

# CORNER STONE

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## HAVE NO FEAR, LITTLE FLOCK

*Luke 12:32*

### CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND

*by Romell Soudah*

The question of a Christian presence in the Holy Land has been a major concern and an issue of great importance on both the local and international levels. The entire Christian population in Palestine and Israel is approximately 162,000. Of the Christian population, a sum of 120,000 Christians are living in Israel (inside the green line) and the remaining part, 42,000, are living under today's Palestinian Authority (the Occupied Territories: The West Bank and The Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem) of which 40,000 are living in the West Bank and 2,000 are living in the Gaza Strip.

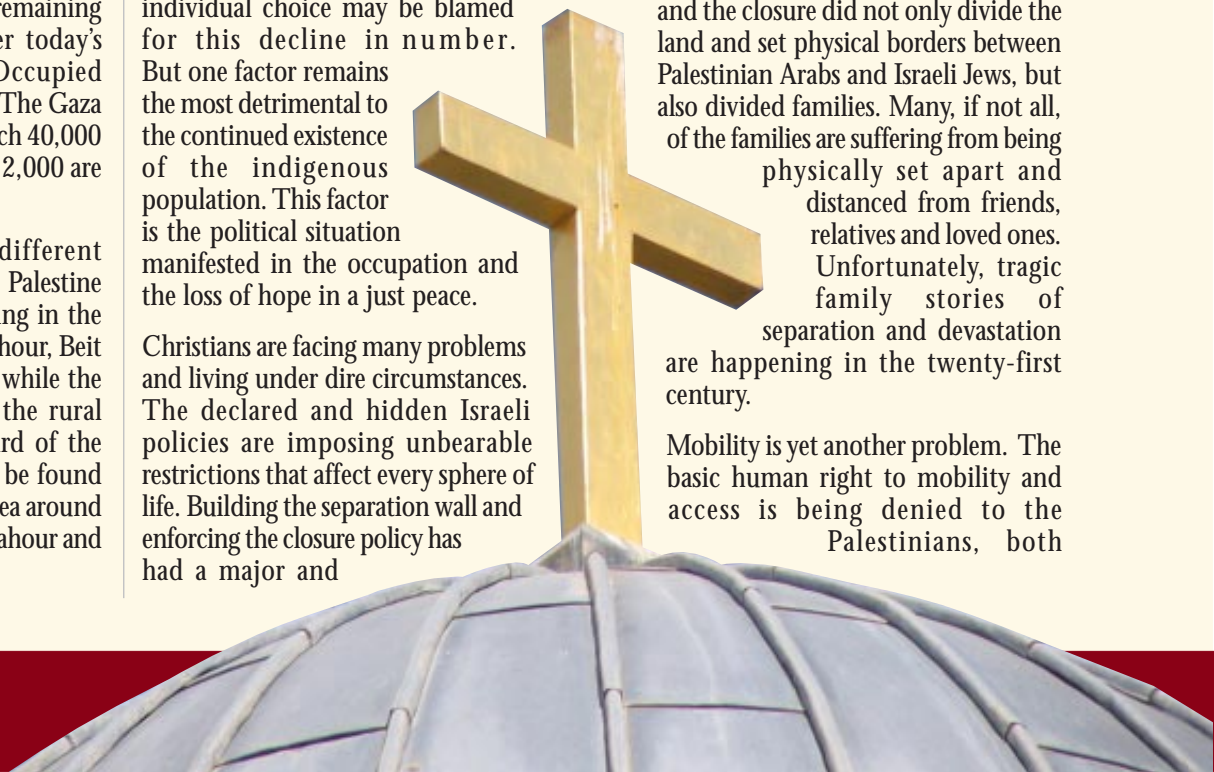
Christians are centered in different localities (villages and cities) in Palestine today. More than 80% are living in the urban areas (Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, Beit Jala, Jerusalem and Ramallah) while the remaining 20% are living in the rural areas. However, about one third of the total number of Christians can be found in the Bethlehem District, the area around and including Bethlehem, Beit Sahour and Beit Jala.

The number of Christians in Palestine has been declining over the years. Before 1948 more Christians were living in Palestine than today. In 1967, Christians were 5% of the total population in the West Bank and 1% of the total population in the Gaza Strip. Today Christians are less than 2% in the West Bank and less than 0.25% in the Gaza Strip. A variety of factors ranging from the economic to the individual choice may be blamed for this decline in number. But one factor remains the most detrimental to the continued existence of the indigenous population. This factor is the political situation manifested in the occupation and the loss of hope in a just peace.

Christians are facing many problems and living under dire circumstances. The declared and hidden Israeli policies are imposing unbearable restrictions that affect every sphere of life. Building the separation wall and enforcing the closure policy has had a major and

devastating impact on Palestinian economic and social activities. Such policies lead to unlimited negative consequences. It reduces the level of economic activities and job opportunities as well as increasing the level of unemployment and poverty. Like all Palestinians, Christians were badly hit by the construction of the separation wall. In the Bethlehem area where the majority of West Bank Christians reside, many families lost their valuable land, were forced to close their shops, and lost their jobs. In addition, construction of the wall and the closure did not only divide the land and set physical borders between Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews, but also divided families. Many, if not all, of the families are suffering from being physically set apart and distanced from friends, relatives and loved ones. Unfortunately, tragic family stories of separation and devastation are happening in the twenty-first century.

Mobility is yet another problem. The basic human right to mobility and access is being denied to the Palestinians, both



Christians and Muslims. Palestinians are under siege in their own cities and villages. Each town in the Occupied Territories has become a prison as people and vehicles are not free to move and travel between cities and villages. The restrictions on mobility are enforced by many heavily guarded Israeli roadblocks, checkpoints and watch-towers between Palestinian cities and villages. People are prevented from practicing their economic and social activities. It is not easy to reach work, school, university, place of worship, hospital and most other locations. Mr. Hanna Nasser, the former mayor of Bethlehem City, perfectly described the situation by saying, "If Joseph and Mary tried to come today, Israeli soldiers would check their papers, rummage through their baggage, and rudely turn them away".

Christians in East Jerusalem are in double jeopardy due to the restrictions imposed upon all the city residents. The declared policy of the State of Israel is to limit the number of Palestinian Jerusalem residents and decrease it to almost one third of its size. This will have a more pronounced impact on the Christian residents of the city. Being the minority and the most likely to travel abroad for work or study puts them in danger of having their residency revoked by the Israeli Ministry of Interior. As residents of the State of Israel, the Palestinians in the city are not supposed to leave it for more than seven months at a time without a "legitimate" reason such as studying. If such an absence is noted, the residency is revoked.

Moreover, most Christians in the city are educated and that opens opportunities of employment at different non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and foreign organizations. Most of these are now behind the Separation Wall. Employees have to cross check points and travel longer to arrive to their work places.



Many have to choose between their place of residence within the ever limited space allocated for the Palestinian residents in the city and their workplaces. Such a decision is becoming more and more difficult. The move either way may cause havoc. Children have to move to new schools; couples have to choose to live in the city where one of them is making the larger income. Some are leaving their dream houses that they own and are moving to where work is and renting housing there. Such decisions are causing the number of Christians in the city to further diminish.

Another problem that the city residents have is the allocated lands for housing. In Jerusalem land that could be used for housing that match the natural growth of the society are very limited. Building

permits, if all goes well, may take six to twenty years to be issued after multiple applications and thousands of shekels in fees. Despite the fact that many Christians have average to above average income, many cannot afford the cost of the limited available land and the fees that need to be paid to develop them. Again, we find many Christians are emigrating or moving out of Jerusalem to neighboring cities within the Palestinian Authority areas, which puts them in danger of having their residency in Jerusalem revoked.

