



RÖSTER OM GAZA OCH ISRAEL/PALESTINA



FÖRDJUPNING

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KAIROS PALESTINE SWEDEN

Rörelsen Kairos Palestine Sweden vill informera och inspirera kyrkor och kristna till ett aktivt deltagande i strävandena efter en varaktig och rättvis fred mellan Palestina och Israel. Kairos Palestine Sweden har sina rötter i Kairos Palestine, en palestinsk röst för palestinska kristna och kyrkoledare som startade med Kairos Palestine dokumentet i december 2009.

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OMSLAGSBILDEN Jesusbarnet under spillerorna av vad som en gång var Gaza. Foto: Munther Isaac

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Bli medlem!
Varje medlem är
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röst hörd.

INTRODUKTION

VID EN ÅTERBLICK på de uttalanden som gjorts sedan den 7 oktober 2023 framträder en stark kontrast. Vi i västvärlden har - om vi alls reagerat - mestadels hållit oss till humanitära perspektiv, medan reaktionerna från palestinska kristna och deras organisationer andas ett helt annat djup. De skriver teologiskt politiska texter som sätter in det som nu sker i ett hundraårigt perspektiv av kolonialism och icke-erkännande av det palestinska folkets rätt till land, självbestämmande och frihet.

Västvärlden och även många kyrkor, inte minst mina egna biskopar i Svenska kyrkan, lutar åt ett israeliskt dominansperspektiv. De visar omsorg om den israeliska judiska civilbefolkningen men också om det israeliska narrativet som har Hamas motståndshandling som utgångspunkt för sin reflektion, däremot inte fördrivningen av det palestinska folket i samband med att Israel bildades 1948 eller det akuta behovet av eld upphör, för att förhindra folkmord i Gaza.

Vi har i denna skrift samlat några av de mest pregnanta uttalanden som gjorts av palestinska kristna tillsammans med några reflekterande texter från oss i Kairos Palestine Sweden. Vi har som rörelse två huvudmålsättningar. Vi ska dels arbeta för en rättvis fred på folkrättens grund, dels sprida palestinska kristnas röster för fred och rättvisa så att de blir hörda också i Sverige och västvärlden tillsammans med alla seriösa röster för fred. Det innebär att vi får en go-between roll. Vi lever i det västliga narrativet mest varje dag med dess förkärlek för att se konflikten med hjälp av det israeliska judiska narrativet: att judar i Israel är utsatta för antisemitism och lever i en omgivning som hatar judar.

Vilar vi i det palestinska kristna perspektivet är även den 7 oktober uttryck för en motståndshandling - om än värd fördömelse eftersom den drabbade civila och inte enbart kombatanter, dvs stridande. Det palestinska narrativet är grundat i erfarenhet av fördrivning och förtryck med israeliskt omintetgörande av det palestinska folkets rättigheter.

Den latinamerikanska befrielseteologin och dess biskopar myntade uttrycket de fattigas företräde, *the preferential option of the poor*.

I Palestinakonflikten möts två förtryckta folk där det ena ikläder sig kolonialismens dräkt för att förverkliga sin dröm om ett liv skyddat från utsatthet på grund av sin

judiska identitet. Denna ambition med stöd av västvärlden offrar den inhemska palestinska befolkningens rätt till

hem och trygghet. Den palestinska kampen för rätten till sitt hem, rätt till återvändande och rätt till självbestämmande framträder som en konsekvens av fördrivning och kolonialism.

Lena Lönnqvist skriver i Fördjupning om västvärldens moraliska kollaps. Det är en stark text ur barnens perspektiv. Jag själv diskuterar huruvida Israel verkligen bäst kan karakteriseras som en demokrati. Sune Fahlgren och jag själv reflekterar i en artikel om värdet av den palestinska kristna närvaren i det heliga landet.

Den första palestinska texten som vi valt att återge på engelska skrevs en och en halv vecka efter den 7 oktober. Denna text är undertecknad av i stort sett alla de viktigaste palestinska kristna institutionerna. Det innebär att den har stor tyngd som uttryck för en avgörande samstämmighet. Den har ett viktigt budskap till oss i Västvärlden om var de palestinska kristna står och vad de förväntar sig av oss.

Den följande palestinska texten av Kairos Palestine är skriven den 1 november till sammans med sydafrikanska kristna, Kairos Southern Africa. Den utmärker sig på två sätt. För det första pekar den på nödvändigheten att just nu förhindra och stoppa folkmord i Gaza. Det är inte bara krig som benämns och krigsbrott utan också folkmord. För det andra förutsätter den en gemenskap som funnits mellan apartheidoffren i både Sydafrika och det heliga landet ända sedan 1948 då bådas historia av åtskillnad, fördrivning och isolering började. Sydafrikanska kristna som år 1985 utgav sitt Kairosdokument – Kairos South Africa – inspi-

rerade palestinska kristna att offentliggöra sitt eget Kairosdokument – Kairos Palestine – år 2009.

Den ekklesiologiska reflektion som vi som Kairos Palestine Sweden gör tillsammans med andra Kairos och Sabeel grupper i Europa (Global Kairos for Justice – Europe) publicerar vi här i sin helhet.

Som allra starkast framträder den palestinska kristna motståndsdiskursen i prästen Munther Isaacs rop att stoppa folkmord i Gaza, formulerat i den julpredikan som hölls intill en julkrubba med Jesusbarnet omsvept av en palesinsk själ, delvis begravt under rasmassorna i Gaza. Where is God? God is under the rubble... predikan citerades vid Sydafrikas hearing i Internationella domstolen (International Court of Justice) den 11 januari 2024 med anledning av Sydafrikas anmälan av Israel för brott mot folkmordskonventionen i Gaza. Relevanta dokument och filmer finns på hemsidan www.kaiospalestine.se under nyheten International Court of Justice.

Jag vill avslutningsvis uppmuntra läsaren att också gå tillbaka till våra grundläggande dokument på hemsidorna kaiospalestine.ps och kaiospalestine.se. Vi hoppas att en djupdykning i vad de palestinska kristna verkligen säger ska kunna ge västvärldens kristna och andra förutsättningar för solidaritet också med det palestinska folket.

