted in the holocaust. Nevertheless, they do not justify the injustices committed against Palestinians. Justice claimed by one people at the expense of another is not justice.
2. Since Israel has, by force, displaced the Palestinians, destroyed their villages and towns, denied them their basic human rights, and illegally dominated and oppressed them, it is morally bound to admit its injustice against the Palestinians and assume responsibility for it.
3. Since Israel acquired by force 77% of the land of Palestine in 1948, approximately 20% more than the United Nations had allotted, and established its state there, it is moral and right for Israel to return the whole of the areas captured in 1967, i.e. the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem, to the millions of Palestinians who need their own small sovereign state.
4. Israel's 'Law of Return' which allows any Jewish person to immigrate to Israel while denying Palestinians the right of return to their homeland is immoral and discriminatory.
5. Sharing the sovereignty of Jerusalem is imperative to a moral and just peace.
6. The ideology of militarism as well as the stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction are morally wrong. They sabotage the spirit and viability of peace and will not provide security either.

LEGAL BASIS: International Legitimacy

The following principles have been affirmed and repeatedly reaffirmed by the international community:

1. Palestinian refugees have the right of return -- UN General Assembly Resolution .
2. The Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are occupied territories and the Israeli forces must withdraw from them -- UN Security Council Resolution and based on the international principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force.
3. The Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are illegal. Moreover, it is illegal for the occupying power to transfer its population to, or to change the status of, the occupied territories -
4. East Jerusalem is occupied territory. Israel's unilateral actions to alter the status of Jerusalem are illegal and invalid -- UN Security Council Resolutions and .
5. Violations of human rights such as home demolitions, land confiscation, torture, revocation of residency rights, restriction of movement, closures, and the monopolization of resources are an insult to the dignity of human beings and contravene international law -- United Nations

THE PRINCIPLES WHICH SABEEL STANDS FOR:

The people of the region--Palestinians and Israelis--both need and deserve a lasting peace, and security. With peace and security in place, bonds of acceptance and friendship can grow. It is no service to either community to promote a peace which flouts international law, ignores justice, and ultimately cannot endure since this will lead to continued bitterness and violence.

The following principles are therefore, based on international legitimacy. The international community has a responsibility to see that they are fulfilled. Once achieved, the strongest international guarantees must be given to ensure that the people of Palestine and Israel will live in peace and security.

1. **Israel must admit that it has committed an injustice against the Palestinian people and must accept responsibility for that. This means that reparation must be paid to all Palestinians who have suffered as a result of the conflict since 1948 whether they are Palestinian citizens of Israel, Palestinians living on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, or Palestinians living in the Diaspora. The road to healing and reconciliation passes through repentance, forgiveness and redress.**
2. **The Palestinians must have their own sovereign, independent, and democratic state established on the whole of the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israel must withdraw to the June 4, 1967 borders. No solution is acceptable if it does not guarantee the Palestinians' and Israelis' right to self-determination, independence, and sovereignty.**
3. **Jerusalem's sovereignty must be shared by the two states of Palestine and Israel. The city must remain open for Palestinians, Israelis, and all. East Jerusalem can be the capital of Palestine while West Jerusalem can be the capital of Israel. Any agreement must protect the sanctity of the**

holy places and guarantee the rights of the three religions, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism on an equal basis. All illegal confiscation of land or expansion of areas by Israel within the walled city of Jerusalem since 1967 must be reversed.

- 4. The right of return to Palestinian refugees must be guaranteed according to international law. All refugees must be fully compensated.**
- 5. All Israeli Jewish settlements on the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law. All the settlements built on Palestinian soil since 1967 must be part of Palestine.**
- 6. Once the principles of an acceptable justice are applied, a peace treaty must be drawn up between the two states of Palestine and Israel guaranteeing the full sovereignty and territorial integrity of each including recognized borders, water rights, and other resources.**
- 7. Furthermore, both states must fully guarantee the respect and protection of the human rights of all their citizens, including freedom of religion, in accordance with all international conventions.**

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

In 1948 a grievous injustice was committed by the Zionists (forerunners of the state of Israel) against the Palestinian people. The Zionists acquired by force 77% of the land of Palestine and displaced three quarters of a million Palestinians.

Consequently, the state of Israel was declared as a Jewish state. Since then, most of the displaced Palestinians have lived in refugee camps and their national rights have been denied. Despite UN Resolution 194, passed in December 1948 and reaffirmed annually by the UN, Israel has adamantly refused the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their homes. The 150,000 Palestinians who remained within that part of Palestine which became the state of Israel were given Israeli citizenship. However, they have been discriminated against and have been treated as second class citizens.

In 1967, the state of Israel acquired by force the rest of the country of Palestine (the 23%) further displacing approximately 325,000 Palestinians. The Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank came under Israeli military rule. The occupation has been oppressive, brutal, and dehumanizing. Palestinian land has been systematically confiscated, human rights violated, and people systemically humiliated, as documented by a number of international, Israeli, and Palestinian human rights organizations, such as

. Furthermore, Israel assumed control of Palestine's water supply (unfairly restricting water to Palestinians and charging them exorbitant prices), began building exclusively Jewish settlements on Palestinian land and, through hundreds of military laws, persisted in its oppression of the Palestinians. As to East Jerusalem, Israel annexed it and, in 1993, closed it and cut it off from the rest of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, thus denying Palestinians the right of access to it. Consequently, even the right to worship in its churches and mosques is obstructed. Moreover, Israel enacted a policy to limit the Palestinian presence in Jerusalem to 27% of the city's population, through demolition of homes, confiscation of land, revocation of Palestinian residency rights as well as other means.

