

# INTERNATIONAL CHURCH ACTION FOR PEACE IN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

## In Australia



*Walking in the shadow of the Wall  
at Bethlehem*

**Australian Church Leaders: Archbishop Phillip Aspinall of the Anglican Church, Revd Rod Benson of the Baptist Church, Dr Kevin Bray of the Churches of Christ, Archbishop Francis Carroll of the Catholic Church, Revd Terence Corkin of the Uniting Church, Lyndsay Farrell of the Society of Friends (Quakers), Revd Gregor Henderson of the Uniting Church, Revd John Henderson of the Lutheran Church and Revd Merrill Kitchen of the Churches of Christ**

## Costly Solidarity

After participating in the Australian Church Leaders visit to Palestine-Israel in December 2007, Archbishop Francis Carroll reflected:

*Clearly, if we are serious in professing to be in solidarity with people suffering injustice and disadvantage, mere words and symbolic actions without content are not enough.*

*Genuine sacrifice of time, energy and resources, personal involvement and persevering effort and a readiness to accept criticism and even rejection may well be the price to be paid in costly solidarity.*

*Is anything else worthy of a truly humanitarian approach, particularly when it is expressed by disciples of the one who laid down his life for his brothers and sisters?*

More than the voicing of concern, solidarity is a call to responsibility for the other and the commitment to ongoing care and action for the other. The core of responsibility is deep recognition of the humanness and value of all persons, whether we know those persons as individuals or not. The responsibility that comes from deep human recognition, seeks for justice as much as I would seek for justice for myself or my closest companions, if I or they were suffering.

Explaining this recognition and responsibility, St Paul in 1 Corinthians 12, uses an image of the body to show the deep recognition of shared humanness and the commitment to care for each other. when he writes, *We are one body and all are members of it . . . if one suffers all suffer.*

Affirming the central place of costly solidarity in the work for justice for Palestinians, the Palestine-Israel Ecumenical Forum called Christians to move beyond passive concern.

Responding to this call, an Australian ecumenical delegation of Church leaders travelled to Palestine-Israel in December 2007 to meet with Christians, Muslims and Jews; Palestinians and Israelis whose work for a just, secure and sustainable peace is personal and costly.



*Australian Church leaders are briefed on the continued and illegal expansion of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land by Angela Godfrey of the Israeli Committee against Home Demolitions – ICAHD*

The delegation met face-to-face with ordinary people, leaders of the Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities, Israeli and Palestinian peace, justice and human rights groups, local government leaders, UN representatives and diplomatic representatives.

Jean Zaru of the Ramallah Friends Meeting, shared the reality of everyday Palestinian life: *...we are increasingly subjected to a policy of persistent shelling, random shootings, political assassinations, house curfews, impoverishment, abductions, imprisonment, house demolitions, the illegal confiscation of our land and water resources and the destruction of our remaining crops and trees . . . an endless battering of Palestinians on a daily basis which virtually imprisons us in our houses and . . . within fragmented communities separated from each other by endless walls, ditches and checkpoints, making the means of daily life, jobs, education, hospitals, all but inaccessible.*

Security and self-defence are most often given as the justification for Israel's systematic violation of Palestinian people's human rights. *Breaking the Silence* and *Machsom Watch*, two Israeli peace organisations whose courageous work speaks the truth of the violence of the occupation, met with the Australian delegation.

Ex-soldiers from *Breaking the Silence*; Israelis whose work for peace risks public censure and often their own personal safety, spoke the simple truth of the impact of the occupation: *We dehumanised them and in the process we ourselves were dehumanised.*

It is this mutualising recognition of humanness and the cost of its loss to all, which lies at the heart of the call to solidarity, responsibility and personal action. With responsibility and action comes the possibility of justice.



*Meeting with Palestinian refugees in the al-Aroub refugee camp Women's Centre, near Hebron*

*Offer prayers for all those who have suffered over many years physically and mentally as a result of the conflict. Give thanks for all who offer care and healing to those who are hurt and in need. Pray especially for those who serve in the hospitals throughout Palestine and care for all people, Christians, Jews and Muslims.*

**ANGLICAN BOARD OF MISSION  
Australia**

## **MOVING BEYOND WORDS: A Week of Action by churches from 4 to 10 June**

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES is strengthening its work for justice and peace in Palestine-Israel. In 2008 you can strengthen your work by focusing on the following 4 core areas of prayer, education, public action and advocacy.