Eftersom hopp är vad vi gör, uppmuntrar vi även till att fortsätta skriva till USAs president att förhindra folkmordet i Gaza genom att stoppa kriget. Gå till whitehouse.gov och välj meny i övre högra hörnet. Där hittar du kontaktformulär att fylla i med ditt personliga budskap.

Låt oss inte heller glömma att be!

ANNA KARIN HAMMAR
Ordförande Kairos Palestine
Sweden



VÄSTVÄRLDENS MORALISKA KOLLAPS

Dania, 12 år, förlorade mamma, pappa, två syskon och ett ben i en av Israels bombningar i Gaza. Hon var dock stark nog att få livslusten tillbaka så pass att hon i en video för Defence for Children berättade att hon ville få en protes som skulle ge henne möjlighet att gå i skolan och hon ville leva med sina återstående syskon.

NÅGON KANKE TÄNKER att den oskyldiga tolvåringen Dania någon gång i framtiden borde få en ursäkt för allt hon förlorat, men det blir tyvärr omöjligt. När Dania låg med sitt amputerade ben på Naser Hospital i Khan Younis upplevde hon nämligen ytterligare en israelisk bombattack och den dödade henne. Ett sjukhus är inte en skyddad plats för ett barn i Gaza.

Efter 100 dagar av Israels krig mot Hamas, som i realiteten har blivit ett krig mot Gazas civilbefolkning, noterar FN-organet OCHA 23 968 döda, 60 582 skadade och 1,9 miljoner på flykt. Rapporter uppger att cirka 9000 barn är bland de döda. Addera till detta att humanitär hjälp hindras att nå de drabbade och att 80 procent av Gazas bostäder är raserade.

Vi är delaktiga i en humanitär katastrof. Vi är med om att skapa en historisk skamfläck, som skrämmar och får mig och många andra att tappa tron på att det finns en moral och etik i vår del av världen. Vi beskådar västvärldens moraliska kollaps.

Hamas fruktansvärda angrepp på civila israeler den 7 oktober bör fördömas av alla, men det motiverar inte ett urskillningslöst dödande och total förödelse i Gaza under mer än tre månader. När Israel inte sätter en gräns för dödandet av civila, är det omvärdens skyldighet att göra det.

Sydafrika har agerat genom att anklaga Israel för folkmord och se till att få frågan prövad i International Court of Justice i Haag. Anmälan fick stöd av 15 stater, samtliga utanför det vi kallar västvärlden. Ingen EU-stat eller nordamerikansk stat ställde upp.

Miljoner engagerade privatpersoner har under hösten demonstrerat runt om i världen med kravet att Israel upphör och införsel av humanitär hjälp i Gaza. Visst är det hoppningsvande



Nahida Boulos Anton och hennes dotter Samar Antoun dödades av en israelisk prickskytt när de tagit sin tillflykt till Holy Family Roman Catholic Church i Gaza den 16 december 2023.

att så många ställer upp på gatorna, men hur ska man tolka det totala ignorandet av detta från beslutsfattarna? Det är som om regeringarna är döva för demonstranternas rop och blinda för palestiniernas lidande. Var finns deras etiska kompass?

Irland och Belgien ska dock undantas. De har faktiskt försökt få EU att kräva eld upphör och de hade visst stöd av Spanien, Slovenien och Malta. Övriga 22 EU-stater var dock inte intresserade av att engagera sig för de palestinska barnens tragiska öde. Detta trots att majoriteten hade röstat ja till den FN-resolution som uppmanade till ett stopp för våldet i Gaza. Moralisk kollaps!

Givetvis faller skulden tyngst på Israel och USA, eftersom de är aktörerna i det som kanske kommer att kallas folkmord i Gaza, men skulden faller också tungt på Sverige och övriga västvärlden som inte ställer krav på eld upphör och som inte är beredda att införa sanktioner mot Israel i den händelse man inte skulle följa uppmaningen.



Kyrkorna och västvärldens kristna kunde ha varit först i demonstrationsledet för att försvara oskyldiga människors liv och kräva att Israel upphör med våldet. Enskilda kristna har varit aktiva, men kyrkorna som organisationer har inte hörts mycket i protestkören. Beror det på den bakvända tanken att om man kritiseras Israel, löper man risken att anklagas för antisemitism. Eller beror det på den ännu mer bakvända tanken att bibeln skulle uppmana kristna att stödja ett land som heter Israel, oavsett hur odemokratiskt och diskriminerande landets politiska ledare agerar?

De palestinska kristna rösterna uttrycker misstro mot väst och vi får inse att alla vackra ord från vårt håll om solidaritet och medmänsklighet nu har kommit på fall. När det blev skarpt läge och det ställdes krav på att stoppa Israel, överensstämde inte längre etik

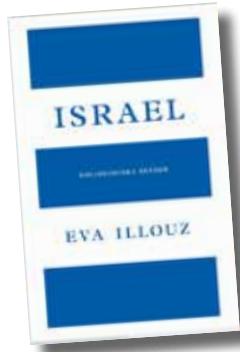
och moral med de vackra orden.

Vad har det för värde att Sverige har erkänt Palestina, när inte ens socialdemokraterna (som var beslutsfattare i frågan) ställer tydliga krav att Sverige och EU ska stoppa den pågående katastrofen i Gaza?

TV-mediet är obarmhärtigt och skonar oss inte från att se hur Israels våld drabbar oskyldiga föräldrar och barn, hur det historiska Gaza krossas till ruiner, hur humanitär hjälp stoppas så barn får lägga sig hungriga och hur sjukdomar, väta och kyla skapar en helvetisk tillvaro för dem. Palestinierna i Gaza trodde att det fanns en omvärld som skulle förhindra att detta kunde ske, men de fick istället uppleva västvärldens moraliska kollaps.

LENA LÖNNQVIST
Kassör i Kairos Palestine Sweden

ISRAEL – DEMOKRATI ELLER TERRORSTAT?



INGEN BERÄTTELSE OM Israel har gripit mig djupare än sociologiprofessor Eva Illouz skildring i Israel – sociologiska berättelser (Daidalos förlag) om hur hon har kunnat vara praktiserande judinna i olika länder. Uppväxten i Marocko tills dess hon var tio år gammal inne-

bar en självklart praktiserad judisk tro. Flytten till Frankrike förändrade förhållandena, men det var fortfarande i det sekulära Frankrike möjligt att praktisera judisk tro och judiskt liv utan inskränkningar. Åren i USA innebar en verkligt positiv tid för Eva Illouz. Judisk tro och judiskt liv har en stark ställning i USA. Det var lätt och

väldigt uppskattat att vara praktiserande judinna i det stora landet i väster.