In 1991 at the end of the Gulf War, the peace process was initiated by the United States and Russia. In spite of its initial promise in the Madrid Conference to achieve a just peace, it became, in its Oslo form, an instrument for furthering the injustice. As it evolved, certain portions of the occupied territories were returned by Israel to the Palestinian Authority. By the end of March 2000, only 18.2% of the

area of the West Bank has been returned to full Palestinian Authority; 24.7% is under Israeli security and Palestinian civil control. The remaining 57.1% of the West Bank is still under full Israeli control. The areas that have been returned to the Palestinians are not geographically linked together. The Israeli Army controls the highways and major roads throughout the occupied territories, as well as everything below the ground and sky above. It is important to note that in the Gaza Strip, only 60% of the land is under Palestinian control where over a million Palestinians live; while Israel controls the 40% of the Strip for the benefit of 6100 Jewish settlers. Furthermore, some of the 194 Israeli settlements (166 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and 28 in East Jerusalem - - all illegal under international law) have expanded to sizable towns. It is estimated that the number of settlers, including those who live in the settlement ring in and around Jerusalem, is approximately 400,000.

The two sides, Israelis and Palestinians, have more recently been engaged in the final status negotiations which include the thorniest issues, namely, Jerusalem, borders, refugees, water, and settlements.

We feel we are standing at a most important juncture in our history. The United States Government has been working to broker a peace agreement between Israel and Syria as well as to keep alive the negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Many of us are afraid that what might ensue in Palestine is an unjust peace. We at Sabeel feel we have a Christian responsibility to speak our mind for the sake of a lasting peace that will bring an acceptable justice to the Palestinians and security for all the peoples of our region. We fear that the Palestinian Authority might be forced to accept an unjust peace which will be attractively packaged by the state of Israel and the United States Government. We are, however, sure that an unjust peace will only be temporary and will inevitably plunge our region into greater violence and bloodshed. We will not be silent. We lift our voice prophetically in pointing to the pitfalls of injustice. The following points comprise the different scenarios. We would like to present them clearly with their probable consequences.

THE GREATEST CONCERN: A bantustan state

Taking a good look at the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, it is clear that Israel's eye is focused on the West Bank which includes East Jerusalem. The confiscation of Palestinian land, the building and expansion of the settlements have never stopped. Israel continues to insist that the settlements will remain under Israeli rule. If this is done, Israel will maintain its military presence on the West Bank while allowing the Palestinian Authority to have autonomous rule over its own people. The areas under Palestinian rule will be called Palestine. They will have the semblance of a state but will exist under the suzerainty of Israel and will not enjoy genuine sovereignty. What we are witnessing, therefore, is a bantustan-type state, home rule, just like what was proposed by the former apartheid government of South Africa to its black citizens. From all indications, this is the picture which is emerging on the ground.

If pressured, Israel may even concede the Gaza Strip, where it currently has only 6100 settlers and controls approximately 40% of the land and one third of the water. It might withdraw totally from the Gaza Strip, which now has a damaged aquifer and a serious lack of usable water, and allow the Palestinians to have their sovereign state there. That area will be small and contained in one corner of Palestine and, from Israel's perspective, will, presumably, not pose any serious

threat to Israel. On the West Bank, however, the Palestinians will only be given autonomous rule, a homeland, in the guise of a state yet void of actual sovereignty.

This we believe is an unnatural, unhealthy, and unjust scenario and will only lead to a bloodier conflict. History teaches us that oppressed nations will not give up their struggle for freedom and independence. Under this scenario, Israel will not achieve the security it seeks because the forced and unjust peace settlement cannot be permanent.

Sabeel rejects outright this peace formula or any variation of it and warns that its imposition will be ultimately catastrophic for both peoples.

THE GENUINE HOPE: Two sovereign and fully democratic states

This scenario envisages the total withdrawal of Israel from all the occupied territories including East Jerusalem according to United Nations resolutions 242 and 338. The Palestinians will establish their sovereign state on the whole of the 23% of the land of Palestine. One way to redeem the settlements is to make them the new towns for the returning Palestinian refugees. This can constitute a part of Israel's reparations to the Palestinians. Israel must compensate the owners from whom the land was confiscated. The Jewish settlers who choose to remain in Palestine can become Palestinian citizens and live under Palestinian sovereignty.

As to Jerusalem, it will have to be shared. The city must remain open to all. A peace treaty will be drawn up and the two countries will become inter-dependent economically and will help each other develop their resources for the well being of both their peoples.

This is the formula which the Palestinians have been hoping and working for. Indeed, it is not the ideal solution, but it carries within it an acceptable justice which most Palestinians are willing to live with for the sake of peace and prosperity. Furthermore, as this scenario agrees with United Nations resolutions since 1967, it will ensure the support of the international community of nations. This formula gives the Palestinians a state as sovereign as Israel, rids them of the Israeli occupation, and restores to them the whole of the occupied territories of 1967. Indeed, a state within the West Bank and Gaza, composed of only 23% of Palestine instead of the 43% allotted by the UN in 1947, is already a very significant compromise by the Palestinians. The Palestinians would have to give up their right to most of historic Palestine. Obviously, Israel, with the help of the United States and the international community, will have to compensate the Palestinian people.

THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Our vision involves two sovereign states, Palestine and Israel, who will enter into a confederation or even a federation, possibly with other neighboring countries and where Jerusalem becomes the federal capital. Indeed, the ideal and best solution has always been to envisage ultimately a bi-national state in Palestine-Israel where people are free and equal, living under a constitutional democracy that protects and guarantees all their rights, responsibilities, and duties without racism or discrimination. One state for two nations and three religions.