Overall, the continued lack of economic and social options compounded by the lack of stability in the political arena will cause more and more Christians to leave the Holy Land in search of peace, security, and a different way of life. Therefore, emigration is becoming the most detrimental factor to the almost extinct Palestinian Christian population. Much research has been done and statistical information is available detailing the diminishing number of Christians due to this fact.

Today the Christian presence in the Holy Land is of importance and needs more attention than ever. Holy places in Palestine are the shrine of the Christian world. These few Palestinian Christians who still reside in Palestine are the only direct link between Christians around the world and the mother Church which was established in Jerusalem over 2000 years ago. Christian survival in the Holy Land is of vital importance to preserve its unique culture and status. Palestinian Christians are there to make sure that the flame of Christ's message continues to burn in its original birthplace.

*Romell Soudeh is a lecturer at Bethlehem University. He conducted a survey on the Christian presence in the Holy Land for Sabeel's 6th International Conference: The Forgotten Faithful. Results of the survey will be posted on [www.sabeel.org](http://www.sabeel.org) in November 2006.*

# THE CHURCHES OF THE HOLY LAND

## A Rich Mosaic

by Naim Ateek

In preparation for the 6th International Conference, I would like to present another portrait of Palestinian Christianity\*. The following is a very succinct survey of the mainline churches of the Holy Land (Israel and Palestine) with a brief emphasis on the question of the Status Quo with which most people are not familiar. I am certain that this issue will, on the one hand, clarify some aspects of Palestinian Christianity, while on the other hand, raise some questions in the minds of readers which hopefully we can address during the November conference.

Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land belong to a variety of church denominations. It is a rich mosaic. The following is a very brief historical outline:

**The Greek Orthodox or Byzantine Orthodox Church:** This is oldest church in the land, and most indigenous Palestinian Christians were members of it at one time or another. Although the official name of the church sounds foreign, the members themselves are Palestinians. Between the 4th and 16th centuries the Orthodox Patriarch was Arab. Since 1534 the hierarchy of the church has been Greek. Today the Patriarch is Theophilus III. He occupies the highest hierarchical Christian position in the land and has a number of Archbishops that serve under him. They are all Greek with the exception of Archbishop Atallah Hanna who is Palestinian Arab, consecrated on December 24, 2005. The Orthodox community of the Holy Land is approximately 40,000. Nazareth has the largest Orthodox congregation with a membership of about 17,000. In 1724 the church split largely over the question of the indigenization of the hierarchy and a large segment of the church went into union with Rome. They became known as Greek Catholics or Melkites. Today they comprise the largest number of Christians inside the state of Israel, approximately 70,000 members. The Melkites have two bishops in Israel and Palestine. Archbishop Elias Chacour was consecrated on February 25, 2006 as Archbishop of Galilee; and Bishop George Bakar as Patriarchal vicar in Jerusalem who presides over a Melkite community in the West Bank including East Jerusalem that is approximately 2500 in number. The Orthodox and Melkite churches comprise the largest number of Christians in Israel and Palestine. Both churches possess a number of institutions- schools, medical clinics, homes for the elderly, and others.

\* See *Cornerstone Issue 40* on [www.sabeel.org](http://www.sabeel.org)



**The Armenian Orthodox Church:** The Church's history in the Holy Land goes back to the 4th century when Armenian Christians came to live close to the holy places. Although they are not ethnically Arab, many of them regard themselves today as Palestinians. Archbishop Torkom Manoogian is the 96th Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem. At the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries a good number of Armenians came to Palestine, as well as to other parts of the Middle East to escape genocide by the Turks. There are approximately 5000 Armenians in the Holy Land living largely in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Jaffa, and Haifa. In 1742, a segment of the church separated and went into union with Rome and became known as the Armenian Catholic Church. There are 75 Armenian Catholic families in the Holy Land and their patriarchal vicar is Mgr. Raphael Minassian.

**The Coptic Orthodox Church:** They also came to be close to the Holy Places from the early Christian centuries and to provide ministry to their pilgrims. Although they came from Egypt, they see themselves as Palestinians today. The Coptic Archbishop Anba Abraham and the clergy are all Egyptians. They number 1500 and have church centers in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho, Jaffa, and Nazareth. As with other Orthodox churches, a segment of the church separated in 1895 and went into union with Rome

and is known today as the Coptic Catholic Church. They have no church in Jerusalem.

**The Syrian Orthodox Church:** Like the Copts, they came to Jerusalem in the early Christian centuries. Their concentration today is in Jerusalem and Bethlehem where they number approximately 5000. The highest prelate is Archbishop Mar Sewerios Malki Murad. In 1783 a segment of the church separated and went into union with Rome. They formed the Syrian Catholic Church and they, too, have congregations in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. They are represented today by Archbishop Gregorius Boutros Malki. They number approximately 500. Although the Archbishop is Syrian in nationality, all the members of the church consider themselves Palestinians.

**The Ethiopian Orthodox Church:** It goes back in its presence in the Holy Land to the early Christian centuries. They are a very small expatriate Christian community, monks, nuns, and a few lay, who live their liturgical prayer life within their churches and monasteries in the Jerusalem and Bethlehem area. They are represented by Archbishop Abune Grima.

**The Roman Catholic Church (Latin):** It had its official beginning in Palestine during the period of the Crusades when a Latin Patriarch displaced the Orthodox Patriarch in Jerusalem. However, when the Crusades came to an end in 1187, the Latin Patriarch was also removed. In 1233, the Franciscans came to the Holy Land and established themselves as the Guardians of the Holy Places. The Latin Patriarch, however, did not return to Jerusalem until 1847. A very important element that strengthened and expanded the Roman Catholic presence has been the various Catholic religious orders for both men and women who came from the West. There are 31 religious orders for monks and 72 for nuns in the land. In 1987, the first Palestinian Patriarch was appointed by the Vatican, Mgr. Michel Sabbah. The number of Latins in Israel and Palestine is approximately 35,000. They have a good number of institutions throughout the land that include, schools, hospitals, homes for the aged, retreat centers, Bethlehem University, and many others.

NOTE: In 1517 the Ottoman Turks occupied Palestine as well as many other countries in the region. Due to internal Christian squabbles in Jerusalem regarding the use and control of the holy places, in 1852 the Turks organized the relationships between the historic churches in the land vis-à-vis the Holy Places, their respective rights,

and function especially in the Jerusalem and Bethlehem areas. This became known as the Status Quo and is still in effect today. According to the Status Quo, all the mother churches that have been mentioned thus far (not their Catholic offshoots) had rights in the use of the holy places as specified in some details in the Turkish decree. This included the Greek Orthodox Church, the Franciscans, the Armenian Orthodox Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

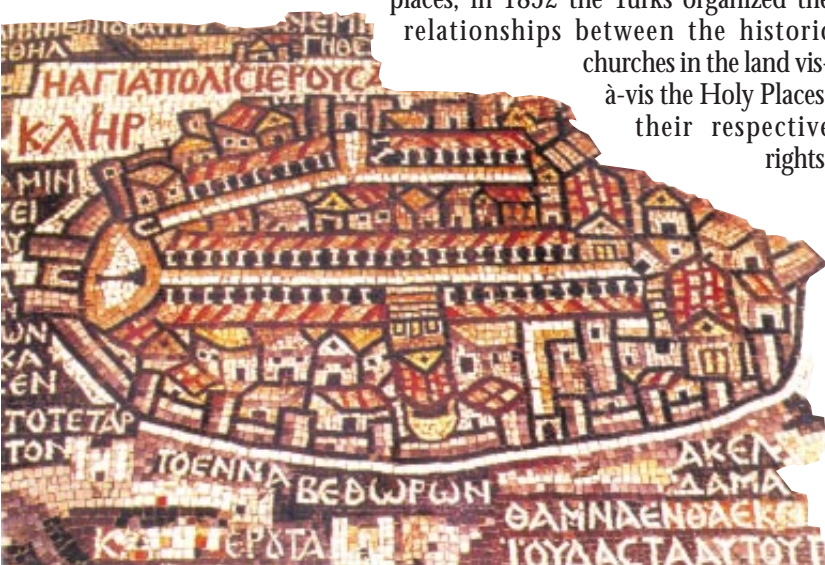
**The Maronite Church:** The home of the Maronite Christians is Lebanon. It is one of the historic churches in the Middle East. During the Crusades the whole church went into union with Rome while preserving its eastern Christian heritage. Most of the Maronites are living today in the Galilee in addition to congregations in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Jaffa. The present bishop is Bishop Paul Sayyah and the number of Maronites is approximately 8000.