Annorlunda blev det när Eva Illouz flyttade till Israel. För första gången kände hon sig oförmögen att praktisera sin judiska tro eftersom hon upplevde sammanhanget för religiös judendom vara så förtryckande, inte minst på grund av den religiösa extremismen och i förlängningen situationen för palestinierna.

Jag greps av berättelsen och tänkte att det är en förskräcklig skildring som pekar på att där de judiska idealen minst kan praktiseras – det är i Israel! För mig blev Eva Illouz skildring av judisk tro och Israel ett släktskap med profeten Amos när han utbrast: Ta bort ifrån mig era gudstjänster och firanden – men låt rätten flöda fram som vatten, lik en bäck som aldrig sinar.

Försvarare av Israel som stat pekar ofta på att Israel är demokratiskt, men det kräver verkligen en följdfråga. Demokratiskt för vem? När Israel nu håller kontroll över hela det heliga landet inklusive de palestinska områdena/Palestina framträder Israel snarare som en apartheidstat. Israel varken erkänner Palestina som stat eller ger palestinier i de ockuperade områdena rösträtt och alla andra rättigheter. Så

”... men låt rätten flöda fram som vatten, lik en bäck som aldrig sinar.

fort Israel gör anspråk på hela landet mellan Medelhavet och Jordanfloden kommer apartheid som ett brev på posten. Detta har konstaterats av FNs speciella rapportörer för de ockuperade områdena, detta har konstaterats av israeliska ambassadörer som tjänstgjort i Sydafrika, och inte minst: apartheid har konstaterats i gedigna utredningar främst av Amnesty International och Human Rights Watch men även av den israeliska mänskliga rättsorganisationen B'Tselem med flera. När nu kriget i Gaza – som palestinierna och många med dem uppfattar som folkmord – pågår, har frågan om apartheid kommit i skymundan, men situationen har inte förändrats.

Det som tydligast kan sägas om Israel är att det är en terrorstat eller terrorregim för palestinska barn och familjer. Inte bara i Gaza, där barnen har ett helvete, som just nu när detta skrivs utreds och urskiljs av Internationella domstolen, International Court of Justice. Utan också på Västbanken där ingen familj med barn och tonåringar kan känna sig säker under natten. Alldeles oförberett stormar israelisk militär in i privata hem och håller befolkningen i skräck. Terror. Israel är en stat som praktisrar terror. En terrorstat.

Hur vilse Israel har gått beskriver ingen bättre än författaren Göran Rosenberg som i Rabbi Marcus Ehrenpreis obesvarade kärlek ställer den kulturella sionismen emot den politiska sionismen. De universella värden som kultursionismen höll fram för världen ser vi nu begravas i Gazas rasmassor tillsammans med den politiska sionismen. Hur det än utvecklar sig framöver är det politiska projektet dödligt sårat av att inte kunna erbjuda trygghet med enbart våld. Därtill fordras rättvisa.

ANNA KARIN HAMMAR

GEMENSKAP MED DE PALESTINSKA KRISTNA

"Med början i Jerusalem..." LUK 24:47, APG 1:8

Om kyrkornas förbundenhet med de palestinska kristna och det heliga landet.

NÄR LUKAS BERÄTTAR om Jesus Kristus och de första kristna betonar han var och hur det började "i Jerusalem". Den kristna trons visshet är för Lukas grundad i tid och rum på Jesus liv, död och uppenbarelse som uppstånden. Men detta är inte lätt att förstå och ta till sig. Lukas konstaterar att Jesus öppnade "sinnena" (Luk 24:45) på lärjungarna, så att de kunde inse att budskapet om frälsning gäller alla folk i hela världen.

Men inte bara Jesushändelsen timade "i det heliga landet", som området mellan Medelhavet och floden Jordan kallas. Det började med Abraham, en invandrare till detta område, som fick kallelsen att vara Guds folk på jorden. Så fortsätter det med Sara och Hagar, Rebecka och Mirjam, Judit, Hanna och Rut. Och i Marias ja till ängeln Gabriel förtätas berättelsen och Gud själv blir mänsklig i Jesus Kristus.

Kyrkan sammanfattar detta mysterium i det teologiska ordet "inkarnation". Betydelsen av det är en världsbild: Ingen plats, ingen tid på jorden är utan Gud. Med början i staden Jerusalem sprids detta glädjebud till alla folk.

Berättelserna om Jesus betonar också att marken har betydelse för honom. Också när han är som mest utsatt. Då han i Getsemane trädgård faller till marken växer modet, uthålligheten och kraften.

Kyrkohistorien visar att för kristna i hela världen är det heliga landet av stor betydelse. Vi upplever att vi har en särskild relation till denna plats där allt började. Därför kan kyrkor-

na idag inte frikoppla sig själva från vad som faktiskt händer på marken i det moderna Israel och Palestina. De kristna i Palestina är efter Nakba 1948 få till antalet, men de förvaltar troget arvet i det heliga landet. Man kan höra palestinska ortodoxa kristna säga att "min familj har rötter i den första pingstdagen".



När kyrkorna i Palestina nu vänder sig till systrar och bröder i den världsvida kyrkan och ber dem – oss – att aktivt engagera sig i kravet på att kriget i Gaza måste upphöra, så synliggör det en ekklesiologisk utmaning: Är kyrkorna i väst fortfarande förbundna med "urkyrkan"? Angår det kyrkor i Sverige att kristna församlingar utplånas i Gaza? Efter kriget och folkmordet är den kristna närvaren i den delen av det heliga landet kanske slut.

Den humanitära krisen i Gaza och utplåning av kyrkor är den senast konsekvensen av statens Israels erövringspolitik som försöker fördriva landets folk och ta deras mark. Ropet från de palestinska kristna om solidaritet för hållbar fred och rättvisa handlar i ett ekklesiologiskt perspektiv om kyrkans identitet och vittnesbörd i världen. Kristi kyrka är "med början i Jerusalem" kallad att vara en världsvid frihetsrörelse präglad av försoning. Inget folk är ju fritt förrän alla folk är fria.