STANDING FOR JUSTICE

At every turn, the principle of justice must be upheld. Unless justice is

rendered and security is achieved, the solution must be rejected because it will not endure. A just solution must include an equal measure of justice and security for both sides to make it viable. Otherwise it will not lead to a permanent peace. This is the basic principle that must be upheld and used as the measure for every one of the above points.

This is where Sabeel takes its stand. We will stand for justice. We can do no other. Justice alone guarantees a peace that will lead to reconciliation and a life of security and prosperity to all the peoples of our land. By standing on the side of justice, we open ourselves to the work of peace; and working for peace makes us children of God.

**"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God."
(Matthew 5:9)**

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The Next Step for Israel

by James Ron

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"After blindfolding him and tying his hands behind his back, we took him to a secluded alley, forced him to his knees, and put a gun to his head threatening to shoot him if he didn't talk."

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Many hope that Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon will bring peace to the troubled border. But without acknowledgment of the destruction visited on Lebanon by Israel over the last 32 years, some Lebanese will not forgive and forget. Guerrillas will continue to fire rockets over Israel's northern frontier, triggering retaliations and more fighting. If the international community pushes Israel to acknowledge and compensate its Lebanese victims, however, the hostilities will finally end. I'll take a first step by apologizing for my own misdeeds.

My first Lebanon raid was in 1986. I was a 19-year-old Israeli conscript, and my paratroop platoon was sent to a village whose name I can't recall. I provided security for two Lebanese militiamen and their Israeli handler. We broke down the door of a home, shoved the family aside, and pulled a middle-aged man outside. After blindfolding him and tying his hands behind his back, we took him to a secluded alley, forced him to his knees, and put a gun to his head threatening to shoot if he didn't talk. A UN peacekeeper appeared and put an end to that incident, but there was more to come. Next day we performed a mock execution on a 10-year-old Lebanese boy. We forced his family into the kitchen and dragged him to a nearby orchard. My lieutenant pressed the child's face into the dirt while I jammed my rifle against his skull. Although the officer threatened to shoot his head off, the boy did not respond, keeping silent even after we threatened to throw him from the roof of his three story home. I was a recent transfer from another unit, and my colleagues were more familiar with the drill. I watched and learned as they blew off doors with explosives, poured sacks of flour onto dirt floors, scattered utensils, broke dishes, and rifled through drawers. For days we ransacked the village, searching for signs of guerrilla presence. The elderly female, and young villagers were trapped in their homes, ordered to observe a 24-hour curfew. Their men were gathered in a central square, blindfolded, and hauled off for questioning. When another soldier and I expressed reservations, we were ridiculed by our colleagues. More often than not, however, we thought little about the villagers we were tormenting. Casual brutality was not limited to lower-income recruits. Omri, child of an intelligence officer, liked to fire bursts toward villagers peeking through doorways. Rafi, son of a liberal parliamentarian, kicked a cup of hot tea into an elderly man's face. Several were from kibbutzim, others from middle-class families, and our lieutenant was devoutly religious. We were one of the standing army's elite and disciplined units. My experience was a small part of a long-running conflict. During the 1947-49 war, more than 750,000 Palestinians lost their homes to the new Israeli state, and many fled to Lebanon. In the late 1960s, Palestinian guerrillas began raids from Lebanon, provoking powerful retaliation. After their main Jordanian base was crushed in 1971, Lebanon became a center of guerrilla activity. Palestinian attacks killed 332 Israelis between 1967 and July 1982. In return, Israel killed 5,000-6,000 Lebanese and Palestinians. The fighting helped trigger a 15-year Lebanese civil war that claimed 75,000-120,000 lives. During the 1970s, Israeli shelling emptied dozens of villages and drove an estimated 300,000 civilians into Beirut's slums. Northern Christian militias received Israeli arms and training, while Syria supplied Israel's opponents. In the south, Israeli-paid gunmen acted as informants, interrogators, and enforcers. Israel's strategy was to disrupt Palestinian guerrillas by punishing the surrounding Lebanese population; the result was deeply felt Lebanese anger.

Israel invaded in 1982 to end Palestinian political ambitions. Jewish nationalists were eager to annex the West Bank and Gaza, and many believed this first required smashing the Palestinians' Lebanon base. One goal of the invasion, later publicized by Israeli journalists, was to deport Palestinian refugees from Lebanon with Christian militia help. The plan later collapsed, along with Israel's other grand designs.

During the invasion's first months, Israel killed 12,000-15,000 persons and lost 360. Although the Israeli casualties were combatants, most of their victims were civilians. Israel pounded Palestinian camps and Lebanese slums to drive the guerrillas out, turning neighborhoods into rubble.

Israel's allies doubled as death squads, massacring hundreds in Tel el-Zatar, Sabra, Shatila, el-Khiam, and elsewhere. Palestinian fighters were eventually driven from Beirut, but Israeli brutality helped create new enemies. Islamist fighters began to attack Israeli troops and fire rockets into Israel, stimulating further reprisals. When Jewish civilians were forced into shelters, journalists diligently conveyed their suffering. They did not give Israel's victims equal attention, however. With television dwelling on Israeli rather than Lebanese pain, the more plentiful Israeli-induced casualties became remote statistics.

How do nations move beyond such conflicts? Recent history suggests that political deals are not enough, and that truth-telling is vital. Consider South Africa, where a commission requires former abusers to acknowledge their crimes in return for amnesty. Or consider El Salvador and Guatemala, where commissions have publicized definitive accounts of official wrong-doing, helping the political healing. The international community has advocated reconciliation through truth-telling and accountability in Argentina, Congo, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, Indonesia, Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and now Sierra Leone. In these and other cases, war termination can be helped by official recognition of victims' pain, apologies, and compensation. Why should Lebanon be different?

