

Statement of Participants in Sabeel's Solidarity Gathering

We Christians, Jews, and Muslims from over 20 countries have come to Sabeel's Alternative Assembly in Palestine to stand in solidarity with our Palestinian brothers and sisters who are enduring the yoke of occupation.

Sabeel is an ecumenical Christian center for Palestinian Liberation Theology, which seeks to make the Gospel contextually relevant. Sabeel, which in Arabic means both "the way" and "spring of life-giving water", strives to develop a spirituality based on justice, peace, nonviolence, liberation, and reconciliation for the different national and faith communities. In doing so, it encourages us to work for a just, comprehensive, and enduring peace informed by truth.

"We have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears..." the pattern of the pervasive control and domination by Israel which is causing widespread suffering and reflecting the injustices faced by the Palestinian people. The Oslo "peace process" has failed.

Deepening our understanding and gaining fresh insights, we can only conclude that peace is a real possibility if, and only if, justice is achieved. Toward this end, we affirm the timely *Principles for a Just Peace in Palestine-Israel*, that is, The Jerusalem Sabeel Document of May 2000.

We therefore note with deep sadness that the failed "peace process" has resulted in:

- Entrenching a new and harsh form of occupation of Gaza and the West Bank (which includes East Jerusalem). The occupation is violence.
- A dramatic increase in the expansion of settlements, construction of by-pass roads, control of territory by settlers, and other "facts on the ground".
- Allowing, in practice, through closure and rapid settlement building in East Jerusalem, the isolation of Jerusalem from Palestinian life in Gaza and the West Bank, and her transformation into a closed city.
- A de facto apartheid system of Palestinian life in the Occupied Territories, with the populated areas carved up into "Bantustans".
- Gross violations of basic human rights, intensified in recent months.
- A new phase of extreme Israeli violence, including use of heavy artillery against civilians, causing over 15,000 injuries in addition to over 400 deaths in only the last five months.
- Severe damage to the Palestinian economy while giving Israel control and domination over that economy.
- Further threat to the continued existence of the Christian community in Palestine by creating circumstances that encourage emigration.

The continued occupation, control, and oppression by Israel of the Palestinian people are in themselves the greatest risks to the security of the state of Israel, while justice offers the only hope for both Israelis and Palestinians. Justice undergirds a durable peace, which will offer security for all the people of the region. A new and just process must be established which returns to the principles of international law, resulting in:

- The immediate implementation of the IV Geneva Convention, to which Israel and most of our countries are signatories, and which applies to the West Bank and Gaza, to be upheld by international peacekeepers.
- Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, and 1322, which will terminate the occupation and its violence.
- The return and compensation of all refugees who so choose, in accordance with UN Resolution 194.

Justice also requires an acknowledgement by Israel of al-Nakba (the Catastrophe of 1948), followed by a Truth and Reconciliation Commission as an instrument of healing.

We pledge ourselves to identify and then challenge the structures of domination in Israel and Palestine and in our own countries, including those that supply armaments as well as financial and political aid which supports the injustice in Palestine.

We affirm our commitment to strive for the realization of a just peace, in solidarity with all who seek a just peace, based on our faith that all can be redeemed and reconciled in Christ. With Sabeel,

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. (The Jerusalem Sabeel Document)

Jerusalem

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