SUNE FAHLGREN
Sekreterare i Kairos Palestine Sweden
ANNA KARIN HAMMAR

A call for repentance

An Open Letter from Palestinian Christians to Western Church Leaders and Theologians

WE, AT THE UNDERSIGNED Palestinian Christian institutions and grassroots movements, grieve and lament the renewed cycle of violence in our land. As we were about to publish this open letter, some of us lost dear friends and family members in the atrocious Israeli bombardment of innocent civilians on October 19, 2023, Christians included, who were taking refuge in the historical Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Porphyrius in Gaza. Words fail to express our shock and horror with regard to the on-going war in our land. We deeply mourn the death and suffering of all people because it is our firm conviction that all humans are made in God's image. We are also profoundly troubled when the name of God is invoked to promote violence and religious national ideologies.

Further, we watch with horror the way many western Christians are offering unwavering support to Israel's war against the people of Palestine. While we recognize the numerous voices that have spoken and continue to speak for the cause of truth and justice in our land, we write to challenge western theologians and church leaders who have voiced uncritical support for Israel and to call them to repent and change. Sadly, the actions and double standards of some Christian leaders have gravely hurt their Christian witness and have severely distorted their moral judgment with regards to the situation in our land.

We come alongside fellow Christians in condemning all attacks on civilians, especially defenseless families and children. Yet, we are disturbed by the silence of many church leaders and theologians when it is Palestinian civilians who are killed. We are also horrified by the refusal of some western Christians to condemn

*"Learn to do
right; seek justice;
defend the
oppressed"*

Isa 1:17)

the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestine, and, in some instances, their justification of and support for the occupation. Further, we are appalled by how some Christians have legitimized Israel's ongoing indiscriminate attacks on Gaza, which have, so far, claimed the lives of more than 3,700 Palestinians, the majority of whom are women and children. These attacks have resulted in the wholesale destruction of entire neighborhoods and the forced displacement of over one million Palestinians. The Israeli military has utilized tactics that target civilians such as the use of white phosphorus, the cutting off of water, fuel, and electricity, and the bombardment of schools, hospitals, and places of worship—including the heinous massacre at Al-Ahli Anglican-Baptist Hospital and the bombardment of the Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Porphyrius which wiped out entire Palestinian Christian families.

Moreover, we categorically reject the myopic and distorted Christian responses that ignore the wider context and the root causes of this war: Israel's systemic oppression of the Palestinians over the last 75 years since the Nakba, the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Palestine, and the oppressive and racist military occupation that constitutes the crime of apartheid. This is precisely the horrific context of oppression that many western Christian theologians and leaders have persistently ignored, and even worse, have occasionally legitimized using a wide range of Zionist theologies and interpretations. Moreover, Israel's cruel blockade of Gaza for the last 17 years has turned the 365-square-kilometer Strip into an open-air prison for more than two million Palestinians—70% of whom belong to families displaced during the Nakba—who are denied

their basic human rights. The brutal and hopeless living conditions in Gaza under Israel's iron fist have regrettably emboldened extreme voices of some Palestinian groups to resort to militancy and violence as a response to oppression and despair. Sadly, Palestinian non-violent resistance, which we remain wholeheartedly committed to, is met with rejection, with some western Christian leaders even prohibiting the discussion of Israeli apartheid as reported by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and B'Tselem, and as long asserted by both Palestinians and South Africans.

Time and again, we are reminded that western attitudes towards Palestine-Israel suffer from a glaring double standard that humanizes Israeli Jews while insisting on dehumanizing Palestinians and whitewashing their suffering. This is evident in general attitudes towards the recent Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip that killed thousands of Palestinians, the apathy towards the murder of the Palestinian-American Christian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in 2022, and the killing of more than 300 Palestinians including 38 children in the West Bank this year before this recent escalation. It seems to us that this double standard reflects an entrenched colonial discourse that has weaponized the Bible to justify the ethnic cleansing of indigenous peoples in the Americas, Oceania, and elsewhere, the slavery of Africans and the transatlantic slave trade, and decades of apartheid in South Africa. Colonial theologies are not passé; they continue in wide-ranging Zionist theologies and interpretations that have legitimized the ethnic cleansing of Palestine and the vilification and dehumanization of Palestinians—Christians included—living under systemic settler-colonial apartheid. Further, we are aware of the western Christian legacy of Just War Theory that was used to justify dropping atomic bombs over innocent civilians in Japan during World War II, the destruction of Iraq and the decimation of its Christian population during the latest American war on Iraq, as well as the unwavering and uncritical support for Israel against the Palestinians in the name of moral-supremacy and “self-defense.” Regrettably, many

western Christians across wide denominational and theological spectra adopt Zionist theologies and interpretations that justify war, making them complicit in Israel's violence and oppression. Some are also complicit in the rise of the anti-Palestinian hate speech, which we are witnessing in numerous western countries and media outlets today.

Although many Christians in the West do not have a problem with the theological legitimization of war, the vast majority of Palestinian Christians do not condone violence—not even by the powerless and occupied. Instead, Palestinian Christians are fully committed to the way of Jesus in creative nonviolent resistance (*Kairos Palestine*, §4.2.3), which uses “the logic of love and draw[s] on all energies to make peace” (§4.2.5). Crucially, we reject all theologies and interpretations that legitimize the wars of the powerful. We strongly urge western Christians to come alongside us in this. We also remind ourselves and fellow Christians that God is the God of the down-trodden and the oppressed, and that Jesus rebuked the powerful and lifted up the marginalized. This is at the heart of God's conception of justice. Therefore, we are deeply troubled by the failure of some western Christian leaders and theologians to acknowledge the biblical tradition of justice and mercy, as first proclaimed by Moses (*Deut* 10:18; 16:18–20; 32:4) and the prophets (*Isa* 1:17; 61:8; *Mic* 2:1–3, 6:8; *Amos* 5:10–24), and as exemplified and embodied in Christ (*Matt* 25:34–46; *Luke* 1:51–53; 4:16–21).