**The Anglican and Lutheran Churches:** The Anglicans and Lutherans came to Jerusalem in 1841 as one entity and established the Jerusalem Bishopric. For the first 40 years they served jointly together and alternated the appointment of bishops between England and Germany. A good number of churches and institutions were established throughout the Holy Land. In the 1880's the two churches ended their official agreement and set up separate church ministries where the Anglicans served the northern part of Palestine and east of the Jordan River; and the Lutherans focused their ministry on the Jerusalem and Bethlehem area. The Anglicans were the first to install indigenous bishops followed by the Lutherans - 1976 and 1979 respectively. The Anglican bishop in Jerusalem today is Bishop Riah Abu El Assal and the Lutheran's is Bishop Munib Younan. Both churches have a number of institutions and their combined membership in the land is less than 5000.

The official protocol of the churches today is as follows: The Greek Orthodox Patriarch, the Latin Patriarch, the Armenian Orthodox Patriarch, the Franciscan Custos of the Holy Land, the Coptic Orthodox Archbishop, the Syrian Orthodox Archbishop, the Ethiopian Orthodox Archbishop, the Maronite Patriarchal Exarch, the Bishop of the Episcopal (Anglican) Church, the Lutheran Bishop, the Syrian Catholic Exarch, the Greek Catholic Exarch, and the Armenian Catholic Exarch. They are 13 in all.

There are four important remarks that need to be made:

1. Historically, the Greek Orthodox Church has always resented the loss of many of its members to the Catholic and Protestant churches. It is still the cause of much direct or indirect frustration especially among some of the Greek hierarchy. There is, however, a greater acceptance of the other churches on the part of most Palestinian Orthodox clergy and people. Nevertheless, the wounds have been deep and, on the whole, not been healed. For the church in the Holy Land to move



forward there must be healing.

2. There are small groups of expatriate Christians who live in the land and maintain various ministries - liturgical, societal, educational, humanitarian, pilgrim. Some of them have been here for many years but they are largely expatriates and have very few or no local indigenous membership. Some of these are the Church of Scotland, Mennonite Central Committee, Society of Friends (Quakers), Romanian Orthodox Church, Russian Orthodox Church, White Russians and others.
3. There is also a number of local, free, and small evangelical communities in different areas of the country. The largest and best organized among them is the Baptist church that started in Galilee in the 1920's, and has become established with its pastors and congregations. There are other smaller local church groups like the Church of the Nazarene, Church of God, Pentecostals, Plymouth Brethren, and others. Some of them are led by local preachers and have attracted a number of local Christians to their meetings. Their worship services are non-liturgical and simple where the emphasis is on the study and interpretation of the Bible.
4. Since its inception, the Christian Church has always contained in its membership multi-ethnic and multi-racial members including Jewish believers who were among the first to believe in Jesus as Messiah (Christ) and Lord. Since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the number of Jewish believers has been steadily increasing. They are established as local congregations of Messianic Jews throughout the state of Israel. Their numbers range between 5,000 to 10,000. In addition, a good number of the Russian immigrants into Israel consider themselves Christian and not Jewish. They, too, have their own Russian-speaking congregations. Most of them are Russian Orthodox. However, there are also evangelicals among them. They are estimated in the tens of thousands.

As you can see, the above is a rich though complicated mosaic. Despite the frailty of us human beings, whether clergy or lay, the Church in the Holy Land has survived, and will continue to survive through the power of the Holy Spirit. The challenge before us is not only to see the mere physical survival of the church, but the presence of a living, active, and empowered community.

*The Rev. Naim Ateek is Director of Sabeel.*

## STATEMENT BY CHURCH RELATED ORGANIZATIONS (CRO's) AND CHURCH INSTITUTIONS

We Palestinian Arab Christians of the East have for centuries lived together and in unity with our Muslim brothers and sisters, with whom we share the same land and the same destiny. Our co-existence has been a model to others, and together we have been able to overcome various challenges that threatened our unity. We have stood firm in the face of all those who have tried to destroy our national unity.

### **Based on these facts we affirm that:**

- Any offence against religious symbols or holy places will, inevitably, cause harm to our national unity which is the safeguard of our continued existence on our land and in our country. Any such offensive behavior can also cause harm to the Palestinian people as a whole and to our National Authority which is responsible for the protection of our Christian and Muslim holy places.
- We are perplexed and regret His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI's use of the quotation that hurt our Muslim brothers and sisters and our fellow citizens in the Holy Land and around the world.
- We regret and strongly condemn the attacks on several churches and Christian organizations in Palestine. These unjustified attacks endeavor to harm the distinctive national unity among Christians and Muslims across generations. Such attacks are bound to be taken advantage of by opportunists who claim that Christian holy places will be unsafe in a Palestinian state.
- We therefore call upon the various sectors of our community to act prudently and be alert in order to thwart the endeavors of such opportunists. We also call upon the Palestinian National Authority to make every effort and to undertake all necessary measures that will prevent such attacks in the future. We hope that our call will reach all those who care about the wellbeing of all the Palestinian people.
- We also call upon the media in all its forms to abstain from stirring people's religious sensitivities, creating strife and endorsing accusations and threats.

Finally, we pray to God for strength to overcome the occupation and all obstacles in the way of our people, so that together we can achieve peace, freedom and understanding among different faiths, and respect for the dignity and faith of every person.

*The Arab Orthodox Club- Jerusalem  
Sabeel Liberation Theology Center  
The National Christian Association  
The East Jerusalem YMCA  
The Arab Catholic Scout Group  
The YWCA of Palestine  
Council of Orthodox Charities in Palestine  
The Laity Committee in the Holy Land  
The Arab Orthodox Community of Jerusalem  
The Syrian Orthodox Organizations & Institutions*

# MARGINALIZED AT HOME

by *Atallah Mansour*

As a result of Western missionaries' activities during the last two centuries, by the mid-1900's Palestinian Christians were more educated and more apt to live in urban communities than their Muslim countrymen. This characteristic made the Christians more mobile, less clinging to the land and more vulnerable to coming under violent pressure during the war of 1948. The result was that some two thirds of the 100,000 Christians who lived in the Palestinian area that became Israel found themselves as refugees outside the country. Only 34,000 Christians managed to remain in their homeland inside the newly created Israel. The vast majority of these survivors were living in rural areas of the Galilee Mountains.

An exception to this was Nazareth with its Christian majority. Nazareth was the only Palestinian town to maintain its Arab population of 12,000 safe and intact. The reason behind this was clear: the home town of the Prince of Peace, was also home for dozens of Christian missionaries. As it turned out, the presence of these monks and nuns, and internationals working as school and hospital staff, along with the prestige that Nazareth held, was the reason that Nazareth was spared from the Israeli atrocities which forced many other Palestinians to take refuge. The Israeli military began to drive villagers across the border to Lebanon.