If Israel wants a peaceful border, it must do more than withdraw from a mess it helped create. Palestinians and Lebanese languishing in camps and slums still harbor great bitterness toward Israel. If it wants to end this anger, Israel should recognize and compensate those it harmed. If Israel will not do so on its own, the international community should pressure it to do so. If other countries can face up to their unpleasant pasts, why not Israel?

Let me begin by asking forgiveness from the 10-year-old whose name I never knew and from the village whose name I no longer remember.

James Ron, assistant professor of sociology at Johns Hopkins University, is a field investigator for international human rights groups.

This story was run by permission of the author. It appeared on page A25 of the Boston Globe on May 25, 2000.

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THE JERUSALEM SABEEL DOCUMENT PRINCIPLES FOR A JUST PEACE IN PALESTINE-ISRAEL

Greetings from Sabeel.

This [document](#) has been prepared by Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem. The reasons for its creation are two-fold. First, it is meant to help both the local and international community to understand what is currently happening on the ground including the possible dangerous ramifications as well as the positive opportunities for a just peace. In the confusing and complicated intrigues of the Palestine-Israel politics, it is difficult for many of our international friends to stay abreast of the situation. For that reason, we have sought to clearly and concisely explain the main principles which constitute a just peace as well as the various scenarios that lie before us.

Secondly, it is important for Sabeel to lay down clearly where it stands. The constant fear in our community has been that the Palestinian Authority will be pressed to sign a peace treaty containing less than the minimum requirements for justice. Before we find ourselves reacting against, we decided to establish where we, as a grassroots Christian movement stand. This document represents, therefore a voice within the Palestinian Christian community that is seeking to be faithful to God in the pursuit of a genuine peace that will give justice to the Palestinians, security for Israel and Palestine, and open the way for forgiveness and reconciliation.

This document is the fruit of several months of discernment, prayer and preparation. We released it on May 15th because of the symbolic significance of that date. It was on May 15, 1948 that the state of Israel was established, and the Palestinian Nakba (Catastrophe) is remembered. Be that as it may, we believe that a just peace is still possible and a life of security and reconciliation is within our reach. In light of the events of the last few weeks we hope that you will sincerely reflect on the content, and then act according to conscience. Our faith in the living God obliges us to press on. "...I have set before you life and death ... Choose life so that you ... may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19). Sabeel chooses to stand for justice. We can do no other. We invite you, indeed, we beseech you, to stand with us.

Canon Naim Ateek
Sabeel Center, Jerusalem

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Snapshots of Our Activities

Sabeel's Letter to the Pope

In an open letter to Pope John Paul II, on the occasion of his visit to the Holy Land, Sabeel encouraged His Holiness to work for justice on behalf of the Palestinians. A copy of the letter can be found [here](#). Sabeel asked that His Holiness lift a clear voice for the sake of:

- Jerusalem, calling for the elimination of all checkpoints;
- the right of return and compensation for all refugees;
- and for the confession by the Israeli government of the injustices committed against the Palestinian people, in order that justice, understanding and respect can be achieved.

From the letter: "Justice is the only foundation that can guarantee a life of security and peace. Again, it can open before us the door of reconciliation and healing between Palestinians and Israelis. Justice will lead to a greater understanding and respect among our three religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam." Sabeel was honored to receive a letter of thanks and blessings from His Holiness in return.

Local Department

Under the theme "Together, Towards New Horizons" Sabeel launched its local celebrations of the new millennium. The motto for the year 2000 is the Bible verse "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). The opening ceremonies were held in Bethlehem and Beit Sahour on March 11th and 12th. Since then, hundreds of celebrants have marked this event in the towns of Nazareth and Jerusalem, Bethany and Abboud, a village North of Ramallah.

Following is the summary of events: The venue chosen for our first local conference was Bethlehem University; it is with anticipation and much hard work that the local department members, and a team of volunteers, prepared for the event.

The conference was declared open at 9am with a small welcome note by Nora Carmi, followed by a prayer from Archmandrite Dr. Atallah Hanna, the spokesperson of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, inviting all to recite the ecumenical version of the Lord's prayer. Then Stefan Salameh, our youth coordinator, with Sister Patricia Crockford from Bethlehem University at the piano, led the participants in a hymn of unity and love "Rejoice, in love". The Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek explained the significance of the celebrations and the necessity of the local Christians to renew their commitment to Christ as they together, and in unity, stand for truth and justice. This gift of ecumenism, a genuine sign of the love he commanded us to share is what we can offer Jesus on his 2000th birthday. Some thirty children of the Lutheran School Choir in Beit Sahour ended the opening session with songs and hymns setting a favorable atmosphere that would be retained throughout the more serious discussions.

Since the conference part of celebrations was to be the expression of indigenous Christians' sharing together, special attention was taken to include speakers and moderators of different denominations. Gender balance was also taken into account.

The contents of the working sessions listed below were altered and tailored according to each venue, but the essential topics remain: 1) Who do you say that I am? 2) Who is Jesus for us? 3) How do we revitalize the Christian Community? 4) Practical plans to

promote unity and co-existence in a pluralistic society, and 5) a Qur'anic tribute to Jesus on His 2000th birthday.

The first very important question was addressed, both in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, by Archbishop Paul Sayyah, head of the Maronite Church in the country. He presented a deep theological perspective of Christ incarnate, Christ who lifts up humanity; He is the model who teaches us how to act according to our faith today. In Nazareth, it was Monsignor Bulos Marcuzzo from the Latin Catholic Church who presented a paper on the topic. The second part of this first session in the three towns, was the testimony of a sensational woman from Nablus, Samira Wahbeh, who stirred the hearts and minds of participants as she spoke of her personal relationship with Christ and how she came to know and love him. For the past twenty years, Samira, born to a Greek Orthodox family, has been leading Bible studies for an ecumenical group of women in Rafidia-Nablus. Samira's zeal and genuine excitement seemed to touch all those who were present. People relate and understand tangible tales and Samira's story is very much living proof of renewed faith. Everywhere Samira went, she was accompanied by the Greek Catholic priest of the area, Father Yousef Saadeh and a dozen faithful disciples, who willingly celebrate and establish links with their brethren.