Finally, and we say it with a broken heart, we hold western church leaders and theologians who rally behind Israel's wars accountable for their theological and political complicity in the Israeli crimes against the Palestinians, which have been committed over the last 75 years. We call upon them to reexamine their positions and to change their direction, remembering that God “will judge the world in justice” (*Acts* 17:31). We also remind ourselves and our Palestinian people that our *sumud* (“steadfastness”) is anchored in our just cause and our historical rootedness in this land. As Palestinian Christians, we also continue to find our coura-



GUD, FÖRBARMA DIG ÖVER GAZA!

ge and consolation in the God who dwells with those of a contrite and humble spirit (Isa 57:15). We find courage in the solidarity we receive from the crucified Christ, and we find hope in the empty tomb. We are also encouraged and empowered by the costly solidarity and support of many churches and grassroots faith movements around the world, challenging the dominance of ideologies of power and supremacy. We refuse to give in, even when our siblings abandon us. We are steadfast in our hope, resilient in our witness, and continue to be committed to the Gospel of faith, hope, and love, in the face of tyranny and darkness. "In the absence of all hope, we cry out our cry of hope. We believe in God, good and just. We believe that God's goodness will finally triumph over the evil of hate and of death that still persist in our land. We will see here 'a new land' and 'a new human being', capable of rising up in the spirit to love each one of his or her brothers and sisters" (Kairos Palestine, §10).

Your Kingdom come!

SIGNED ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

Kairos Palestine

Christ at the Checkpoint

Bethlehem Bible College

Sabeel Ecumenical Center for Liberation Theology

Dar al-Kalima University

Al-Liqa Center for Religious, Heritage and Cultural Studies in the Holy Land

The East Jerusalem YMCA

The YWCA of Palestine

Arab Orthodox Society, Jerusalem

Arab Orthodox Club, Jerusalem

The Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees of the Middle East Council of Churches

Arab Education Institute

Pax Christi, Bethlehem

Joint Kairos Southern Africa and Kairos Palestine

Open Letter to Church leaders and Christians in the USA, Europe and the Ecumenical Family

1 November 2023

SISTERS AND BROTHERS

We are witnessing a genocide against Palestinians in Gaza unfolding in front of our eyes, not dissimilar to what happened less than 30 years ago in Rwanda and 80 years ago in Europe. Many in the West were complicit in those genocides. We cannot and dare not let it happen again. It must be stopped.

Failure to act to stop this genocide, which is being supported by many in your countries, and encouraged by the supply of arms to Israel to carry it out, will make you complicit in this genocide. Those whose governments support this genocide have a greater responsibility to ensure that their governments stop this genocide.

While we condemn all violence against civilians and non-civilians, this war did not emerge out of a vacuum. Its genesis can be traced back to the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories, the expansion of illegal Jewish settlements in Occupied Palestine, the violation of the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and the siege of Gaza for the last 17 years. And most recently, the rising of the ultra-national and ultra-religious fascist groups to power in Israel and the denial of the current rightwing national and religious coalition to recognize the inalienable right of the Palestinians to freedom and self-determination. The entire world witnessed the continuing violations and attacks against Muslim and Christian Holy sites and worshippers in Jerusalem and other places carried out by Jewish extremists, settlers, Knesset members, and ministers, discounting the religious

sensibilities of not only Palestinians but also millions of Christians and Muslims around the world; to name a few of the reasons behind the suffering of the Palestinians under Israel's settler colonialism regime.

In 2022, the Israeli Occupation Forces have killed 230 Palestinians; 171 in the West Bank, 53 in Gaza, 6 in Israel and 44 of which are Child fatalities. Moreover, since the beginning of the year and until Oct. 7th, 2023, the Israeli Occupation Forces have killed a total of 243 Palestinians.

We hope that this provides you with a macroscopic view of the situation of the Palestinian people. This is simply to underline the point that pain, grief and sorrow did not start on Oct 7th, 2023.

We all know that all of these atrocities against all human beings are against God's intentions for God's world.

They are also against international law and in breach of the Geneva Conventions. These Laws and conventions were put in place mainly by Western powers after the Second World war and no state was precluded from it or given exceptional status.

Combine all which have been described above with the total siege imposed upon Gaza by Israel and the dangerous blocking of almost all non-violent avenues, then any reasonable human being will understand that things will explode. If Americans or Europeans were placed in a similar situation to what the people of Gaza have been exposed to, then we wonder how they would have reacted? History teaches us that they would not have reacted non-violently and therefore we find some of the labels being placed on Palestinians (and previously on

*"Vindicate
me in your
righteousness,
LORD my God"*

(Ps. 35:24)

South Africans) as extremely hypocritical.

South Africans know what it means to be labelled as “terrorist” or “communist”. Worse labels have been put on Palestinians by those who are guilty of the worst kind of anti-Semitism, a burden and responsibility that they have placed on the Palestinian people. In practice, we see how the Palestinians are being terrorized daily by Israeli settlers and by the Occupation forces and other Zionist militia. And therefore, we call out the hypocrisy of these labels being imposed only upon one group of people.

Most of the churches in Europe and the USA seems not to have repudiated their colonial and racist history.

Because of this, the lens through which our lives are being viewed is still colored by their sins of colonialism and racism. Now and once again, we need to hold this before you and make you aware of this. This is a projection of the worst kind and is inconsistent with the Jesus we know from our Scriptures. We therefore call you to deep repentance.

The Jesus we know and have experienced - and whose birth in Bethlehem we will soon celebrate - is best encapsulated by the words of the young South African Christian poet, Thandi Gamedze, when she writes:

*If Jesus were alive today –
And I do mean the brown Jesus
The one who grew up in occupied Palestine
The Roman empire a constant threat
Its military weaponized against anyone stepping
out of line
The Jesus whose welcome into the world was
tainted by violence
Air resounding with Roman ally King Herod's
order
For the genocide of all boy children in Bethlehem
If that Jesus were alive today
It's clear where he would be
Likely making his way South
Dodging bombs and white phosphorous rain
Mourning family and friends
whose homes had been turned to rubble
While they were sleeping inside
Healing powers compromised in the face of all the
casualties*

*Lament the only plausible response to the
devastation*

*That Jesus would have no water to turn into wine
Because the present empire has poured cement into
the supply*

*And cut off all means to access
His supernatural abilities would be tested
In this humanitarian crisis*

*Because the five thousand hungry people
have multiplied to two million*

*And even five loaves and two fishes are hard to
find*

*I'm quite sure he would be scared
Just as when contemplating his imminent
crucifixion*

*Drained of all hope in the face of the empire's
inhumanity*

*He'd probably turn to prayer as he did the day
before his murder*

*“God, would you take this cup of suffering from us
And free Palestine”*

It is with this lens, so beautifully and confidently encapsulated above, that we address you now.