The fact that the Nazarenes managed to stay in their homes encouraged others,

Christians and Muslims, to try to remain in their Galilee villages, including three Christian villages; Ailaboun, Kafr Bir'am, and Iqrit. These peaceful farmers were about to find this rather hard. The Greek-Catholic priest of Ailaboun, Father Mu'a'lem, refused to give up. He managed to contact church leaders in the Vatican to pressure the Israelis to permit a safe return for the farmers of Ailaboun to their homes. The other two villages, one Maronite and one Greek-Catholic, were deceived into believing that they were being removed temporarily "for a fortnight", but were never allowed to return home.

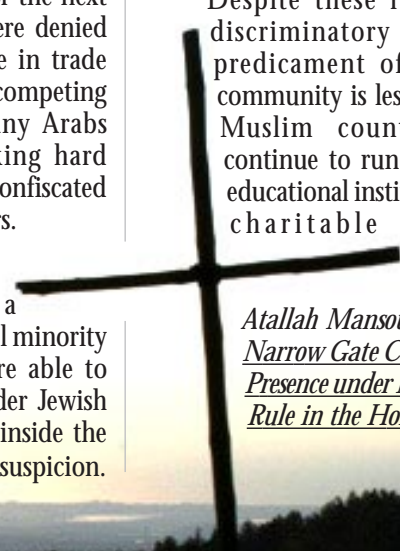
The Israeli government treated all local Arabs according to a Jewish tradition: "respect but suspect". Rural neighborhoods were split to make room for planting new Jewish settlements. In order to smoothly implement this policy of "judaization" of these areas, the Arabs were subject to military rule for the next twenty years. Arab workers were denied jobs and the right to organize in trade unions, to prevent them from competing with Jewish newcomers. Many Arabs earned their bread by working hard "illegally" to harvest their own confiscated land for their new Israeli masters.

From 1948 to 1977 the Arab states bordering Israel adopted a policy that disregarded the small minority of Palestinian Arabs who were able to remain in their homeland under Jewish rule. These Palestinians living inside the new Israel were regarded with suspicion.

Later the Arab states, with the help of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), came to realize that there was no justification for their shunning of the Israeli Arabs (or the "1948 Palestinians"). This realization came as somewhat of a spiritual relief and blessing to the Israeli Arabs, except for those who nourished false hopes about the future role they may play in changing Israel. This perceived threat moved the Israeli government to adopt counter-measures to legally perpetuate the status quo ensuring their everlasting supremacy. A new law was enacted to define Israel as "a Jewish and Democratic state". This contradiction of terms meant that only Jews are full citizens. Muslims and Christians are marginal minorities residing in the Land of Israel. Consequently, very few Christians have been hired for any high-level positions in the central government; not in the security or foreign services, and not even in the health or social services. Even the heads of the Christian department in the Ministry of Religions Affairs were not Christians.

Despite these restrictions and discriminatory practices, the predicament of the Christian community is less grim than their Muslim counterparts. They continue to run their prestigious educational institutions, hospitals, charitable services and churches.

*Atallah Mansour is the author of Narrow Gate Churches, Christian Presence under Muslim and Jewish Rule in the Holy Land.*



# AILABOUN

**Ailaboun is a small town in the Galilee located 30 km northeast of Nazareth. Its history goes back to the 5th Century BC when it was known as Ailabo. The “n” was added to its name after the Islamic Conquest and the Battle of Hitteen in the 7th Century AD. The town was destroyed after a battle with the Crusaders, at a time when all the area was referred to as “Galilee of the Gentiles”.**

Father Elias Zureik, met with the officer in charge of the troops who demanded that all the people gather in the town square. As they were gathering, the army shot at them and killed Azar Salem Musallam and injured others. Although the town had surrendered, the officer ordered the people to walk north towards the neighboring town of Al Mughar to ensure that there was no Arab resistance against the Jewish forces. Only if they obeyed would they be allowed to go back to their town. Seventeen men were held back, and five of them were used as a

*by Elias Saliba Srour*

The town remained almost in ruins until the middle of the 17th century when Christian tribes from Huran (present day Syria) and Transjordan started to settle in it. Some families from the neighboring areas also moved to Ailaboun due to family and tribal feuds. The early arrivals lived on raising cattle because of the vast areas of grazing land, but the town gradually developed as an agricultural town concentrating on olive trees, vine and fig trees as well as wheat. By 1948 its population was 680.

Until shortly before 1970, Ailaboun was a completely Christian Melkite (Greek Catholic) town, with a few families who had joined the Orthodox Church in 1911. However, towards the end of the 1960's the state of Israel forced many Bedouin tribes from the Negev to settle in the Galilee towns and a number of them settled in Ailaboun. In the town today there are two Melkite churches, an Orthodox church, and two mosques. The current population is approximately 5,000 of which 35% are Muslim.

Ailaboun has a unique story from 1948 related by an eye witness from the town, Elias Srour. According to Srour, author of the 1996 publication, [The Nakbah in Ailaboun](#), it is the only town in the Galilee whose residents were able to come back to their homes after they had been evicted by the Israeli forces to Lebanon in 1948.

On the eve of October 30, 1948 when the Arab Salvation Army (Jeish el Inqath) had withdrawn from the outskirts of Ailaboun, some of the young men fled north towards Lebanon or to other neighboring towns,



shortly before the Israeli forces invaded Ailaboun. The priest of the Melkite church, Father Marcus Muallem, along with his father, Father Hanna Muallem, and the priest of the Orthodox Church,

protective shield for the army in the event of encountering mine fields. The other twelve were shot to death in different parts of the town including the town square, in order to claim that there had been resistance. In the meantime the people who had walked to Al Mughar, faced no resistance, but were not allowed to go back to Ailaboun, and were forced to proceed to Lebanon. As they sat to rest because the children were thirsty and hungry, the army opened fire at them, injuring a number, and killing Samaan Jiries Shoufani, whose son was amongst the young men who were shot dead earlier.

The people fled north until they reached Faradih, where an army officer forced them to pay one hundred pounds plus all their gold and jewelry, as ransom money so that the Israeli forces would protect them. After spending the night at the mosque in Faradih, forty men were picked up and arrested, while the rest of the people were forced to continue walking towards the north. By midnight the army loaded everybody by brute force onto three trucks amidst the screaming of the children. Feeling helpless and desperate, they finally reached the Lebanese border and stayed at the church of Ein Ibel. After three days they were transferred by buses to the Miyyeh-Miyyeh Refugee Camp east of Sidon.

When Father Marcus realized that the Israeli army had not kept its word, and his people had ended up in Sidon, including his own family, he sent a messenger to Lebanon with a letter to his son, Abdallah, and to the town chief, Mukhtar Faraj Srour. They met with the Bishop of Galilee, Georgius Hakeem, who was in Beirut at the time, and they felt very frustrated at the impotence of the church during those difficult times. Eventually the Bishop helped by directing them to Fouad Ammoun, Lebanon's representative to the United Nations. Through Ammoun's efforts a UN delegation was sent to the village of Ailaboun, accompanied by an Israeli officer, and met with Father Marcus. As a result of that visit the Israeli army allowed the people to come back to their town. However, they returned in small groups at different intervals until they were sure they would not be tricked again. The first group returned on November 22, 1948, almost a whole month after the beginning of the Ailaboun nightmare and the massacre of its young men.

Today Ailaboun has a population of 5000 with a thriving Christian community.

*Elias Saliba Srour is the author of Ailaboun: History and Memories and Al Nakba in Ailaboun.*



# GAZA

Gaza City is situated along the ancient caravan routes between the Arabian peninsula, Egypt and greater Syria. At the edge of the Sinai peninsula, between Asia and Africa, it had strategic importance and was considered the key to the domination of what came to be called the Middle East. The people of Gaza have always mixed well with the peoples who passed through that area such as the different Arab tribes from Arabia, the Phoenicians who settled along the Lebanese and Palestinian coast, and the Aegean peoples from the Greek isles who settled along the coast between Haifa and Gaza. Nevertheless, the Arab element has been dominant since ancient times and up until this day.