The moderators of this important session were respectively, Dr. Nader Abu Ghattas, from al-Ihsan Orthodox Society in Beit Jala at Bethlehem University, Ibtissam Muallem, a Melkite pharmacist and lawyer in Nazareth and Hilda Minarios, the Principal of the Coptic Orthodox school in Jerusalem. All were powerful presentations given from different perspectives highlighting and emphasizing the basis of our faith and how we can live our Christian life through Christ's love for us and through his teachings.

The Aboud festival - April 1 - was outstandingly blessed. The program may have been long, but the villagers expressed their faith through the testimony of a Catholic seminarian, the church choir, school children acting parables, a Bible reflection by the pastor of the Church of God, and a musical/drama interpretation of the significance of Christian love. The Sabeel contribution was Bassam Zu'mot introducing the sketch performed in open air, festive celebrations, Rev. Naim's explanation of the purpose, logo and symbol of the conference and the young singers. Village scouts ushered in the guests, maintained discipline among the tens of children perched on steps and fences, and offered coffee and biscuits at the end of the festival.

Clergy gatherings

Many of the clergy who had taken part in the pre-conference visits to various towns and villages, attended one or more of the celebrations in the above-mentioned venues. They were actively present through presentation of academic papers, prayers and discussions during the conferences or through readings, choirs or preaching at the ecumenical services. In fact, the mini-celebrations at Bethany (a venue which was not part of the original program) took part upon the insistence of Father Michel Shawqi. As soon as this Egyptian Fransiscan friar, in charge of the Latin Catholic Church in Lazarus's village, heard of the program, he was confident that such an event would be conducive to help revive the dormant faith of the 80 Christian families (of different denominations) who sometimes feel isolated and forgotten, away from the center of activity, Jerusalem. Many of the parishioners are young couples starting families and are in dire need of spiritual encouragement. Before leaving the country to serve God in Egypt at the beginning of May, Father Michel rarely missed any gathering or celebration at Sabeel (he had first taken part in the Sabeel Jerusalem Day in March 1999). It was with sadness that the Sabeel family and his fellow clergymen bid him

farewell at a simple luncheon, praying that God would accompany him in his new sabeels.

Two clergy gatherings took place in March and April at the Center, following the regular pattern of breakfast, Bible meditation, the continued book review of *Vie et Mort des Chretiens de L'Orient*, and the sharing of common concerns. Sabeel welcomed, this year, a newcomer, the young energetic Catholic priest of Abboud, Father Aktham Hijjazin within its circle. He and the elderly Greek Orthodox priest in that village, Father Abdallah Sammarin, together draw a beautiful picture of two generations of servants of Christ cooperating and working with love. Father Hijjazin was instrumental in making the festivities in Aboud a very positive, refreshing and warm gathering of friends.

Youth activities

Stefan Salameh's first official encounter with the youth happened on Saturday, February 26, at 6:00pm at Sabeel when 21 young people from various church-related youth groups in Jerusalem came together. Stefan introduced Sabeel's planned conferences and celebrations and invited the youth to share their suggestions and ideas for better coordination and cooperation throughout the country. Though most of the Catholic youth groups were busy with the Papal visit, there was a positive attitude towards joint activities.

News from Nazareth

At the planning meeting in January with Sabeel's president, the Nazareth branch pointed out its priorities, which in addition to the general local celebrations would concentrate on historical trips and visits and a study of the spirituality of the different churches in Nazareth and the Galilee.

"Together, Towards New Horizons". The Nazareth celebrations were held on April 8th and 9th at the Salesian Sisters School and the Salesian Monks, Don Bosco Convent.

Though a lot of the groundwork and preparations were done in the Jerusalem office, it was the Nazareth Sabeel Committee, with Violet Khoury the Galilee coordinator, Nibal Mizzawi the staff member, and a volunteer team of adults and young people who had to put the final touches to the program and rally the participants. Knowing the needs and interest of the Galilee parishioners, the fourth session was not included in the program; and the second session and third sessions were combined in one. The conference part was thus shortened and tailored to the taste of each site. What is important is that the people were happy and felt the importance of their long Christian heritage that had been neglected and forgotten. The Salesian nuns were very cooperative and the new beautiful and modern hall, a very welcome and appropriate choice. The general apathy that is felt among the local Christian population has made this program even more necessary and challenging.

After Father Elias Odeh, a Catholic priest and educator from Shafa Amr threw in some practical ideas to revitalize the Church ministry, George Dibbini, a Sabeel Nazareth committee member, active in the Orthodox Council, tried to draw out the people's view. After a short break and a light supper, the festival part brought new life into the hall. The producer of the play, Bassam Zu'mot was there in person; the actors performed like professionals. When the Silverstones started to play their music, the joyous clamor of the people was intermingled with the echo of instruments, and the beautiful voices of Garo and William, the two vocalists of the group. The team of volunteers were swaying and dancing contagiously and priests and nuns were also

tapping measure with their feet. The highlight surprise of the evening was a song entitled "Sabeel". All difficulties and frustrations were forgotten; worries about expenses and transportation of sound system and musicians could wait. This was a celebration to glorify God and this was an expression of uninterrupted witness in the Holy Land.

