

2016 Statement on Palestine/Israel
Submitted by
Justice in Palestine and Israel Community

In 2013 at its Annual Gathering in Greenville, SC, the Alliances of Baptists adopted a *Response to Kairos*, initiated by the Justice in Palestine and Israel Community. That statement said, in part:

Even while living under the injustices of the 49-year Israeli military occupation, Palestinians still radiate hope. They continue to seek peace with justice. They continue to cry out to Christians from all corners of the world. Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, a mission partner with The Alliance of Baptists, is one of the authors of *Kairos Palestine - A Moment of Truth: A Word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering* (2009). This document represents the most prevalent views of Palestinian Christians living in the occupied territories.

We, a group of Christian Palestinians, after prayer, reflection and an exchange of opinion, cry out from within the suffering in our country, under the Israeli occupation.... The cruel circumstances in which the Palestinian Church has lived and continues to live have required the Church to clarify her faith and to identify her vocation... Today, we bear the strength of love rather than that of revenge, a culture of life rather than a culture of death.

The *Kairos* document goes on to quote Scripture.

You have heard it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven..." [We] endorse nonviolent resistance based on hope and love that puts an end to evil by walking in the ways of justice.

In 2013 Alliance of Baptists heard their cry and took decisive action, seeking to follow the model of Jesus by "speaking truth to power" in Twenty-first Century Palestine and Israel. It is now time to take the next step. In the *Kairos* document, Palestinians called for a global citizens' response: to launch broad boycotts, implement divestment initiatives, and to demand sanctions against Israel, until Palestinian rights are recognized in full compliance with international law. These actions give us practical alternatives to violence as a way to bring about change in Israel and the occupied territories. Actions such as these proved effective in the Civil Rights movement in the United States and in the struggle to end Apartheid in South Africa. Ten years of efforts along these lines have been effective in advancing the struggle for justice and peace in Israel and the occupied territories, generating effective and well-funded intense opposition to current practices and policies.

Many Christian fellowships have responded to the *Kairos* document with different kinds of economic actions to end their complicity and investment in the occupation, including the United Church of Christ, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the United Methodist Church, the National Coalition of American Nuns, the Mennonite Central Committee, the American Friends Service Committee, the Friends Fiduciary Corporation and others.

The Justice in Palestine and Israel Community proposes that the Alliance support the recommendations of the *Kairos* document with the following actions:

1. Direct the Endowment Committee of the Alliance Board of Directors to join many denominations and organizations in divesting from companies and corporations that continuously and knowingly perpetuate, support, or profit from human rights violations as part of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. Investment accounts can be screened with an online tool developed by the American Friends Service Committee: www.afsc.org/investigate. [A complete up-to-date list of all such companies can be seen here: <http://investigate.afsc.org/screens/afscdivestment>.
2. Encourage Alliance congregations and individual members to use the tool above to screen their investments.
3. Encourage congregations and individuals to study the issues blocking justice and peace in Palestine and Israel. Materials are available in the resources section of the Alliance website.
4. Encourage individual and congregational members of the Alliance to refrain from purchasing consumer products manufactured in illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, (For more information, see “The Un-Shopping List” compiled by Joining Hands for Justice in Israel/Palestine: www.JHJIP.org).
5. Advocate against state and federal laws that would limit free speech about Israel/Palestine or penalize individuals, corporations or institutions that withdraw their support of the Israeli occupation.
6. Encourage Alliance members to continue the activities that the 2013 Statement directed. Our actions begin with prayer. We know that war, oppression, and injustice in Palestine and Israel have victims on all sides. The oppressors and the oppressed are both victims of the oppression. We pray for peace with justice in Palestine and Israel for Jews, Muslims, and Christians. Our past actions have also included:
 - a. Making resources available for the study of the conflict in Palestine and Israel, including instructional materials to study the *Kairos Palestine* document.
 - b. Creating a speakers bureau of Christian and Muslim Palestinians and Israeli and American Jews who are working for peace through justice.
 - c. Collecting and distribute personal stories of Palestinians and Jews living with conflict and violence. Note: the newly formed Palestinian Christian Alliance for Peace, along with Jewish Voice for Peace and Friends of Sabeel North America can help congregations and organizations locate speakers for events and conferences.
 - d. Advocating with our elected officials for an end to the U.S. government's economic, political and military support of the ongoing Israeli occupation.
 - e. Organizing regular trips to Palestine and Israel to see the religious and historic sites and to meet Palestinians and Israelis working for peace through justice.
 - f. Countering the dangerous and growing climate of hatred and hostility toward all Muslims by avoiding stereotyping and publicly challenging all forms of racism and religious bigotry directed against Jews and Muslims.