

## **PAX CHRISTI'S POSITION ON THE ISRAEL/PALESTINE SITUATION**

**The current situation in Israel/Palestine due to the deadlock of the peace process and the worsening relations between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as the climate of violence created by the use of force has led Pax Christi France to take a stand on this conflict.**

Peace between individuals and nations is the purpose of every action and stance taken by Pax Christi. These are based on the following founding principles, which are rooted in the Social Doctrine of the Church:

- The equal dignity of every human being who is created in the image and likeness of God (Gen.1:26) which means respect for human rights and international humanitarian law in the treatment of peoples particularly in conflict situations.
- Dialogue is the basis of every peace process, which means respect for people's self-determination
- The search for a fair peace must underlie all negotiations, which implies the principle of respect for international law as the regulator of relations between states and not the use of force.
- The refusal of violence and the assertion that non-violence is the only effective way of settling conflicts between individuals, communities and states.

**Pax Christi's analysis today of the Israel/Palestine situation is based therefore on these principles, which are applicable in every conflict situation.**

### *Historical Background*

*At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, nationalist desires swept over the peoples of Europe. European Jews, who had suffered discrimination and had been humiliated, even persecuted at certain times in their history in Europe, joined this movement and claimed a national home for the Jewish people. After some hesitations, they chose Palestine and began to make settlements there. They succeeded in convincing European states of the legitimacy of their claim. This included the British Mandate of Palestine, which, in the Balfour Declaration of 7 November 1917, gave its agreement to a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, respecting the rights of the local population. At the end of the Second World War the horror of the Holocaust was to persuade the world, through the UN, to make this Jewish national home official. David Ben- Gurion would change it into the State of Israel on 14 May 1948.*

*In 1947 Palestine was in effect inhabited by Palestinian Arabs who were forcibly driven out of their lands after the declaration of Israel's independence. In 1948, in the event which Palestinians call the Nakba (catastrophe), 800,000 Palestinians were expelled and sought refuge in other territories and in neighbouring countries. Since then, these Palestinians have been divided between those living in Israel, those living in territories occupied by Israel (West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza) and Palestinians who are refugees (in these same territories or abroad).*

*This State of Israel struggled to establish itself under the threat of Arab armed forces and appeared to be particularly threatened during the first 20 years of its existence. After the Six- Day War in 1967, which was followed by the peace deal signed with neighbouring Egypt and Jordan, Israel enjoyed a period of relative peace at its borders which allowed it to quietly occupy the West Bank and East Jerusalem.*

**The position which has been taken, as a result of analysing the current situation in Israel/Palestine, is intended to be seen as a base for a peaceful future for both the Israeli and the Palestinian people.**

- The State of Israel's failure to respect international law leads us to define an oppressor (the Israeli government) and an oppressed (the Palestinian people) in the present conflict.
- Israel has the right to exist within secure borders, which are recognised by international law.
- The Palestinian people have the right to exist within secure borders, which are recognised by international law.
- The 'two state' solution, which is the only one likely to create a state of peace in the region, must be promoted. To this end, the UN, EU and France must recognise the State of Palestine without delay in order to allow a just and fair dialogue in peace negotiations. These two states must allow all their citizens, regardless of their race and religion, equality in their economic and political rights and duties, including their right to self-determination
- To allow a peace process to be put in place, in the interest of Israel and Palestine, Israel must put an end to its use of force or, if necessary, be compelled to do so. In particular, the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem must be stopped, together with the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, which are associated with it. Sanctions must be imposed on Israel if it does not comply.
- A resolution of the question of Jerusalem is fundamental to peace. It must be founded on international law and on a negotiation between Israelis and Palestinians. Unilateral decisions and actions which change the character and special status of Jerusalem are morally and legally unacceptable. In addition, the particular identity of Jerusalem must be protected as a city which is holy for Jews, Christians and Muslims. In the same way its special vocation for peace must be protected.
- The blockade of the Gaza Strip must be ended as a matter of urgency. With American cuts in the UNRWA budget in January 2018, the risk of a major humanitarian catastrophe is increasing.
- The Palestinian refugees' right of return is an integral part of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and must be the subject of a negotiated agreement between the two parties within the framework of the resolution of the conflict.
- In France and throughout the world citizens' freedom of expression on this situation must be preserved.
- Pax Christi is opposed to all anti-Semitism and therefore rejects the notion, put forward by some people, that equates anti-Semitism with criticism of the current policy of the State of Israel. In addition, this false notion weakens the fight against anti-Semitism.



**Oser le dialogue et bâtir la paix  
entre personnes, peuples et nations !**

- Finally, Pax Christi promotes peaceful and non-violent means for the resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. It supports all peace initiatives from both the Israelis and the Palestinians, and it condemns all recourse to violence in the resolution of this conflict, wherever it may come from.

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