Faith, hope, and love- towards justice & reconciliation in the Holy Land

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A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of the Palestinian suffering is the recurring theme of the Kairos document. This past Tuesday, thirty people gathered in the city of Bethlehem in the West Bank to discuss the importance of the Kairos document in the lives of Palestinian Christians–, especially youth. Participants of the conference came not only from Bethlehem, but other cities such as Jerusalem, and Ramallah.The members of the Kairos committee, including the Coordinator Rifat Qassis, Fr. Jamal Khader and Nidal Abu Zuluf, shared their thoughts on Kairos and the young Palestinian Christians reflected on their role in this journey.

Kairos is a Greek word meaning the ‘right’ or ‘opportune moment’. Similar to South African Christians who created their own Kairos Document back in 1985, Palestinian Christians not only see an Apartheid system at work here in the West Bank and Gaza but also recognise that now is an opportune moment to speak out with one voice.

Palestinian Christians not only see an Apartheid system at work here in the West Bank and Gaza but also recognise that now is an opportune moment to speak out with one voiceHemmed in by the Israeli occupation and its resulting restrictions on movement, as well as limitations to economic growth, among other realities, increasingly high numbers of Palestinian Christians have left their homes in search of better jobs and more freedom elsewhere.

“This document is a road map for the Palestinian Christians who are living a very difficult life due to occupation,” says World Vision Jerusalem, West Bank, Gaza Church Relations Coordinator Charlie Abu Saada, in attendance at the conference.

“Young Palestinian Christians are always asking about their faith, their relations with people of other faiths, as well as some interpretations of the Old Testament, which can be difficult for them to understand due to the political situation. The Kairos document provides them with some answers, and at the same time, encourages them to reflect and develop these with the aim to work together to end the occupation and any feelings of hatred and injustice.”

Addressing the Palestinian community, churches worldwide, Jewish and Muslim religious leaders and Israeli communities, Kairos asks the international community to stand by Palestinians who have faced oppression, displacement, and suffering to work against injustice towards a just and lasting peace.

“One of our major problems living in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially for young people, is the lack of future– the lack of clarity about the future and the present,” says Coordinator of Kairos, Rifat Qassis. The Kairos document succeeds in offering a vision to young people, mainly Christians. It gives them hope- this is the magic word that can protect and preserve our presence in this country.”

Kairos asks the international community to stand by Palestinians who have faced oppression, displacement, and suffering to work against injustice towards a just and lasting peaceQassis continues, “We know that there are many forums and places where Kairos is being discussed. I think with Kairos we managed to create a different kind of dialogue, an interfaith dialogue, among many of the Christian churches in the United States and the Jewish communities and groups there. I am very satisfied with many of the responses we received from the United States, from churches, especially the ones that went beyond just studying the Kairos or sending a response, but working on implementing some of the recommendations which came in the Kairos.

Still, we have a long way to go, and we should encourage the churches to stand for their own values and principles and support the Kairos because by supporting the Kairos, they support both nations in seeking a just solution for this conflict.”

Twenty-eight-year-old Eyad Kheir, a teacher in Talitha Kumi School in Beit Sahour sees Kairos as the first document that unifies all Christians in their vision of what a Palestinian Christian truly is.
“As a youth and as a teacher, I see a major issue with the Palestinian Christians, or a crisis of identity, because Palestinians can not really understand how to be a Christian and a Palestinian at the same time and how we can apply the teachings of our Lord Jesus in our daily life and with the Israeli occupation. The Kairos addresses this with three points- faith, hope, and love. So, together we discuss what faith in our situation is and what hope we have? And how can we resist with love? How can we understand the Old Testament, with the vision of the New Testament and that of our Lord Jesus?

I really hope that our voices reach out to them for help and to stand beside us against occupationThese two issues of occupation and Palestinian Christian emigration are infiltrating children’s mentalities and causing suffering continues Eyad. “Although it does not offer an exact solution, Kairos offers hope and ways to a solution for Palestinians. The Kairos addresses these, and gives hope and ways to a solution,” says Eyad.

Many Palestinian Christian youths, such as twenty-year-old Bethlehem University student Areej Massoud, agrees. “As a Palestinian and as a Christian, I think that Kairos speaks on what the Palestinians are going through, showing our suffering and discussing the issues that a lot of people, especially foreigners, are not aware of.”

“Occupation is not only a political problem, but also it is a case that deals with human beings that have civil rights. I think that through Kairos, people will feel our suffering, so I really hope that our voices reach out to them for help and to stand beside us against occupation,” says Areej.

World Vision endorses the spirit and intent of the Kairos document as a Palestinian Christian’s statement to the world about the illegal military occupation. World Vision supports Palestinian Christians’ right to self-determination in search of renewal, reconciliation, and justice in the Holy Land.