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In this month of the commemoration of 50 years of Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, member organization Pax Christi British Section in collaboration with Pax Christi International, urges the international community to call for the immediate end of the 50-year Israeli occupation and for the parties to reengage in a peace process in compliance with international law.

Beginning with the Six Day war between 5-10 June, 1967, five decades of military occupation in disregard for international laws and U.N. resolutions and the willful expansion of settlements has led to dire conditions on the ground that systematically violate the human rights of the Palestinian people.

“It is time for the international community to say, ‘Enough!’”, states Pax Christi in light of this month’s 50th anniversary of the occupation.

This call comes at a moment when commemorative activities are being held around the world to raise awareness of the impact that five decades of occupation has had on the lives of Palestinians. In this symbolic month, Pax Christi British Section calls for governments, civil society and all people of good will to exercise their influence, through any means available - political, economic, public and private advocacy - to seek an end to the occupation.

For 50 years the international community has been witness to the denial of human rights and the deterioration of conditions throughout the occupied Palestinian territories. We have watched the slow ebbing of hope as lives are damaged by the policies of this occupation which:

- deny freedom of movement;
- limit access to critical services, especially health care;
- monitor and curtail access to basic necessities, especially water and electricity;
- diminish opportunities for education and employment;
- obstruct normal family life and the exercise of religious worship;
- negatively affect the Palestinian economic infrastructure, especially in the agricultural sector;
- punish legitimate, nonviolent expressions of resistance and protest;
- and impose regulations that create segregation and inequality.

Recently, Michael Lynk, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, has expressed his deep concern about the deteriorating situation: *“The systemic human rights violations that accompany this occupation - collective punishment, confiscation of property, excessive use of force and unlawful killings, lack of freedom of movement and steady settlement expansion, among others - are intensifying an already perilous situation.”*¹

¹ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘No end in sight,’ says UN human rights expert after five decades of Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory’, 19 May 2017, online available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21639&LangID=E>

Rania Giacaman Murra, Director of the Arab Educational Institute in Bethlehem, explains, *“The occupation severely affects especially Palestinian youth and women. Palestinian children and youth don’t know how it was before the occupation, what it means to live in a land without walls, how it feels to breath the air of the sea, what it means to pray as Muslims and Christians without being checked and humiliated at checkpoints. Mothers often live in fear that their children will not come back home safe, that they are killed or injured or humiliated.”*

The current situation is not sustainable. Reaching a political solution is the only path to peace. Therefore, Pax Christi British Section calls for the parties to return to the negotiating table to establish a peace agreement that recognises and protects the human dignity and rights of the Palestinian and Israeli people as equals. We believe that the revival of a peace process must be based on a steadfast commitment to abide by international law and U.N. resolutions.

To promote and support such efforts for peace, Pax Christi British Section strongly recommends a ban on the sale and delivery of arms to Israel and Palestine and an immediate cessation of any military cooperation which contributes to violent conflict.

Marie Dennis, Co-president of Pax Christi International, stated: *“We are commemorating a sad milestone this month with 50 years of devastating occupation. It is urgent that it is resolved, as for both Palestinians and Israelis their future and hope depend on it. This is the moment for an increased commitment to reach a just and sustainable solution in accordance with international law.”*

In recognition of this solemn occasion and to highlight the impact of 50 years of occupation we will be calling on our members to:

- Join us in sending messages of encouragement and solidarity to partners in Bethlehem, the Arab Educational Institute aei@p-ol.com and Wi’am hope@alaslal.org
- Use this Pax Christi Statement and other information on our website, to write to newly elected MPs with their concerns for the situation in Palestine & Israel.
- Join the *The Stop Arming Israel* campaign week of action from July 1-7 and lobby for an end the UK’s military links with Israel <https://www.stoparmingisrael.org/stop-arming-israel-week-of-action-1st-7th-july-2017/>
- Look ahead to World Week for Peace in Palestine & Israel 17-23 September and plan services and events that will present the voices and visions of the young people of Palestine & Israel. <http://tinyurl.com/UK-WWPP1>

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