Legend has it that the Holy Family, Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, passed through Gaza on their way back from their flight to Egypt after the death of Herod. It is believed that the Holy Family rested at the northern entrance to Gaza opposite the ancient fortress.

Christianity came to Gaza at its very early stages and slowly spread among its people. The first to spread the Christian message in that area was St. Philip as recorded in

Acts 8:26. In the year 29 AD, St. Hilarion built a monastery in Gaza which is the oldest in the whole world.

Christianity in Gaza has dwindled over the years, and the past 39 years of Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip has driven many out in search of employment and a decent life. Nevertheless, the Christian presence in Gaza is more effective than its numbers warrant, whether in education, health, relief work, or the economy.

# GAZA CANNOT SLEEP

by *Father Manuel Musallam*

*Sabeel wanted to include a more comprehensive article about the history of the Christian community in Gaza in this issue. Unfortunately the political situation is so dire that we felt it would be more appropriate to include this heartfelt account from Fr. Manuel instead. Fr. Manuel Musallam is the parish priest at the Latin Church and school in Gaza.*

The people in Gaza are suffering unbelievably. They are hungry, thirsty, have no electricity, no clean water, and they are suffering constant bombardments and sonic booms from low flying aircraft.

They need food: bread and water. Children and babies are hungry. Even if there is food for sale, people have no money to buy food. The price of food, of course, has doubled and tripled in the situation. We cannot drink water from the ground here as it is salty and not hygienic. People can only buy water to drink. They have no income, no opportunities to get food and water from outside and no opportunities to secure money inside Gaza. They have no hope and many very poor people are aimlessly wandering around trying to beg for something from others who also have nothing. It is heartbreaking to see. Unfortunately, we are seeing sickness increase, and to add insult to injury, people cannot afford to pay for transportation to hospital. This is not only hard suffering for now, but this fact will have long reverberations for the future, degrading future generations.

Without electricity, children are afraid. No light at night. No oil or candles. Some can't even buy matches. Of course, those who are sick in hospital are suffering an unimaginable horror. There is no electricity to operate life saving machines



and the simplest of treatments is not able to be undertaken. With no electricity to pump the water from wells, no fuel to boil water, we are all thirsty. Thirsty children are crying, afraid and desperate.

Children are also suffering from the sonic booms. Many have been violently thrown from their beds at night. Many arms and legs are broken due to this fact. These planes fly low over Gaza and then reach the speed of sound. This shakes the ground and creates shock waves like an earthquake that can cause a person to be thrown from their bed. I, myself, weigh 120 kilos and was almost thrown from my bed due to the shock wave produced by a low flying jet that made a sonic boom. It is terrifying. It is like someone picked up your house and shook it. Bombardments hit Gaza

from the sea, air or land. I have an employee who lives in Bet Hanoun. He told me he has not slept in one week. Gaza cannot sleep.

I sent the Sisters of the Baby Jesus to Jabalia Camp to check on some poor families. They returned to me crying at the unspeakable horror they saw; the cries of hungry children, the sullen faces of broken men and women who are just sitting in their hungry emptiness with no light, hope, or love. Christians must work to stop this silly war. I am against fanaticism and violence, but these actions guarantee an increase in violence.

I demand that those outside of Gaza must care about us here in Gaza, Muslims and Christians. There are no differences here in religion. A hungry child is a hungry child. A sick person is a sick person. Our Lord demanded through St. John that you remember us in our affliction and we are now in a serious affliction. These actions are war crimes. When I cry as a priest, I beg you; we do not need pity. We only need justice. Without justice, there will be no peace. Peace is the farthest thing away from the mind of anyone, Christian or Muslim, in Gaza at this time.



# JIFNA

Jifna is a village near Ramallah with a population of 1500 people, 25% of whom have had to move to Jerusalem or Ramallah where they can find jobs. The people of Jifna belong mainly to eight families, four of whom are original inhabitants of Jifna, while the other five have, at various times, come from other countries such as Syria. Eighty percent of the people of Jifna are Christian while the other 20% are Muslim who came to live in it at different times.

*by Samer Salameh*

In Jifna there is one elementary school run by the Catholic Church. After graduating from this school, which was established one hundred and fifty years ago, students

have to commute daily to Ramallah for their high school education.

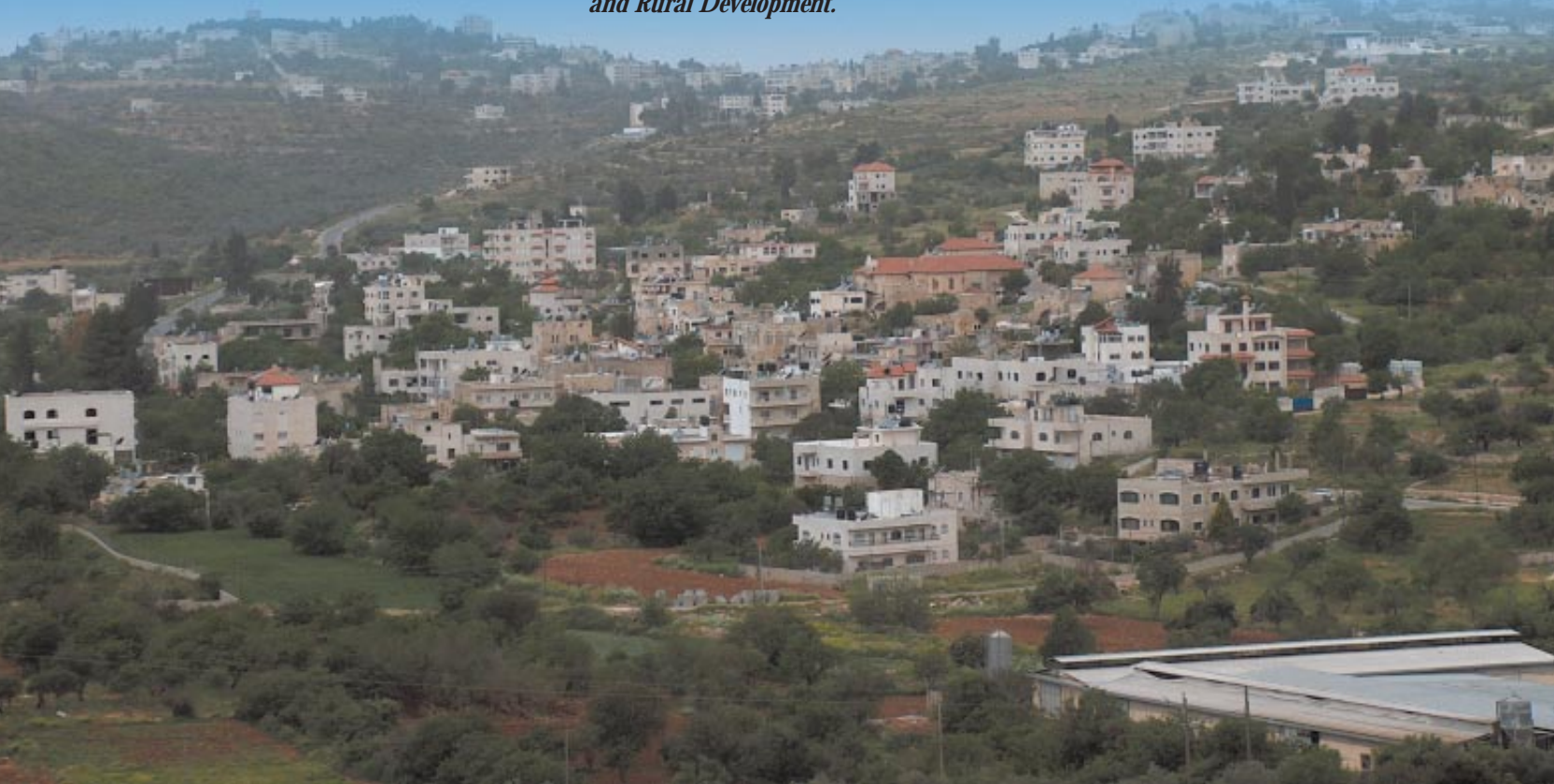
Jifna is known for its abundance of olive trees, and also apricots, walnuts and grape vines. Recently, the village has lost its agricultural aspect as many people are opting for other jobs and businesses. There are a number of restaurants in Jifna and some people live from small industries and simple commerce. Unemployment is not a problem in Jifna, yet the average income is low because of the unstable political situation and the Israeli occupation. Jifna people are known for their close-knit community and solidarity with each other, whether inside the village or anywhere they happen to be.

