

Statement from 100 Christian Community Leaders in the Holy Land to European Countries: Support Palestine's membership in the United Nations.

Palestine, the Holy Land is our homeland. Our roots here stretch for centuries. We, Palestinian Christians are the descendants of the first Christians. We are also an organic and integral component of the Palestinian people. And just like our Palestinian Muslim brothers and sisters, we have been denied our national and human rights for almost a century.

We have endured dispossession and forced exile since 1948, when two thirds of Palestine's Christians were forcibly expelled from their homes in the Holy Land. Our presence in our Holy Land has been under threat since then, choked by a snaking wall that has devoured our land and deprived our congregations of hope and peace in the land that was blessed with the birth of the Prince of Peace. We have persevered through 64 years of exile and 45 years of occupation, holding on to His message of peace. We, Palestinian Christians say enough! Our message is simple: to achieve peace, the world must also say enough to occupation and the degradation of human dignity.

As Christian community leaders in Palestine, we are entitled to seek a just peace that will lead to reconciliation and the realization of our people's natural rights. The current status quo is untenable. On one side, there is a people under occupation and on the other, a belligerent occupying power that works tirelessly to distance us from the peace we seek and pray for. We Christians have a duty to confront oppression. In our Kairos document, we Palestinian Christians declare that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is a sin against God and humanity because it deprives Palestinians of their basic human rights, bestowed by God.

Ending Israeli occupation is the only way for Palestinians, Christians and Muslims, to enjoy a life of prosperity and progress. It is also the surest way to secure continued Christian presence in this, our Holy Land. It is the way to preserve our history and help tear down the occupation's wall that disconnected Jerusalem and Bethlehem for the first time since the birth of Christianity.

We, Palestinian Christian leaders, part of the indigenous people of the Holy Land and descendants of the first Christians, have witnessed the changes of this land over the centuries. We have suffered the loss and have carried the cross for all these years. The occupation, oppression, exile and Apartheid, have made of everyday a good Friday. We hope that your actions and prayers, along with ours, will help us get closer to the day of our own resurrection as a free nation.

We believe the Palestine Liberation Organization's initiative to enhance Palestine's status in the United Nations to an Observer State is a positive, collective, and moral step that will get us closer to freedom. This is a step in the right direction for the cause of a just peace in the region. We fully endorse this bid, just as we supported Palestine's application for full membership of the United Nations a year ago. That is why we call upon European governments to fully endorse the just Palestinian plight for freedom and independence.

The international community, and particularly Europe, have a historic responsibility towards Palestine's rights. Europe has long championed the values of peace and human rights. Now, Europe can reflect this principled position by helping Palestine. We call on you to support our effort in bringing about a real peace by aligning their positions and actions with international law and UN resolutions and supporting Palestine's UN Bid. From the Holy Land, we call on you to take this peaceful, righteous, and collective step towards deliverance so that our halleluiah soon becomes a celebration of a peace we live and not a yearning for a reality we are unjustly denied.

Signatures:

- 1) Patriarch Emeritus Michael Sabbah, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 2) Archbishop Atallah Hanna, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 3) Monsignor Rafik Khoury, Latin Patriarchate Seminary.
- 4) Dr. Zoughbi Zoughbi – Director of Wi'am Center, Bethlehem.
- 5) Vera Baboun, Bethlehem Municipality, Bethlehem.
- 6) Hind Khoury, Vice President of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center and Ambassador, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 7) Fr. Faysal Hijazeen – General Director the Christian Schools in Palestine
- 8) Sami El-Yousef – Regional Director for Palestine and Israel, Pontifical Mission for Palestine, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 9) Reverend Alex Awad, Pastor of the East Jerusalem Baptist Church and Dean of Students at Bethlehem Bible College, Occupied Jerusalem / Bethlehem.
- 10)Fr. Aziz Halaweh – Parish Priest of Taybeh
- 11)Claudette Habash, General Secretary of CARITAS – Jerusalem, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 12)Mira Rizek – National Secretary General of YWCA Palestine, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 13)Hanna Siniora, Head of the European – Palestinian Chamber of Commerce, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 14)Nabil Mushahwar, Head of the Palestine Bar Association, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 15)Afif Safieh – Ambassador, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 16)Fr. Jamal Khader – Dean of Arts, Bethlehem University.
- 17)Fouad Kokali – Member of Parliament, Beit Sahour.
- 18)Rifa'at Kassis, Kairos Palestine General Coordinator, Beit Sahour.

- 19)Yacoub El-Yousef – President of the Arab Orthodox Club, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 20)Dr. Bernard Sabella, University Professor and Member of Parliament, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 21)Fr. Ibrahim Shomali – Parish Priest of Beit Jala.
- 22)Dr. Elias Iseed – Head of the Arab Orthodox Society, Beit Sahour.
- 23)Khader Abuabara – Head of the Arab Orthodox Club, Beit Jala.
- 24)Dr. Na’el Salman – Mayor of Beit Jala
- 25)Fr. Johnny Abukhalil, Parish Priest of Nablus.
- 26)Hanna Karkar, St. Jacob's Orthodox Cathedral Board of Trustees, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 27)Antonian Society, Bethlehem.
- 28)Hani Hayek, Mayor of Beit Sahour.
- 29)Ibrahim Matar, President of National Christian Association, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 30)Ramzi Zananiri, Executive Director of Near East Council of Churches, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 31)Samia Khoury, Civil Society Activist, Occupied Jerusalem
- 32)Fayez Saqqa – Member of Parliament, Bethlehem.
- 33)Hanna Amira, Member of the PLO Executive Committee, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 34)Nader Abu Amsha, Director YMCA, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 35)Dr. Kholoud Daibes, Member of the Church of the Nativity Rehabilitation Committee, Bethlehem and former minister.
- 36)Tony Khashram, Businessman, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 37)Ziad Bandak, Adviser to the President, Bethlehem.
- 38)Fr. Raed Sahlia, Parish Priest of the Holy Family Church, Ramallah.