The next day, about a hundred people gathered for the ecumenical service. The Choir of the Annunciation Basilica led by Yousef al Khill and the Peace Tunes group from Tur'an led by Fadi Ramadan linked together readings and prayers with hymns. New young soloist voices provided an enchanting promise, a singing testimony to Christ. Father Elias Chacour, vice-president of Sabeel who had returned from a trip abroad only hours earlier, set the ecumenical atmosphere and the Rev. Naim Ateek, the preacher of the day, presented a precise agenda with concrete steps towards a meaningful Jubilee. The document entitled "Let us now go to Bethlehem" was circulated in Arabic and can be obtained in English in paper form or on our website. A whole busload of Orthodox youngsters from Jerusalem, who were conducting their own conference in Nazareth, made a stop at the church. Archmandrite Atallah Hanna from Jerusalem and Father Atallah Makhoul from Kufr Yassif, leaders of the group, took part in prayers and readings at the ecumenical service. Father Suhail Khoury, a Melkite priest also participated.

Ecumenical Worship Service

The celebrations would have been incomplete without the thanksgiving ecumenical worship services following the conferences on the next day. The plan was to encourage churches to invite preachers from other denominations to give the sermon during the Sunday service.

This was definitely a first in Beit Sahour where the service was held in the Church Hall beneath the Greek Orthodox Church on March 12, 2000. The hall was filled with choirs from the Greek Orthodox Church, the Greek Catholic choir formed by the Abu Saa'da family (The Palestinian Von Trapps), The Syrian Orthodox, the Salesian trumpeters and the Lutheran School Children's choir. Many people were moved at the sight of clergymen representing Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches sitting on stage, sharing the kiss of peace and blessing together big baskets of bread for the Agape meal. The readings were shared among women and men, again, from the different denominations. Archmandrite Atallah Hanna, from the Greek Orthodox Church gave the sermon. The presence of the Syrian Orthodox Bishop, Mar Sweirios Malki Murad was an encouraging sign for the residents of Beit Sahour (The Shepherd's Field) not used to this kind of simplicity and humility. The head of the Orthodox Council, George Baabish welcomed the guests and the Greek Orthodox parish priest Father Saba Kheir, prayed, and observers remarked that there definitely was a warm atmosphere of trust and friendship as the fellowship was continued over coffee and Arabic sweets.

The Jerusalem service was held at St. Stephen's Cathedral within the beautiful grounds of the Dominican Convent on Nablus Road. Right across the street, is one of the Contemporary Stations of the Cross for Palestinian residents, the Ministry of Interior, where people daily stand in long queues, waiting in humiliation for permits, with the reality of the unjust occupation hovering over their heads.

The service was held on Saturday, May 6 and the Syrian Orthodox Bishop, Mar Sweirios Malki Murad delivered the sermon. Choirs representing the Roman and Catholic Churches, the Coptic and Syrian Orthodox Churches, a duo from the Greek Orthodox Church and another from the Armenian Orthodox Church filled the air with

praise to God. Again there was an Agape meal blessed this time by the three bishops, Aris Shirvanian, Mar Sweirios Malki Murad and Daoud Haddad (retired Lutheran); the fellowship then continued outside the cathedral with coffee, cookies and friendly chats. Many commented that the service was beautiful and expressed disappointment at the small number of attendants - about 75 – which they attributed to people being saturated with services so soon after two weeks of Easter celebrations.

Stepping back to evaluate the celebrations, we realize that it is a difficult task we have chosen to accomplish throughout this year; we are convinced that it is a necessary and important mission and we shall not waiver in our determination. Slowly but surely, the frustrations will diminish, and people will rise above their apathy to pursue their future, empowered by faith, filled with hope and encouraged by love. All difficulties and frustrations are forgotten. The Palestinian Christians will remain an uninterrupted witness in the Holy Land.

International Department - *sabeel.org* welcomes first visitor from Kazakhstan

Recent visitors have seen the re-design of the Sabeel homepage www.sabeel.org and checked out the updates on Sabeel's programs. The 40+ additions made since the last Cornerstone include an advocacy report on bypass roads, commemorations on the anniversary of the Deir Yassin massacre, Palestinian prisoners day, and an Easter message from Sabeel. We have also added more information on conferences – both local and international. The website has received 2000 visits since March, from New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Singapore, the U.S. Government, and from the Caucasian republic.

Meet the Palestinians

As Sabeel's "Meet the Palestinians" lectures continue to expand under the "[Ahlan wa Sahlan](#)" program, the Center hosted over 400 students, theologians, pilgrims, scholars, peace workers, and volunteers from March to May of 2000. Participants listened to presentations from the board and staff of Sabeel, concerning the history and identity of Palestinian Christians, as well as the religious and political issues that affect their lives. Further, the "Contemporary Way of the Cross" component of the program, continues to serve as a powerful witness to visitors.

The Sabeel Center would like to take the time to thank visitors and representatives from various Christian denominations and organizations worldwide, including The Church of Scotland, especially former Moderator John Cairns; The Church of Norway and the National Council of Churches - Norway, especially Bishop Ole Kvarme; The Episcopal Church - USA, especially Bishop Herb Thompson of Cincinnati, Ohio; The United Church of Canada, especially Area Secretary for South Asia, the Pacific Islands and Interfaith Dialogue, Bruce Gregersen; The Church of England; The United Reformed Church; The Presbyterian Church USA; Church Mission Society (UK); and the Christian Peacemaker Team - Hebron. Sabeel would like to extend its sincere appreciation to Chip Carter (son of former President Jimmy Carter) and the visiting members of The Friendship Force, an international organization dedicated to building realtionships worldwide through intercultural exchange programs with families in various countries. This was the group's first time in Palestinian-controlled territory, and we offer our warmest thanks prayers on behalf of their valuable initiatives towards dialogue and understanding.

