



NJPN Comment

Peace-making is journey of hope

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At Christmas, attention turns to the Holy Land. A key strand of Pax Christi's peace work relates to the unresolved conflict and injustice in Palestine and Israel. We amplify the voices of those working for non-violent change. We encourage Christians here to learn more about what life is like in Palestine and Israel and why, and to take action for peace and justice.

Pax Christi has valuable, long-standing relationships in the Holy Land. Some Pax Christi members visit the region often. Ann Farr worked as an Ecumenical Accompanier (*eappi.org*) and uses her profound experience to represent us at the Middle East Forum of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

I follow media reports from Israel, the West Bank or Gaza but my understanding of the oppression of Palestinians and the injustice they live with does not come from mainstream media. At the Nottingham Diocese Justice and Peace Assembly I met Giuliana Tiripelli. I am reading her book, *Media and Peace in the Middle East*. In analysing professional practice, Giuliana says insufficient historical and 'daily life' context is given on the Palestine/Israel issue. Mainstream journalistic values "may cause journalists to produce accounts that hide knowledge that could help to transform conflicts."

At the Bishops' Middle East Forum, Ziad El Sayegh, policies and communication advisor for the Middle East Council of Churches, called for the prophetic voice of the Church in support of those struggling non-violently against injustice. His description of contexts in each Middle Eastern country was valuable but differed from media reports here. He said that Christians in the Middle East find the term 'minorities' unhelpful. Rather, they say 'we are citizens in the countries we live in. We want to participate in our society, like other citizens.'

You can find good information on work to transform conflict and bring justice to Palestine and Israel from the Arab Educational Institute (*aeicenter.org*). In one project, they display witness stories on the Wall that surrounds Bethlehem: 'Throughout the occupied Palestinian territories, Israel follows a policy of not granting Palestinians building permits' and 'Many children witness house demolitions, arrests, beatings and forms of humiliation of their parents or siblings.'

Pope Francis reminds us of first "believing in the possibility of peace." In Palestine and Israel this is a difficult challenge but he also says that peace-making is "a journey of hope."

Peace Sunday is January 19th:

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www.paxchristi.org.uk

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