We firstly acknowledge our Jewish sisters and brothers who have begun to say “not in our name” and we pray that their numbers and protests may grow. The people taking to the streets across the globe are now primarily the ones carrying the good news of peace, justice and reconciliation. It is to them that we shall turn.

It is therefore an indictment on the Churches in the USA, Europe and the Ecumenical Family that they seem strangely indifferent to the murder of Palestinians and the acts of vengeance being meted out to our Palestinian sisters and brothers and only react when Israelis get killed. You constantly speak “peace, peace where there is no peace.” As far as we can see, any pretense for peace has been abandoned long time ago while pieces of Palestinian land have been stolen. The empty phrases are therefore an affront not only to us, but to the God of justice, the God who took sides with the oppressed, the downtrodden and the marginalized.

If this was 1943, Jewish people being persecuted by Europeans would have been the opp-



GUD, FÖRBARMA

DIG ÖVER GAZA!

FOTO: MOTAJ AZAIZA

ressed, downtrodden, and marginalized and we would have taken their side. But it is now 2023, and today the formerly oppressed have become an empowered oppressor breaking the necks of the current oppressed people, the Palestinian people, even wishing away their very existence. They are being bombarded daily with messages from settlers:

“Move to Jordan!”

We have news for them and for you: the Palestinians are not going anywhere: instead, the Palestinians will rise from their current crucifixion and all oppressed people everywhere will identify with the Palestinian people in the same way that people identified with black South Africans under apartheid. The Christian community in Palestine is a small and often forgotten minority, but with Bishop Tutu we say: “God is not a Christian” and God does not only care about those who call themselves Christians. All human beings and all those who do the will of God are equally loved and cared for by God.

Human rights have no borders of religion, culture, class, race, or gender. Palestinian Christians stand with and identify fully with all Palestinians. The West needs to understand

that you are placing the values of democracy and human rights at significant risk, in effect delegitimizing it, if you continue your current trajectory.

While this open letter is addressed to you, our hope is in God, who is in solidarity with his people. God will hold you accountable for your sins of commission and omission.

We put our trust in the Jesus who proclaimed Good News to the poor and oppressed. Jesus reminds us all that God is not a tribal God, but a God who cares deeply for all peoples. This same Jesus fills us with hope and joy and we pray deeply that you too will meet this Jesus, and be liberated by him.

If your hearts do become somewhat moved by what we have written, we call for deep and immediate solidarity with all Palestinian people and in particular those in Gaza. We stand ready to engage with you on the contents of this open letter.

May God bless you,

REV FRANK CHIKANE

on behalf of Kairos Southern Africa

+ PATRIARCH EMERITUS MICHEL SABAH

on behalf of Kairos Palestine

Are Western Churches still in Communion with Palestinian Christians?

*Brev från Global Kairos for Justice (GKJ) – Europe skickat till
kyrkoledare i Europa.*

PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS AND theologians are raising the question as to whether western churches are still in communion with them. In a situation where – after the violent breaking of international law by the Kassam Brigades, the military arm of the resistance movement Hamas – Israel is potentially committing genocide in Gaza, and certainly committing war crimes according to international law, some churches are keeping silent. They follow the government refusing to even ask for a ceasefire. It is expected that there will be no more Christians or churches in Gaza after the end of the war.

This raises serious ecclesiological questions. In July 2020 Kairos Palestine and its Global Kairos for Justice Network (GKJ) issued the Cry for Hope. This document “calls upon all Christians and on churches at congregational, denominational, national, and global ecumenical levels to engage in a process of study, reflection and confession concerning the historic and systemic deprivation of the rights of the Palestinian people, and the use of the Bible by many to justify and support this oppression. We call on churches to reflect on how their own traditions can express the sacred duty to uphold the integrity of the church and the Christian faith concerning this issue. We cannot serve God while remaining silent about the oppression of the Palestinians” (<https://cryforhope.org/>).

Several churches have responded with impressive confessions and responses. The majority of European churches did not realise the se-

riousness of this call, referring to the tradition of the confessing church in Nazi-Germany and the declaration of a status confessionis in relation to apartheid in South Africa.

The current situation is even more desperate than when Cry for Hope was issued, as Palestinians face the possibility of permanent forced expulsion from Gaza, and a breakdown in the rule of law in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. We invite us and the European churches to scrutinise ourselves and our actions. According to Bonhoeffer (*Zur Frage der Kirchengemeinschaft. DBW XIV.* (1936), S. 655-680), in situations such as that in Palestine now, churches behave in three ways:

- As true church they confess Christ in spite of all dangerous consequences (in Jesus’ and his case, being executed by the powers),
- As erring church they try to accommodate the powers by not taking a clear stand, and,
- As false church they show complicity with the powers that persecute the church in question.

In the case of the erring church, communication has to be intensified in order to win it to the true church, and for a clear confession to be made. With Israel at risk of committing genocide in Gaza, and extinguishing the Christian church there, churches who side with Israel and keep silent without clearly and publicly rejecting Israel’s actions have to ask themselves whether they are complicit as false churches. The crisis in Gaza is the latest