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And They Call It Peace...

by Jean Zaru

The content of this article is from a speech given by Jean Zaru in March 2000, Uppsala, Sweden. Per the author all statistics have been taken from B'Tselem.

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"Why are Palestinians living in the occupied territories forced to live in bantustans without the right to resist (because this will be interpreted as terrorism)? And why is this not called apartheid."

"When the military attorney warned him... Barak answered "No international law can change our approach. Our decisions are not made according to international precedents but according to our needs and interests."

"Recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world..." (*Introduction to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*).

The Oslo Accords have presented the world with misleading images of peace and now we are left with a difficult and hard reality on the ground. The international media speaks of the Accords as historic because they brought peace and reconciliation. I often quote Ezekiel 13:10, "Because they mislead my people saying peace when there is no peace" or the words of Isaiah 59:14-15, "Justice is turned back and righteousness stands at a distance for truth stumbles in the public place and uprightness cannot enter. Truth is lacking and whoever turns from evil is despoiled." To have peace we must tell the truth; without truth-telling there is no peacemaking.

It is not easy for me to analyze the peace process and its shortcomings, because the local and international media have made it seem as if whoever is against the process is against peace, is not rational, is not moderate and, furthermore, is often labeled a fanatic or terrorist. I recall September 1993 in Selly Oak College and 1994 in Sweden when I spoke about the Oslo Accords that some could not understand why a Quaker, why a peace activist, would warn of a sad outcome rather than rejoice. Why? There is poor coverage and a misreported Middle East process in the United States and Europe. Palestinian and Arab views are rarely included in the mainstream media. For that reason, there has been unanimity in the public discourse of the West that the peace process is a good thing.

"Oslo can only be genuinely understood as an economic, political and disciplinarian restructuring of Israel's relationship with the occupied territories, based on the unanimity of given Zionist agendas within Israel" (*News from Within, The Alternative Information Center*, Jerusalem, October 1999). Or according to Edward Said, "How do you spell apartheid? O-S-L-O."

When reports appear of the torture and killings of Palestinians, they are neither connected to the deeply flawed Oslo Accords nor with an Israeli policy that maintains hundreds of settlements on our land—a policy that continues to increase and enlarge them, even during Israeli Prime Minister Barak's government. Many rejoiced for Barak's election and hailed him as a man of peace, including Arab leaders. According to a report released on 26 September 1999 by the Israeli advocacy group Peace Now, the so-called "growth" during the first three months of Barak's government includes the issuing of tenders for the construction of 2,600 new settlement units. This may be compared to an annual average of 3,000 settlement units under Netanyahu. Coupled with the army's closure of 23,000 dunums of Palestinian land west of Hebron, it becomes clear that Barak is not at all interested in International Law which states that settlements are illegal.

When the military attorney warned him about this Barak answered, "No international law can change our approach. Our decisions are not made according to international precedents but according to our needs and interests." Neither is

Israeli law his frame of reference when it comes to deciding the legitimacy of any settlement, despite the fact that the "rule of law" was a central issue in Barak's election campaign. Only seven "strongholds" out of the 42 built after the Wye River Agreement were declared illegal by Israel, that is, as not having permission from the Israeli government to exist. And only two of the seven illegal settlements have been evacuated.

Settlement growth is driven by political and ideological considerations that serve the strategic, military and economic interests of Israel as well as its scheme of national assertiveness. The number of settlers has reached a total of 349,327 of which 180,000 live in Jerusalem and 6,166 in the Gaza Strip. These settlements are united by a system of highways or by-pass roads and industrial areas that prevent continuity between Palestinian towns and villages and have also been built upon confiscated Palestinian land. There are 177 settlements in the West Bank, including Jerusalem and 18 settlements in the Gaza Strip.

Israel has permitted these settlements to cause environmental degradation to adjacent Palestinian communities. Untreated sewage, for example, is often allowed to run into the valleys below settlements, threatening the agriculture and health of neighboring Palestinian towns and villages. The very existence of these settlements is a direct violation of internationally binding agreements and regulations as international humanitarian law explicitly prohibits the occupying power to make permanent changes that do not benefit the occupied population.

Not only is our land being confiscated, but also are our water resources. Israel controls all the water resources of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, pumping 85% for its own use and leaving us Palestinians with only 15% of our own water for all our needs, domestic and agricultural. While Israelis enjoy the annual per capita use of 344 cubic meters, Jordanians are limited to 244 cubic meters and Palestinians have to survive on a mere 93 cubic meters. In terms of domestic use, the average Palestinian is limited to 39-50 liters per capita, per day, while Israelis consume more than 220 liters per capita, per day. In Jewish settlements, each settler is provided with 280-300 liters daily. And thus, Palestinians have become less and less able to use water for irrigation or even to water backyard family vegetable plots, let alone flower gardens, trees and basic needs at home. All of the while Jewish settlers water their grass lawns and fill their swimming pools.

In the Gaza Strip, one million Palestinians use 25% of the water and the remaining goes to a settler population of fewer than 6,200. In Hebron, 70% of the water goes to 8,500 settlers and only 30% is allocated to the city's 250,000 inhabitants. Israel remains in grave violation of the Hague Regulations, the Fourth Geneva Convention and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Israel continues to confiscate and build on Arab land in East Jerusalem as part of the 'judiazation' of the city; while Arab Jerusalemites are not only deprived of their land but are also often denied building permits. Furthermore, many suffer from house demolitions and the loss of their Jerusalem residency rights and accompanying social services. Since March 1993, Israel has closed off the city of East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. Palestinians who are not officially residents of the city are not allowed to enter Jerusalem without a proper permit issued from the Israeli military authorities. This closure essentially divides the West Bank into north and south cantons and has greatly increased the fragmentation of the Palestinian community.