The Christian community in Jifna is divided between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches and the people are known for their faithful commitment to their Christian faith. They are also famous for keeping some religious traditions for

hundreds of years such as preparing around Advent the special St. Barbara dish made from whole-grain wheat. They decorate it, and take it to church to be blessed, and then share it with everybody. They also have special traditions for Christmas, Palm Sunday, Holy Saturday, and Easter. The month of May is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, at the end of which everybody takes part in a procession to the place where the holy family is said to have rested after they fetched the 12 year old Jesus back from the Temple in Jerusalem where they found him. "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" LK 2:49

The village people have regular evangelical evenings in their different homes and there is a committed Christian youth movement in the village that supports the Church in its different ministries.

*Samer Salameh is a resident of Jifna and the Executive Director of Juhoud for Community and Rural Development.*



# THE FORGOTTEN FAITHFUL

by *Elisabeth Von der Decken*

Hello - Marhaba! I am Yussif. I live in Jerusalem. The Jews call her Yerushalayim, the city of peace. We call her Al-Quds, the Holy Place. Jerusalem is the Holy City for the Jews, for us Christians and for the Muslims.

I live in the Old City, in the Via Dolorosa, the Way of Suffering. It's a strange name for a road, isn't it? Many foreigners come to see us, tourists and pilgrims, and they don't know the city well.

Just yesterday again, one of them got totally lost. No wonder! Here in the Suq (the market), it's full of alleys and narrow streets. Some of the streets have stone roofs over them, from the times when the Crusaders were with us. So then, I say to him, the tourist: "Hello - Marhaba, Mister, can I help you?" He looks suspiciously at me. He probably thinks I want to beg something from him or I want to sell him something! This, they never understand, that we just enjoy helping or showing our city. We don't want anything for it. "Well," I ask him again, "where do you want to go?"

At last, he seems to have confidence, and starts talking: "To the Holy Sepulcher," he says, "but I've lost my way!" That's it, I see, now. "You must go just in the opposite direction," I tell him; "Well, at first straight and then when there is the beautiful smell of spices, you turn to the left. Keep going, and when you pass by the goat heads hanging on the wall, at the meat market, you know, then...but it's best I go with you, I'll show you the way. I want to go there myself anyway."

"Okay, thanks. But, tell me, what are you going to do there?"

"I want to pray of course. What else?"

He looks quite astonished. "What, you want to pray in the Holy Sepulcher? You? In a church?"

"Sure, why not?"

"But you are an...Arab, aren't you?"

"Of course I am," and proudly I add: "I'm Palestinian!" Then I ask him: "But why do you think I shouldn't pray in a church?"

"The Arabs," he says and stammers, somehow embarrassed, "...the Arabs are...Muslims, aren't they? And Muslims always pray in the mosque, don't they?"

"Oh my goodness, yes! But I am a Christian Arab!" Now the poor soul is quite confused: "This is the first time I've ever heard of Christian Arabs! Are there any at all?" He thinks for a while. Then he asks: "But in the past, then, you used to be Muslims, didn't you? When did you become Christians, then?" "We? Muslims? Never! It is just the other way around! When the Muslims came into the country many Christians became Muslims. It was like that, in those times. But we, we have always been Christians."



"Well, I never knew...", he says, looking very bemused. Then I tell him, "You see, Mister, this makes us always really sad. Here, in the Holy Land there are Christians coming from all over the world; they go to Bethlehem to see the Manger; they go to Nazareth to see where Jesus lived with his parents; they come to Jerusalem, here, in the Via Dolorosa, where Jesus had to carry the cross on the first Good Friday; they go to the Holy Sepulchre, the place where Jesus was buried and rose again. They visit, as my father always says, all the 'dead stones'. But us," I say to him, "the 'living stones,' the indigenous Arab Christians, they forget. Sometimes it really hurts. Do you understand this? My father calls us 'The Forgotten Faithful...'"

*Elisabeth Von der Decken is an organ instructor and the former organist of St. George's Cathedral, Jerusalem.*

*This article was first published in German, in the Ecumenical Christian Education Magazine, in 1991.*

## IN PERSON

BISHOP EMERITUS DR. DAOUD HADDAD

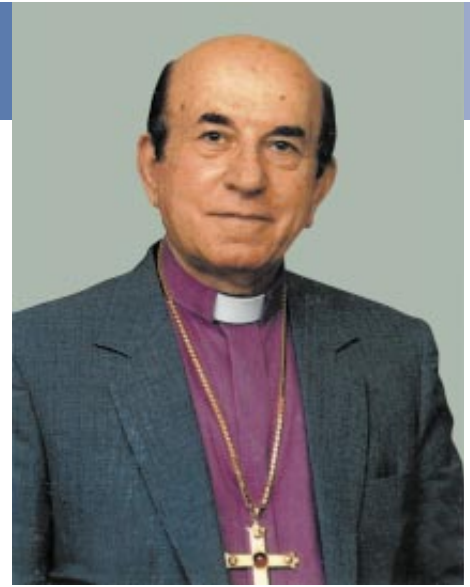
## “MEMORY IS THE ONLY PARADISE OUT OF WHICH WE CANNOT BE DRIVEN”

I was born on the 17th of November, 1914 in a village in Lebanon in the West Bica'a Valley called Khirbet Kanafar. I studied in the village's two-room Presbyterian elementary school, which only consisted of the first four grades. The people of the village were pious and simple Greek Catholic and Maronite Christians. They went to church, listened to the liturgy, and were excited by the euphonious voices of the priest and his assistant; but they knew very little about the Bible and their Christian faith. My father and four other Protestants were an exception. They were Lutherans because they had studied in a Protestant Lutheran School in Jerusalem, the Syrian Orphanage School, also known as "Schneller School" in West Jerusalem. At the age of 12, my father took me, my younger sister Josephine, and my brother Daniel there to where he and my grand uncle before him had studied. My grand uncle later became the headmaster and advocate of the school. After finishing the secondary school I was admitted to the Teacher's Training Seminary. Upon graduation I was appointed a teacher in charge of Christian instruction for the primary grades for three years.

In the spring of 1936 I went to Basel, Switzerland, to study theology. A year later I moved to Germany to Neuendettelsau, Bavaria Theological

Seminary from where I graduated. Although this took place in the Nazi Era, I enjoyed studying and staying in Germany, with the exception of a few events which I shall never forget. An incident happened one day when I was on my way to visit a German family who invited me to spend a few days of my vacation with them. Nazi soldiers stopped me to find out where I was going. I saluted them by taking off my hat; but one of them shouted at me and said: "Man, you must know how to salute properly with 'Hail Hitler'!" Telling them that I was not a German, they answered: "It does not make any difference. When in Rome do as Romans do!" I do not know whether it was courage or stupidity, but I refused to yield to them. Another incident took place when I was on my way to a church in Nuerenberg, I saw soldiers beating an old Jew in front of a shop. Feeling compassion for the old man, I asked them politely why they were beating him. The answer was a heavy slap on my face and a twenty-four hour arrest. Despite these and other unpleasant incidents, I loved the people whom I mixed with during the years of my study in Germany, and they loved me and appreciated my openness and understanding.