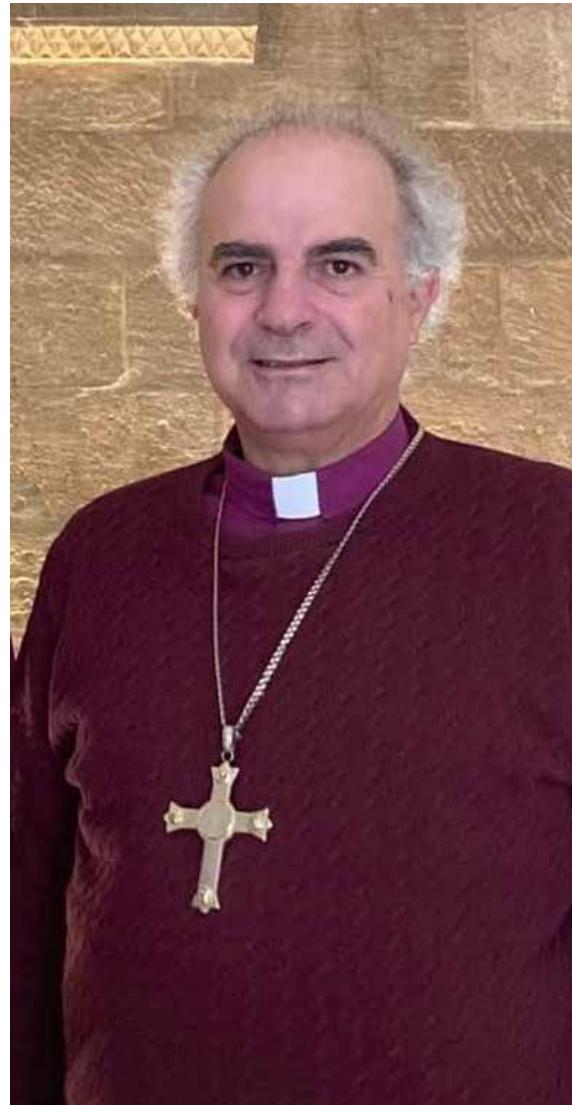
77 ... We cannot serve God while remaining silent about the oppression of the Palestinians"

consequence of Israel's long-standing settler colonialism project

which seeks to replace the indigenous population, and through which – according to human rights organisations and the UN – it has been establishing itself as an apartheid state in order to do so.

Therefore, western churches and church leaders should immediately give a sign of solidarity with our Palestinian brothers and sisters in order to confess Christ in this situation and be in communion with them. The immediate challenge is to call for a ceasefire and to immediately prevent and stop genocide. To act as true church in this situation is to acknowledge 75 years of injustice against the Palestinian people, repent of our own Christian failings in supporting and allowing this injustice to continue and now to escalate in a manner never seen before. We want to declare our commitment to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people now, until they achieve justice, freedom and security together with the Israeli Jewish population. Only together both people will have a future.

Global Kairos for Justice – Europe
DECEMBER 2023



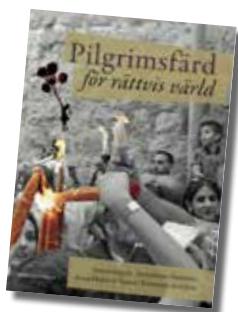
VI BER

Vi ber för biskop Ibrahim Azar och alla kyrkoledarna i det heliga landet.

Vi ber för Kairos Palestine och Sabeel och alla andra organisationer i det palestinska civilsamhället att de ska få fortsätta att vara sanningens och medkänslans röst.

LÄS MER

Pilgrimsfärd för rättvis värld
– möten med kyrkorna
i Israel och Palestina
Beställs från Spricka förlag
eller din bokhandel,
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CHRIST IN THE RUBBLE

A Liturgy of Lament

Saturday December 23rd, 2023

WE ARE ANGRY...

WE ARE BROKEN...

This should have been a time of joy; instead, we are mourning. We are fearful.

20,000 killed. Thousands under the rubble still. Close to 9,000 children killed in the most brutal ways. Day after day after day. 1.9 million displaced! Hundreds of thousands of homes destroyed. Gaza as we know it no longer exists. This is an annihilation. A genocide.

The world is watching; Churches are watching. Gazans are sending live images of their own execution. Maybe the world cares? But it goes on...

We are asking, could this be our fate in Bethlehem? In Ramallah? In Jenin? Is this our destiny too?

We are tormented by the silence of the world. Leaders of the so-called "free" world lined up one after the other to give the green light for this genocide against a captive population. They gave the cover. Not only did they make sure to pay the bill in advance, they veiled the truth and context, providing the political cover. And, yet another layer has been added: the theological cover with the Western Church stepping into the spotlight.

The South African Church taught us the concept of "The state theology," defined as "the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism." It does so by misusing theological concepts and biblical texts for its own political purposes.

- In Gaza today, God is under the rubble.

Here in Palestine, the Bible is weaponized against us. Our very own sacred text. In our terminology in Palestine, we speak of the Empire. Here we confront the theology of the Empire. A disguise for superiority, supremacy, "chosenness," and entitlement. It is sometimes given a nice cover using words like mission and evangelism, fulfillment of prophecy, and spreading freedom and liberty. The theology of the Empire becomes a powerful tool to mask oppression under the cloak of divine sanction. It divides people into "us" and "them." It dehumanizes and demonizes. It speaks of land without people even when they know the land has people - and not just any people. It calls for emptying Gaza, just like it called the ethnic cleansing in 1948 "a divine miracle." It calls for us Palestinians to go to Egypt, maybe Jordan, or why not just the sea?

"Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" they said of us. This is the theology of Empire .

This war has confirmed to us that the world does not see us as equal. Maybe it is the color of our skin. Maybe it is because we are on the wrong side of the political equation. Even our kinship in Christ did not shield us. As they said, if it takes killing 100 Palestinians to get a single "Hamas militant" then so be it! We are not humans in their eyes. (But in God's eyes... no one can tell us we are not!)

The hypocrisy and racism of the Western world is transparent and appalling! They always take the words of Palestinians with suspicion and qualification. No, we are not treated equally. Yet, the other side, despite a clear track record of misinformation, is almost always deemed infallible!



Kyrkoherden i Betlehem, Isaac Munther, håller sin julpredikan i Christmas Church i Betlehem.

To our European friends. I never ever want to hear you lecture us on Human rights or international law again. We are not white - it does not apply to us according to your own logic.

In this war, the many Christians in the Western world made sure the Empire has the theology needed. It is self-defense, we were told! (And I ask How?)

In the shadow of the Empire, they turned the colonizer into the victim, and the colonized into the aggressor. Have we forgotten that the state was built on the ruins of the towns and villages of those very same Gazans?

We are outraged by the complicity of the church. Let it be clear: Silence is complicity, and empty calls for peace without a ceasefire and end to occupation, and the shallow words of empathy without direct action --- are all under the banner of complicity.

So here is my message: Gaza today has become the moral compass of the world. Gaza was hell on earth before October 7th.