I am a pacifist and declared publicly, as early as 1975, at the Nairobi 5th Assembly of the World Council of Churches my aspirations for peace and reconciliation based on the mutual recognition of the rights of both Palestinians and Israelis, including a two state solution according to International Law and United Nations resolutions, the right of return for Palestinian refugees and equality for Palestinians living in Israel.

It was a lonely voice then, and I was asked by dignitaries and church leaders (all men) not to stick my neck out and make any suggestions. However, I did not stop. I continue until this day because the cries of my people for peace with justice are loud and clear, and my will to resist injustice has not been defeated. I do admit that often I feel tired, frustrated and drained and that it is people like you, who still care to be open to the truth, who empower me and give me courage and hope to go on.

What Israel offered the Palestinian leadership (and this includes the Noble Peace prize winners, Peres and Rabin) was restricted to overseeing the Palestinians living in the occupied territories as it relates to matters of internal security, health, education, sanitation, tourism and postal services. Israel still controls the land, water, overall security, economy and borders. Thus, Israel gave Palestinian President Arafat responsibility for the people without the land, without sovereignty, without a commitment to end the occupation, and, in addition to that, the responsibility to discipline and control any one who resists the occupation or the Oslo Accords.

Can we have peace without self-determination and sovereignty? Without land and water that are essentially a question of survival? Can we develop our society economically while Israeli imposed restrictions remain in place: road blocks; closures; isolation; unemployment; economic marginalization and exclusion; exploitation of water, land and people's work; and, in addition, no protection whatsoever?

How can we have peace when millions of Palestinian refugees still live in refugee camps in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon? The refugees had hoped that the Oslo Accords would address the issue of their right of return, which is a basic human right, and compensation or at least improve their economic situation, but have been disappointed again and again.

Refugees suffer from overcrowding, poverty, scarcity of water, lack of a sanitation system, and unemployment, as well as a decrease in the services offered by UNWRA, the United Nations Works and Relief Agency for Palestine Refugees. The situation of refugees in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip is worse than those in refugee camps in Jordan and the West Bank, but all share the frustration of growing unemployment and the lack of progress on the refugee question in the political negotiations. The Palestinian refugees would like to participate in setting the agenda in defense of their rights according to UN Resolution 194 and international law which supports their right to compensation and property rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, does not allow for racial, ethnic or religious segregation. Europe is alarmed if right wing political or religious leaders encourage racism and exclusiveness. Past demonstrations in Europe against Austrian politicians and the International Holocaust conference in Sweden confirm that—and rightly so. What we Palestinians cannot understand is how in our own country, in our own land, can we be denied water, or land, or building permits, or the right to free movement, or right of return, or self-determination all because we

are not Jewish. And how can this be tolerated by the enlightened world in light of the hundreds of UN resolutions that have been passed condemning Israel for its practices and demanding justice for Palestinians?

Why are Palestinians living in the occupied territories forced to live in *bantustans* without the right to resist (because this will be interpreted as terrorism)? And why is this not called apartheid? Is this racism or is it a peace process? Why should we have to drop our priorities for independence, statehood or human rights just to improve Israeli security? Is this really democracy? Is this equality? Is this a mutuality that will discourage all forms of direct and structural violence and bring about peace and reconciliation?

Can we go on endorsing the Oslo Accords and the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations assuming a type of symmetry that views contending parties in conflict as equals? After all, the conflict is there because of the incompatibility between the two parties. Can we go on with these arrangements while Israel dictates rather than negotiates and does so without regard for the deteriorating day to day reality of Palestinian life, where insecurity, unemployment, poverty, and frustration have become almost unendurable?

Can the world continue to be indifferent, as is President Clinton and his government, to the daily abuses of Israeli power and never say a word in public expressing the slightest understanding of our calvary? Can the world go on distorting truth so that even these bad agreements, which do not offer much to Palestinians, are not applied by Israel itself?

Even after the two parties labor to reach an agreement (most often one that fulfills Israeli demands with help from the United States) and the agreement is signed, Israel does not always feel bound to the timetable or the content. Another round of negotiations and the parties end up with another agreement that is even more diluted. There is a sense of apathy in the occupied territories and many people have stopped following the news of these events.

There is such a great need to tell the truth. For there is no plan, no deal, and no imposed peace process—no matter how powerful—that can completely destroy our alternatives. We must have faith in our rights and in the signs of hope in our midst. There are many Palestinians working together with some Israelis to expose the structural violence that is the foundation of conflict. Understanding structural violence enables us not only to consider our situation at the level of symptoms, but more importantly at the level of underlying and systemic causes.

Structural violence is silent. It does not show. Television captures direct violence and, most often, the violence of the powerless and hopeless which is then usually qualified as terror.

We must work hard to find non-violent ways of overcoming political, social, economic, ecological and religious violence and to join hands with all those who are committed to fighting the forces of darkness. In order to hope for justice and to hope for peace, we must work for peace.

What is Peace?

Peace is a state of respect, cooperation and well being.

Peace is the presence of social justice.

Peace is the absence of war, poverty and hunger.

Peace is freedom from sickness and disease. It is employment and health.

Peace is hope for our future and the future of all God's children and God's world.

Peace is when we have no fear to assemble, worship, work, publish and say the truth even to the powerful.

Peace is Salaam, well being for all, with equality, and respect for human rights.

Peace is when everyone feels at home and is accepted with no barriers of age, sex, race, religion or nationality.

Peace is action that is dynamic and positive.

Peace is that fragile harmony that carries with it the experience of the struggle, the endurance of suffering and the strength of love.

May we all be strengthened to work for this kind of peace.

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