

LETTER FROM REV JOHN PARKIN, CHAIRPERSON, KAIROS IRELAND

May 11, 2021

A Time for Action

I begin this letter by referring you to an opinion article in the Israeli Haaretz newspaper recently (06/05/20 - see the attached PDF - '*Donald Trump is Complicit in a Catastrophe for Christians*'). The article is written by two senior Palestinian Christian clergy. Fr. Jamal Khader is the Director of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem Schools in Palestine and Parish Priest of Ramallah. Formerly he was the Rector of the Latin Patriarchate Seminary and Dean of Arts of Bethlehem University. The Rev. Munther Isaac is Academic Dean of the Bethlehem Bible College and the pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem and of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Beit Sahour. They comment on the dire consequences of the proposed Trump Middle East Peace Plan and the annexation of parts of the West Bank for Palestinian Christians in particular, and for Palestinians generally.

Now is the appropriate time for us in Ireland to take action on two crucial matters concerning justice and peace in Palestine and Israel:

1. Proposed annexations in the West Bank by Israel.
2. The Occupied Territories Bill, which is in danger of being lost from the Programme for Government in Dublin.

Annexations in the West Bank by Israel

The recently formed Unity government in Israel, agreed between Netanyahu (Likud Party) and Gantz (Blue and White Party), has two stated priorities; (i) dealing with the Covid 19 pandemic and (ii) the annexation of parts of the West Bank in line with the provisions of the Trump Middle East Peace Plan. The annexation process is due to start on the 1st July 2020 and will probably include the illegal Israeli settlements and much of the Jordan Valley. Such an annexation will be illegal under international law (Fourth Geneva Convention), which prohibits the annexation of territory occupied during conflict.

Countries that are pledged to uphold international law and uphold standards of justice and human rights should take a stance against any such annexation policy. In Sweden a number Christian, [Jewish and human rights activists have called on the Swedish Government together with the European Union](#) to ensure that Israel's annexations policies do not go unchallenged but are met with concrete consequences equivalent to those taken against Russia after annexing Crimea. Simon Coveney as acting Foreign Minister has condemned the annexation plan in a [Department of Foreign Affairs statement](#). Eleven ambassadors, including the Irish ambassador have [warned against the proposed Israeli action](#). In the UK a cross party group of around 130 MPs have written to the [Prime Minister demanding action against Israel](#) if annexation proceeds.

ACTION I

1. Write to your MP/TDs calling for concrete actions and sanctions against Israel, similar to those taken against Russia over Crimea, if it proceeds with its illegal annexation of parts of the West Bank.
2. In Northern Ireland encourage MPs to endorse the cross-party letter to the British Prime Minister calling for appropriate action on this issue.

The Occupied Territories Bill

The Ireland Palestine Alliance, Sadaka, which helped to draft and promote the [Occupied Territories Bill](#), now warns that it may not be included in the Programme for Government being negotiated in Dublin. The Bill would make trade with illegally occupied territories, including of course the West Bank, illegal in the same way that trade with apartheid South Africa was banned in the 1980s. The bill received overwhelming support in the last Dáil and Seanad, with Fine Gael being the only party to vote against it.

Many groups and agencies committed to peace and justice in the Middle East see the enactment into law of the Occupied Territories Bill as a positive step that should take place. See for example the letter from Professor Michael

Lynk, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian Territories ([Irish Times 29/04/20](#)) and a letter by a group of Israeli diplomats and academics ([Irish Times 07/05/20](#)).

ACTION II

1. Contact your TDs to express support for the Occupied Territories Bill and ask that it be included in the programme for government.
2. Write to Simon Coveney commending his statement on the proposed Israeli annexation and asking for the enactment into law of the Occupied Territories Bill.

John Parkin
Chairperson Kairos Ireland
kairosireland@gmail.com