If you are not appalled by what is happening; if you are not shaken to your core – there is something wrong with your humanity. If we, as Christians, are not outraged by this genocide, by the weaponizing of the Bible to justify it, there is something wrong with our Christian witness, and compromising the credibility of the Gospel!

If you fail to call this a genocide. It is on you. It is a sin and a darkness you willingly embrace.

Some have not even called for a ceasefire... I feel sorry for you. We will be ok. Despite the immense blow we have endured, we will recover. We will rise and stand up again from the midst of destruction, as we have always done as Palestinians, although this is by far the biggest blow we have received in a long time.

But again, for those who are complicit, I feel sorry for you. Will you ever recover from this? Your charity, your words of shock AFTER the genocide, won't make a difference. Words of regret will not suffice for you. We will not accept your apology after the genocide. What has been done, has been done. I want you to look at the mirror... and ask: where was I?

To our friends who are here with us: You have left your families and churches to be with us. You embody the term accompaniment – a costly solidarity. "We were in prison and you visited us." What a stark difference from the silence and complicity of others. Your presence here is the meaning of solidarity. Your visit has already left an impression that will never be taken from us. Through you, God has spoken to us that "we are not forsaken." As Father Rami of the Catholic Church said this morning, you have come to Bethlehem, and like the Magi, you brought gifts with, but gifts that are more precious than gold, frankincense, and myrrh. You brought the gift of love and solidarity. We needed this. For this season, maybe more than anything, we were troubled by the silence of God. In these last two months, the Psalms of lament have become a precious companion. We cried out: My God, My God, why have you forsaken Gaza? Why do you hide your face from Gaza?

In our pain, anguish, and lament, we have searched for God, and found him under the rubble in Gaza. Jesus became the victim of the very same violence of the Empire. He was tortured. Crucified. He bled out as others watched. He was killed and cried out in pain – My God, where are you?

In Gaza today, God is under the rubble.

And in this Christmas season, as we search for Jesus, he is to be found not on the side of Rome, but our side of the wall. In a cave, with a simple family. Vulnerable. Barely, and miraculously surviving a massacre. Among a refugee family. This is where Jesus is found.

If Jesus were to be born today, he would be born under the rubble in Gaza.

When we glorify pride and richness, Jesus is under the rubble...

When we rely on power, might, and weapons, Jesus is under the rubble...

When we justify, rationalize, and theologize the bombing of children, Jesus is under the rubble...

Jesus is under the rubble. This is his manger. He is at home with the marginalized, the suffering, the oppressed, and displaced. This is his manger.

I have been looking, contemplating on this iconic image.... God with us, precisely in this way. THIS is the incarnation. Messy. Bloody. Poverty.

This child is our hope and inspiration. We look and see him in every child killed and pulled from under the rubble. While the world continues to reject the children of Gaza, Jesus says: "just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me." "You did to ME." Jesus not only calls them his own, he is them!

We look at the holy family and see them in every family displaced and wandering, now homeless in despair. While the world discusses the fate of the people of Gaza as if they are unwanted boxes in a garage, God in the Christmas narrative shares in their fate; He walks with them and calls them his own.

This manger is about resilience – صمود (sumud). The resilience of Jesus is in his meekness; weakness, and vulnerability. The majesty of the incarnation lies in its solidarity with the marginalized. Resilience because this very same child, rose up from the midst of pain, destruction, darkness and death to challenge Empires; to speak truth to power, and deliver an everlasting victory over death and darkness.

*This is our call.
This is our plea.
This is our prayer.
Hear oh God.
Amen.*

This is Christmas today in Palestine and this is the Christmas message. It is not about Santa, trees, gifts, lights... etc. My goodness how we twisted the meaning of Christmas.

How we have commercialized Christmas. I was in the USA last month, the first Monday after Thanksgiving, and I was amazed by the amount of Christmas decorations and lights, all the commercial goods. I couldn't help but think: They send us bombs, while celebrating Christmas in their land. They sing about the prince of peace in their land, while playing the drum of war in our land.

Christmas in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, is this manger. This is our message to the world today. It is a gospel message, a true and authentic Christmas message, about the God who did not stay silent, but said his word, and his Word is Jesus. Born among the occupied and marginalized. He is in solidarity with us in our pain and brokenness.

This manger is our message to the world today – and it is simply this: this genocide must stop NOW. Let us repeat to the world: STOP this Genocide NOW.

This is our call. This is our plea. This is our prayer. Hear oh God. Amen.

REV. DR. MUNTHER ISAAC
*Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church
Bethlehem*

Bön

BÖN FÖR SITUATIONEN I GAZA I SABEELS BÖNEBREV 18 JANUARI 2024

Efter 100 dagar av krig i Gaza har mer än 10 000 barn dödats, cirka en procent av det totala antalet barn i Gaza, enligt en ny rapport från Rädda Barnen. Rapporten visar också att barn i Gaza som överlever den israeliska aggressionen utstår obeskrivliga fasor, bland annat livspåverkande skador, brännskador, sjukdomar, otillräcklig vård och att förlora familj, nära och kära.

*Fredens Gud, du har skapat var och en av oss
som en bild av dig och lik dig. Du upprätthåller
oss genom dina sånger och livsmelodier, även
om en del förnekar det. Hjälp oss att i vår tro
påminnas om att varje barn som dött i Gaza
inte har försunnit från din kärlek.*

*Du är allt igenom barmhärtig och kommer
att ersätta deras smärta och lidande med
skratt och glädje. Herre, så länge vi lever,
kommer barnmartyrerna också att leva, de är
nu en del av oss, när vi minns dem och vittnar
om förlusten av dem.*

Herre, i din nåd ... hör vår bön.



CEASEFIRE
NOW
STOP THE
GENOCIDE



FOTO: AK HAMMAR BANKSYUTSTÄLLNINGEN I MÅLÖV 2023

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PALESTINAGRUPPERNAS AKUTINSAMLINGAR

Palestinagrupperna har en akutinsamling där insamlade medel går till deras samarbetspartners:

- Gaza Community Mental Health Programme (GCMHP)
- Medical Relief Society (PMRS)
- Youth Vision Society Gaza (YVS)

Plusgiro: 90 11 57-8

Swish: 1239011578

Skriv i meddelandet "Gaza"