### Prayer and Worship

On 8 June use the ecumenical Church Action Week prayer and liturgy created by the Jerusalem Heads of Churches and Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre. Invite a recent visitor to Palestine-Israel to preach.

**REVD PAUL BLACK, St John's, Reid, Canberra**

Print the ecumenical Church Action Week prayer onto cards. Use it on 8 June and pray this prayer for the following 41 days, the number of years Palestinian people have lived under Israeli military occupation.

**FATHER CLAUDE MOSTOWIK, Pax Christi NSW**

Pray for the 10th Nazareth Work Party in which 35 Australians will work in the Galilee region from December 2008 to January 2009 as volunteers in a school, a hospital and an archeological site. All three projects intentionally employ Jews, Christians and Muslims in mutual interdependence.

**MERRILL KITCHEN, Churches of Christ.**

For more information contact: [m.kitchen@cctc.edu.au](mailto:m.kitchen@cctc.edu.au)

### Education

Christian churches and organisations have a unique responsibility to perform in educating Australians about Palestine-Israel.

**REVEREND JAMES BARR, Canberra Baptist Church, ACT**

Include a Palestine information sheet in your pewsheet. For information on free material available on the internet contact: [info@icappi.org.au](mailto:info@icappi.org.au)

**PATRICIA ABBOTT, Canberra**

Organise a Palestine movie night in your parish or community. Invite another community and give out information sheets and prayer cards.

Support the 2008 visits to Australia of peace workers such as Jeff Halper of the Israeli Committee against Home Demolitions. For more information contact Australians for Palestine: [info@australiansforpalestine.com](mailto:info@australiansforpalestine.com)

Learn about the work of Ecumenical Accompaniers and Christian Peace-Maker Teams. Invite a former participant to speak to your community. For more information contact Deborah Porter: [dporter@ncca.org.au](mailto:dporter@ncca.org.au)

Go on an ethical tour of Palestine-Israel. Visit holy sites, meet Palestinian people and learn about the reality of life under Israeli occupation. For more information email Rifat Kassis: [rka@wcc-coe.org](mailto:rka@wcc-coe.org) or Holy Land Trust at [palestine@holylandtrust.org](mailto:palestine@holylandtrust.org)



*Looking across the Holy City of Jerusalem*

## Public Action

Make a large banner with a clear justice and peace message and hang the banner outside your church. Your message might include: *There will be no peace without justice for Palestine* or *End the Occupation: Negotiate a just peace now!*

Hold a vigil in a public place, like the Bethlehem Living Star in December 2007. Place a movie of your action on the web. See the Living Star at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11CJkner908>

**TOINE VAN TEEFELEN, Arab Education Institute, Bethlehem**

Join in other public actions for peace in your community. For information, email Australians for Palestine at: [info@australiansforpalestine.com](mailto:info@australiansforpalestine.com)

## Advocacy to Government and Community Leaders

Write a personal, community or parish letter to the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and send copies to the Palestinian and Israeli Ambassadors.

**REVD ROB LAMERTON, St Phillip's Anglican Church, O'Connor ACT**

Send the clear message that we must continue to seek justice for the Palestinians so that both Israel and the Palestinians can live in peace. Towards these ends we must strive to:

- end the isolation and boycott of Gaza
- end the appropriation of more Palestinian lands by Israel for additional Israeli settlements
- keep open the border crossings between Israel and Gaza
- significantly reduce the roadblocks in the West Bank

**BILL SNOWDON: Geelong Catholic Social Justice Committee**

Write to the leaders of your church asking they commit church resources to ecumenical and denominational advocacy and aid and development projects for Palestine-Israel.

**DR KEVIN BRAY, Churches of Christ**

## In Conclusion

*During our visit to Israel and Palestine those we met consistently impressed upon us the importance of the three P's – 'prayer', 'pilgrimage' and 'project'. I commend them to you also. You will find on these pages a number of practical suggestions for 'prayer' and 'project'. Pilgrimage has always played an important role in Christian imagination and experience.*

*As part of your long-term plan of action I recommend that you consider making your own personal pilgrimage to Israel and Palestine. There are many ways to visit the Holy Land: contact St. George's College in Jerusalem and request their study program; apply to join one of the programs sponsored by the World Council of Churches such as the Ecumenical Accompaniers Program (EAPPI); join one of the tours regularly led by Australian clergy or just be a tourist. Nothing beats being there. In the short-term, please pray for the peace of Jerusalem.*

**THE MOST REV'D DR PHILLIP ASPINALL Primate, Anglican Church of Australia**

## Acknowledgements

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