The troubles I encountered in Germany during my years of study were nothing



compared with those I faced upon my return to Jerusalem after the outbreak of World War II. My ordination took place on May 26, 1940 by Propst Johannes Doering and Director Hermann Schneller, who were deported a couple of days later. So I started my pastoral work with the Schneller Congregation at a very difficult time. I was simultaneously working as a teacher at the Teacher's Training Seminary which was closed down in 1941. From 1941-1946 I worked without any salary because of the deportation of the owners of Scheller's Institutes. From 1943-1946 I was a teacher at St. George's Anglican School besides my pastoral services. The new job and income strengthened me somehow. I found strength and solace in Paul's words: "I have been thoroughly initiated into the human lot with all its ups and downs, fullness and hunger, plenty and want. I have strength for anything through him who gives me power." (Phil. 4:12-13)

In 1948 the conflict between Israelis and Arabs was cruel and ferocious and caused the first displacement of Palestinians from their homes, cities, and villages. In the first days of the war I was in Nazareth on pastoral duties and had to take fifteen orphaned boys from Schneller

School to Lebanon because we feared that the school was going to be undermined. The boys were completely cut off from their villages and towns. Finding asylum for them first in Kahala near Beirut and then in the American Mission School in Shamlan, I went on to my home town Khirbet Kanafar. I then returned to Jerusalem.

Arriving in Jerusalem, I started inquiring about the most distressed Lutherans and other Christian families, and visited them with a woman from my congregation. The visits proved to be most comforting to them in those gloomy days, and the regular evening devotions provided a boost and solace. The Muristan chapel (Crusader's Chapel) used to be so overcrowded with worshipers every evening during this period. In response, the Church of the Redeemer, which had been closed since 1939, was re-opened. There I started building up my refugee church. In 1954 my late friend and member of my church, Mr. Farid Tabrie, urged me to bring together the Lutheran Congregation who had fled Lidda and Ramleh to Ramallah. With the help of friends and partners and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) the Lutheran Church of Hope with its school was started in Ramallah.

In 1959 by a Royal decree from King Hussein our church was officially recognized among the established Christian Churches in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Jordan. After the breaking out of the "Six Day War" in 1967 many Lutherans moved from the West Bank to Amman, Jordan. They wanted me to start a Lutheran Church. I started the work. Later a pastor was sent to Amman to run the work and take care of the congregation. A church was built

with a big congregational center. The dedication of the church took place in August 1987.

In addition to serving in local churches, I was one of the members of the founding committee of the Evangelical churches in the Middle East in 1955 and served four terms as the president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan (ELCJ) as well. In the summer of 1979 a decisive Synod meeting was held, and by a unanimous vote I was elected as the first Arab Bishop of ELCJ. I was consecrated on October 31 on Reformation Day. It was a remarkable date in the history of our church and a memorable milestone in my professional experience. As the first Arab Lutheran Bishop I had four basic objectives:

1. To bring Lutherans of various ethnic groups in the country into closer fellowship.
2. To strengthen and maintain ecumenical ties with all established churches in Jerusalem.
3. To continue dialogues with Muslims and Jews in the country showing an understanding of their religions and their historic backgrounds.
4. To strengthen our relationship with partner churches, with the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) and the World Council of Churches.

In this article, I would like to stress to Western Christians that there are Palestinian indigenous Christian Arabs in this Land. Christianity is deeply rooted in the Holy Land and will not be eradicated. Western churches should be committed to the maintenance and continuation of the local Palestinian Christian community in the Holy Land. Palestinian Christian Arabs cannot overlook the failure of church leaders and their

churches in the West to resist the propaganda waged against us and our Muslim neighbors by "The New Evangelical Christians" and "Western Christian Zionists" who use the Bible to support Israel's claim to the Land of Palestine.

*You can learn more about the life of Bishop Haddad in his biography: Memoirs and Historical Events which is available in both Arabic and English.*





# EIN KAREM

Ein Karem, Arabic for “the spring of the vineyard”, is a picturesque village located approximately 8 km southwest of Jerusalem. It is indirectly mentioned in the Bible as home of Zacharia and his wife Elizabeth, and the birthplace of their son John the Baptist.

Mary visited Ein Karem on the way to Bethlehem during her pregnancy, met her kinswoman Elizabeth, and stayed with her for three months following the visitation by the angel Gabriel in which he announced the future birth of Jesus. “Elizabeth spoke out with a loud voice and said: Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord come to me” (Luke 1:42).

Church of the Visitation is located on the slopes of a rocky hill. It is also known as the Church of the Magnificat (Mary’s song in Luke 1:46-55), in commemoration of the answer Mary gave her cousin Elizabeth in the Gospel episode of the Visitation. Her hymn to the glory of the Lord is

inscribed in 41 languages on one wall of the church.

The Church of St. John the Baptist belongs to the Franciscan monastery of the same name. The first church rose here in the 5th century, over the place traditionally held to be the home of Zacharia and Elizabeth. The Church was rebuilt by the Crusaders, but after they left the Holy Land, the sanctuary was either destroyed or fell into complete disrepair. A few centuries later, the Franciscan Order purchased the site and work began on its reconstruction.

The people of the village, who were predominantly Christian, fled during the war of 1948 in the hope of returning after

the conflict. However, they became refugees and were never able to return to their homes. The village was captured in 1948 by the Israeli forces. Today, according to the Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi, “The village houses are inhabited by Jewish families. One Christian Arab family, exiled from the village of Iqrit (Acre District) in 1949, lives in the village, in an old school building attached to the Franciscan monastery. Some of the larger houses are beautiful lime stone buildings two or three stories high with arched windows and doors recessed into a larger arched facade. Some doors open onto balconies with metal railings. There are seven Christian churches and monasteries in the village. The village mosque, in a state of disrepair, still stands with its minaret.”



# Hope in the Holy Land

## St. Vincent Home for the Physically and Mentally Handicapped Children, Ein Karem

The smiles of four Sisters and 91 other caretakers reflect off the bright walls of the Saint Vincent Home for Physically and Mentally Handicapped Children in Ein Karem. What could be a sorrowful, pain-stricken place is transformed by the work of these whose hands spread the love of Christ to those whom society deems “unlovable.” Yet, one Sister claims, “They

give us so much more than we give them.”

“The heart of the place is really the children,” says Sister Susan. Sixty-one children with varied abilities and needs come to stay at St. Vincent from their families’ homes in Beersheva, Ashkelon, Ashdod and other areas inside Israel. A few children can walk with assistance, and several can speak a few words. In the morning, the children attend school on the premises of the home. In the afternoon, they attend music and art therapy, or go

to Snooziland - a relaxation room specially designed to stimulate all of the children’s senses.

The core values of the Daughters of Charity in service to the handicapped include respect, quality service, simplicity, pluralism, advocacy for the poor, and peace. Ein Karem, home to an Arab-Palestinian community of Muslims and Christians before 1948, is now predominantly Jewish-Israeli. However, in this place of tumultuous, tragic, and regrettable history, the Sisters, caregivers, and volunteers of St. Vincent, supported by the government of Israel, are building peace through their compassion for the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian children in their midst.



2007

## SABEEL INTERNATIONAL WITNESS

### FOR JUSTICE & PEACE VISIT

February 28 - March 7, 2007

“Be not afraid,  
speak out and  
do not keep silent:  
I am with you.”

