

MESSAGE

It's Time for Palestine

It's time for Palestine.

It's time for Palestinians and Israelis to share *a* just peace.

It's time to respect human lives in the land called holy.

It's time for healing to begin in wounded souls.

It's time to end 60 years of conflict, oppression and tear.

It's time for freedom from occupation.

It's time for equal rights.

It's time to stop discrimination, segregation and restriction on movement.

It's time for those who put up walls and fences to build them on their own property.

It's time to stop bulldozing one community's homes and building homes for the other community on land that is not theirs.

It's time to do away with double standards.

It's time for Israeli citizens to have security and secure borders agreed with their neighbours.

It's time for the international community to implement 60 years of United Nations resolutions.

It's time for Israel's government to complete the bargain offered in the Arab Peace Initiative.

It's time for those who represent the Palestinian people to all be involved in making peace.

It's time for people who have been refugees for 60 years to regain their rights and *a* permanent home.

It's time to assist settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories to make their home in Israel.

It's time for self-determination.

It's time for foreigners to visit Bethlehem and other towns imprisoned by the wall.

It's time to see settlements in their comfort and refugee camps in their despair.

It's time for people living 41 years under occupation to feel new solidarity from a watching world

It's time to name the shame of collective punishment and to end it in all its forms

It's time to be revolted by violence against civilians and for civilians on both sides to be safe.

It's time for both sides to release their prisoners and give those justly accused a fair trial.

Sixty Years of WCC Policy on Palestine/Israel, 1948-2007 (in brief) Negotiating a just peace under the rule of law is the strongest option for ensuring the well-being and security of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. This is the core of World Council of Churches policy toward the conflict. It is a conviction that has grown as 40 years of illegal occupation of Palestinian territory has claimed lives, distorted the rights of both peoples and deepened the conflict between them. In making policy the WCC is attentive to those who are suffering, recognizes UN resolution as the basis for peace and is watchful that the Geneva Conventions determine the occupying power's responsibilities in the meantime.

Policy is set by the WCC Assembly, Central Committee and Executive Committee.

Main positions follow, in brief.

- **Palestinians have the right of self-determination;** their duly elected governmental authorities must be recognised, including the current leaders; their refugees have the right of return and require a permanent solution.

- **Israel and its legitimate security needs are recognized beginning with the state's** emergence in it in UN guarantees for its existence, in the right to protect its people under international law, and in guarantees for the territorial integrity of all nations in the area including Israel.

- The life and witness of local churches guide churches worldwide in prayer, support and advocacy for peace. Churches are to agree the status of Holy Places with Muslim and Jewish counterparts. Local authorities must not interfere in internal church affairs.

- Jerusalem must be an open, inclusive and shared city in terms of sovereignty and citizenship. The rights of its communities are guaranteed—Muslim, Jewish and Christian, Palestinian and Israeli—including access to Holy Places and freedom of worship. The WCC opposes the annexation of East Jerusalem. The final status of Jerusalem is an international responsibility and must be agreed within framework of international law and as part of a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement.

- Settlements are illegal, **as is** their expansion; they are prohibited by the Fourth Geneva Convention and incompatible with peace. Israeli soldiers and settlers must be withdrawn.

- The Separation Barrier **is illegal.** It is a grave breach of international law and humanitarian law, and must be removed from occupied territory.

- The WCC supports a two-state solution where Israelis and Palestinians live side by side within secure, recognized borders and share Jerusalem, as called for in UN resolutions.

- The WCC supports groups **on both sides** working for peace and reconciliation, including inter-religious initiatives.

- Violence in all its forms is condemned, whether perpetrated by the State of Israel inside the Occupied Palestinian Territories or by Palestinian armed groups inside the State of Israel. The conflict cannot be resolved through the use of force but only through peaceful means.

- Certain economic measures are legitimate forms of **pressure for** peace. The WCC encourages **member churches to avoid investments or other economic links to illegal activities on occupied territory** and to boycott settlement products.

- **Peace in Israel and Palestine is inseparable from international peace. The conflict affects stability and security in the Middle East and in other regions.**