

New Hope for Palestine, the Middle East & the World

An Advent Plea from our Sisters & Brothers in the Land of Jesus' birth

[Excerpted from Kairos Palestine's *Christmas Alert*. For the full meditation: kairos-palestine.ps/images/kairos-palestine-christmas-alert-2018.pdf.]

Christmas is not a religious occasion simply for trees to be lit and streets and houses to be decorated. Christmas cannot be reduced to decorations and gifts. The real illumination of the feast is the virtue that we practice in our life. Christ came to call the whole of humanity to love, because God is love. When love fades from our life we lose our real Christian values.

Our wounds as Palestinians under harsh occupation do not make us forget our brethren who are also suffering due to instability, war and violence the world over. We pray for and stand in solidarity with the victims of terror and violence in our Arab Orient, for they are the little brothers and sisters of Jesus.



We send our greetings to all who are celebrating Christmas. We pray at the Grotto of the Nativity in Bethlehem for justice to be realized in Palestine, the Holy Land, especially in the city of Jerusalem, and for peace to prevail in our Arab Orient.

Bishop Atallah Hanna, former Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Sebastia, was a co-developer of the curriculum for Christian religion teaching in Palestinian schools.

The Second Sunday of Advent

The Israeli Nationality Law from a Christian Perspective

[Ed. Note: The "Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People" law defines the State of Israel as the exclusive state of the Jewish people.]

God gave believers two meaningful examples to clarify the need to combine spirituality and practicality: salt and light. By reflecting the light of Christ, we illuminate the way for sinners. Just as salt serves in our daily life, we season the dish through our role in society and in protecting the world from corruption. Thus, our actions should stem from our convictions and with reference to the Holy Book when it comes to laws that have a serious impact on people's lives, such as the Nationality Law enacted by the Israeli Knesset on July 19 this year.

Some provisions in the Nationality Law affirm features of the state that already existed, like the design of the flag and the national anthem. Other provisions go further by declaring that the right to self-determination in the

country is solely for Jews. Another provision demotes the status of Arabic from an official language to a "language with a special status." Another provision declares that the state will promote Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem and the Occupied Territories. The law makes no mention of the values of equality and democracy.

Israel's long-term goal is to build an increasing body of law that is discriminatory against Arabs. It is deplorable that those who support this and other racist laws are Jews and Christians who interpret the Old Testament texts to affirm the "right of Jews" to the land. Many

Christians espouse a heretical interpretation of "the last days/end of time," which in turn supports a racist Zionist agenda. They ignore large sections of the Old Testament that support the oppressed, the widow and orphans, in addition to key aspects in the New Testament such as the Sermon on the Mount. They hold a distorted interpretation that undermines the rights and the future of Palestinian Christians and Muslims in the land of Jesus' birth.

Equality and justice are part of the criteria by which God interacted with the human race from day one until now. We appeal to Christians to oppose exclusionist thought that turns our eternal omnipotent God into a god for one tribe or one people over others. The ethos of the Nationality Law can be opposed by faithful men and women standing together with unrestrained voices. "For freedom Christ has set us free." (Galatians 5:1)

Attorney Butros Mansour, Co-Chair of the Lausanne Initiative for Reconciliation in Israel-Palestine, is the author of "When Your Neighbor is the Savior".

Reflect: To what resources do you turn when, serving others and working toward a just world, you get discouraged? To what concrete and practical acts of love and service will your spiritual resources lead and empower you today?

Pray: God, when I don't have the words to pray, hear my sighs. But let neither my words nor my sighs keep me from rising up to love and serve you by loving and serving others. In the name of the One who in the garden prayed, "Thy will, not mine." Amen.

Act: If you are not actively participating in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement, learn more about it this week (www.bdsmovement.net). If you are participating, share the reasons for your BDS passion with a friend.

"We say that our option as Christians in the face of the Israeli occupation is to resist. Resistance is a right and a duty for the Christian. But it is resistance with love as its logic. It is thus a creative resistance for it must find human ways that engage the humanity of the enemy."

Kairos Palestine Document: A Moment of Truth
Chapter 4.2.3