Acts 18:9

Visit begins with lunch on Wednesday, February 28 and concludes with closing worship and dinner on Wednesday, March 7.

#### Witness Visit will include:

- Exposure trips to see the political “facts on the ground” in the West Bank in the 40<sup>th</sup> year of Occupation by Israel
- Lectures by Palestinian and Israeli experts
- Visit to holy sites in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and the Galilee
- Jerusalem’s Old City
- Advocacy workshops

**For more information** visit our website: [www.sabeel.org](http://www.sabeel.org) • e-mail: [world@sabeel.org](mailto:world@sabeel.org)

If you can't join us this time, join us for the Fall Visit, October 2007.

## Sabeel's Second International Young Adult Conference

For more  
information contact  
[Youth@sabeel.org](mailto:Youth@sabeel.org)

July 19-28, 2007 | For ages 18-26

#### Conference will include:

- Visits to Towns and Villages
- Cultural evenings
- Sharing experiences and ideas
- Volunteer experience
- Workshops and group discussions

#### Focus on:

- Christian community
- The political situation
- Challenges confronting Christian young adults worldwide

## SABEEL'S 6TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

**“THE FORGOTTEN FAITHFUL:  
THE CHALLENGES AND WITNESS  
OF PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS”**

November 2-9, 2006

**Program to include:**

- 2 nights in Jerusalem, 3 nights in Jericho, 2 nights in Nazareth
- Visits with the Christian Communities in villages such as Taybeh, Jifna, Aboud, Birzeit, Ain Arik
- Lectures and workshops with international and local speakers in Bethlehem, Ramallah, and Nazareth
- Bible Studies with Kenneth Bailey
- Visits to Christian Villages in the Galilee
- Presentation of Sabeel's Survey of Christian Community in Gaza, West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Israel
- Informal Reception at Notre Dame, evening of Nov 2.

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(Book your departure for late evening Nov 9,  
or watch for information about Post-conference options.)

For more information contact [conf2006@sabeel.org](mailto:conf2006@sabeel.org)



# FIRST ANNUAL YOUNG ADULT CONFERENCE

by *Krista Johnson*

From July 26th to August 6th 2006, young adults from around the world gathered together for the first Sabeel International Young Adult Conference themed *Together: Facing Challenges...Finding Hope*. Participants came from Palestine, Sweden, Denmark, Hong Kong, India, Israel, the United Kingdom and the United States. The group included 14 internationals, 18 locals, and 7 staff and volunteers. The group traveled together to Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, Hebron, Jifna, Taybeh, Ramallah, Aboud, and Jericho. Participants had a chance to meet, share stories, and learn about one another's

cultures and denominations. The trip included cultural activities, tours of Christian sites, engagement in the realities facing Palestinian Christians, community service, meetings with government officials, and time to relax and engage in honest cross-cultural dialogue. Though the young adults were not able to travel to the Galilee as originally planned because of the conflict in the north between Israel and Hizballah, our conference was a great success. As one of the international participants reflected: "Truly, to see is to believe and to be changed. In no other circumstance would I be able to meet with so many Palestinian Christians and form relationships with them. For that, I am very appreciative.

This is what will frame my involvement in fighting for peace throughout my life."

This conference was special because it was planned by young adults for young adults. The conference was facilitated by seven Sabeel volunteers and staff members: Youth Coordinator Haya Dow, Omar Harami, Krista Johnson, Andrea Dalton, Nevart Ateek, Janan Sima'an, and Amal Geraisy. In addition, the conference staff was supported by a spirit of volunteerism among the participants. From taking pictures to helping with lunch preparations and leading devotions, participants were often willing to pitch in to make the conference a success.

In addition to the international and local

conference participants, the group had the opportunity to meet with over 55 additional young adults from the West Bank in their different localities. The group would have been enriched by their presence throughout the whole conference, but severe restrictions on travel for Palestinians from certain areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territories limited the opportunity for these young adults to participate. The Sabeel Youth department is in the process of developing further relationships with those young adults through follow-up conference events. We hope that they will continue to be involved with the work of Sabeel.



The young adult conference included a number of tours, speakers, and field trips to help the group to better understand current realities in Palestine. The group toured holy sights in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Jericho as well as exploring current Palestinian realities through Sabeel's "Contemporary Way of the Cross" (which included visits to settlements, the wall, checkpoints, Deir Yassin and Ein Karem, using prayerful reflections and liturgies developed by Sabeel). They also went on a tour in Hebron hosted by the Christian Peacemaker Teams, and a tour of Jerusalem's Old City with a focus on political change. The group had a chance

to go hiking through Lifta and to learn about its history. Lifta is one of nearly 500 villages de-populated in 1948. Never completely destroyed, its ruins still stand just outside Jerusalem. In addition to tours, the group participated in hands-on volunteer work in Beit Sahour for a day. They painted homes, refurbished gardens, and helped to prepare schools for the upcoming school year. Other highlights of the conference included swimming in the Dead Sea, watching and learning Dabka (traditional Palestinian dancing) in Beit Sahour, enjoying traditional Palestinian meals, and reenacting a Palestinian wedding, in which participants played the roles of bride, groom, and wedding party. These cultural events provided a hands-on way to learn about Palestinian culture and traditions, while having fun in the process.

The conference was a success, and in the evaluation process it was decided that Sabeel would begin the process of planning for another young adult conference in the summer of 2007. Information about the dates and theme will be available on our website: [www.sabeel.org](http://www.sabeel.org).

*Krista Johnson is mission personnel with the Disciples of Christ-United Church of Christ working at Sabeel.*

*The full conference report along with many photographs can be found at [www.sabeel.org](http://www.sabeel.org)*

## HUSTAVLE\*\*

**The Cry from a Wounded Planet**  
Sons and daughters of the Earth,  
you who know good and evil:  
Life is in danger! Show that you care!

**Discover the Wholeness**  
The Earth is a tapestry woven  
without seams.  
No-one has the right to tear it apart.

**Sense the Holiness**  
A holy fragrance hovers over all  
that exists.  
Life must be valued, protected  
and loved.

**Rejoice in the Beauty**  
Creation has a wealth of its own.  
Nothing is mere raw material.  
The gifts of the Earth must be  
handled  
with devotion and gratitude.

**Remember the Context**  
Your life is woven into the pattern  
of all life on Earth.  
All that you have is given to you  
in trust.  
You must pass it all on to those  
who come after you.

**Struggle for Justice**  
Mother Earth has enough to meet  
the needs of all,  
but not to satisfy their greed.  
The gap between poor and rich  
is contempt for human dignity.

**Live in Reconciliation**  
Sons and daughters of the Earth,  
you who have the power to tear up  
her tapestry:  
you are called to a life of reconciliation!

*\*\* "Hustavle" is a Norwegian word, indicating a bisis, important text. A "hustavle" was a set of "household rules," given a decorative form which made it suitable to be framed and hung in the house. This "hustavle" was created for a conference on ethics and the management of natural resources in 2001 at The Archbishop's Palace, Trondheim.*



## Purpose Statement of Sabeel

*Sabeel* is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, this liberation theology seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians, promote unity among them, and lead them to act for justice and love. *Sabeel* strives to develop a spirituality based on justice, peace, non-violence, liberation, and reconciliation for the different national and faith communities. The word 'Sabeel' is Arabic for 'the way' and also a 'channel' or 'spring' of life-giving water.

*Sabeel* also works to promote a more accurate international awareness regarding the identity, presence, and witness of Palestinian Christians as well as their contemporary concerns. It encourages individuals and groups from around the world to work for a just, comprehensive, and enduring peace informed by truth and empowered by prayer and action.

For more information on *Friends of Sabeel* groups in your area please contact our International representatives or the Sabeel Center in Jerusalem.



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