- 39) Lena Saleh, Educator, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 40) Edmond Shehadeh, General Director of the Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation, Beit Jala.
- 41) Simon Kouba, Engineer and Community Activist, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 42) Xavier Abu Eid, Adviser to the PLO Negotiations Team and honorary Member of the Papal Scout Troup, Beit Jala.
- 43) Kamal Boullata, Artist and Art Historian, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 44) Salim Hodali – Head of Diaspora Section - Bank of Palestine, Beit Jala.
- 45) Francis Tams, Civil Society Activist, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 46) Pauline Nunu, Spokesman for the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 47) Fr. Hanna Salem, Vice Director of the Latin Patriarchate Seminary, Beit Jala.
- 48) Yusef Daher, Jerusalem Inter Church Center, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 49) Manuel Hassasian, Ambassador, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 50) Dr. Samir Hazboun, President of the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce, Bethlehem.
- 51) Elie Shehadeh, Palestinian National Initiative, Bethlehem.
- 52) Antoine Nesnas, Community Activist, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 53) George Lama, Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation, Bethlehem.
- 54) Honey Thalgieh, Captain of the Palestine National Women' Football Team, Bethlehem.
- 55) Renee Bahu, Retired Teacher, Ramallah.
- 56) Kamal Daibes, Member of Ramallah Municipal Council, Ramallah.
- 57) Albert Hani, Head of Papal Scouts Group, Beit Jala.
- 58) Saint Vincent de Paul Society, Beit Jala.
- 59) Fr. Iyad Twal, Parish priest of Beit Sahour, Beit Sahour.

- 60) Dr. Muna Mushahwar, Arab Orthodox Club, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 61) Fr. Johnny Bahbah, Latin Patriarchate Seminary, Beit Jala.
- 62) Fr. Emcula Sema'an, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, Beit Jala.
- 63) Diana Safieh, Dame of the Holy Sepulcher, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 64) Dr. Suleiman Abu Dayyeh, Head of Palestine Desk – Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Liberty, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 65) Sister Hala George, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 66) Hania Persekian, Arab Orthodox Club, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 67) Issa Kassasieh, Arab Studies Society – Orient House and member of the Arab Orthodox Club, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 68) George Bahu, University Lecturer, Ramallah.
- 69) Diana Mushahwar, The Four Homes of Mercy, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 70) Fr. Yousef Hodali, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, Beit Jala.
- 71) Tony Salman, National Christian Coalition, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 72) Antony Habash, Regional Director – Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation, Bethlehem.
- 73) Nidal Abuzuluf, Manager of Joint Advocacy Initiative – YMCA, Beit Sahour.
- 74) Mireille Ghnem, President of YWCA Jerusalem, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 75) Mazin Qumsieh, Professor Bethlehem University, Beit Sahour.
- 76) Vivien Sansour, writer and photographer, Beit Jala.
- 77) Yasmine Khoury, Kairos Palestine, Bethlehem.
- 78) Michel Awad, Executive Director SIRAJ Center, Beit Sahour
- 79) Anton Hanna Siniora, The National Christian Association, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 80) Maher Sahlieh, Palestine Scouts Association, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 81) Usama Zoughbi, Civil Society Activist, Bethlehem.

- 82) Ramzi Sansour, Assistant Professor and Consultant, Bethlehem.
- 83) Ghassan Daoud, Head of the Association of Orthodox Housing Project, Beit Sahour.
- 84) Fr. Boulos Alam, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, Beit Jala.
- 85) Near East Council of Churches – Jerusalem, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 86) Issa Kassis, CEO Palestine Mortgage & Housing Corporation, Ramallah.
- 87) Arab Orthodox Club – Bethlehem, Bethlehem.
- 88) Fr. George Shahwan, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, Beit Jala.
- 89) Dr. Varsen Aghabakian, Development Consultant – Occupied Jerusalem.
- 90) Haifa Baramki, Vice President – YWCA Palestine, Ramallah.
- 91) Raed Abed Rabboh, Public Relations Director at Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ) and Member Mar Mansour Christian Association, Beit Jala.
- 92) Issam Moghannam, Head of the Holy Family Scout Troup, Ramallah.
- 93) Wassef Daher, Head of Board YMCA – Palestine, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 94) Dr. Aghlab Khoury, President of the Arab Orthodox Club, Beit Sahour.
- 95) George Rishmawi, Head of SIRAJ Center and Alternative Tourism Group, Beit Sahour.
- 96) Mouhib Awad, Member of Parliament, Ramallah.
- 97) Fr. Louis Hazboun, Parish Priest of Bir Zeit, Bir Zeit.
- 98) Andre Batarseh, Secretary General of YMCA, Occupied Jerusalem.
- 99) Nizar Habash, Journalist and former head of Holy Family Scout Troup, Ramallah.
- 100) Nora Karmi, Kairos Palestine, Occupied Jerusalem.

This letter has been endorsed by a large number of Priests, Reverends and other community leaders in Europe.