

Israel Palestine Working Group Report

Basic Information

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Status of Paper	Draft
Action Required	For group discussion
Draft Resolution	None as yet. Resolutions will be informed, in part, by the feedback from discussion in groups and will be presented to the April Methodist Council.
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	Not applicable

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	Bearing in mind the events of the last 15 months, including the Gaza War, Israeli incursions and the deteriorating conditions of occupation, this report aims to provide a draft statement of the Methodist Church's position on Israel/Palestine, taking into account past resolutions of Conference and governments' obligations under international law.
Main Points	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Occupation has strengthened in recent years denying the rights of Palestinians, making their living circumstances intolerable and establishing a barrier to achieving a sustainable and secure peace for all parties. 2. Because of the complex nature of the situation and insufficiency of media reports a full awareness of what is actually happening in Israel/Palestine is largely lacking among many people 3. A greater understanding of the theology that underpins differing attitudes and actions to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict needs developing, in order that proper theological reflection and conversations may underpin the attitude of the Methodist Church and Methodist people 4. It is proposed that the Methodist Church in association with the World Council of Churches and ecumenical partners redouble its efforts to engage the UK Government and the European Commission / Parliament on the issue 5. Methodist people are encouraged to pray, to visit the region, to write to their MPs and to make use of existing resources to learn more about the situation in the Holy Land and hear from those directly affected.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	<p>Previous Conference Resolutions on Israel and Palestine can be found on the Israel Palestine page of the Methodist Church website.</p> <p>The Israel Palestine Working Group has been established by the 2009 Methodist Conference to bring a report to Conference in 2010. See:-</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Methodist Conference 2009: Notice of Motion 226: Israel/Palestine Working Group</i></p>

REPORT OF THE ISRAEL/PALESTINE WORKING PARTY

	<p>September 2009 Council Paper: <i>MC/09/80 Working Group on Israel/Palestine</i></p> <p>(See page 2 of the attached report for details of the working group brief)</p>
Consultations	<p>Initial and on-going consultation with Faith and Order and Connexional Team Inter-faith Relations Officer.</p> <p>Consultation with Baptist Union of Great Britain, United Reformed Church, Council of Christians and Jews, FODIP on this draft report. The report will also to be read by Garth Hewitt (Amos Trust), Daoud Nasser (Tent of Nations). Other faith groups will be consulted closer to the publication of the report in April.</p>

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	None
Faith and Order	A suggestion is made for further theological work
Financial	None
Personnel	None. (This work area is already covered in the work of the ecumenical Joint Public Issues Team and the recommendations will not substantially increase workloads).
Legal	None
Wider Connexional	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None
Risk	None

JUSTICE FOR PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

A REPORT OF THE ISRAEL/PALESTINE WORKING GROUP

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1. Working Group Brief

Background

Methodist Conference 2009 adopted the following Notice of Motion:

7/28 Notice of Motion 226: Israel/Palestine Working Group

Bearing in mind the events of the last 8 months, including the Gaza War and Israeli incursions; the deteriorating conditions of occupation under which Palestinians are forced to live and their request for Christians in the West to visit them and to speak out on their behalf, Conference resolves:

- i) as a matter of urgency to establish a Methodist working group facilitated by the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), to bring to Conference 2010, a statement of the Methodist Church's position on Israel/Palestine, taking into account past resolutions of Conference and international law;
- ii) that the Proposer, The Revd Nichola G Jones, and Seconder, Dr Stephen Leah, be part of the working group.

Terms of Reference

The following Terms of Reference were agreed by The Methodist Council September 2009

The Working Group on Israel/Palestine shall bring to Conference 2010 a report outlining the Methodist Church's position on Israel/Palestine, taking into consideration:

- a. *previous statements on Israel/Palestine made by the Methodist Conference and reports received by Methodist Council or Methodist Conference. Working group members will be asked to affirm that they are in agreement with previously stated Conference positions on the occupation.*
- b. *the statements of the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem and other strategic partners*
- c. *the context of the current crisis*
- d. *the application of international law and human rights instrument and make appropriate recommendations for how this statement should be used to inform future work by the Methodist Church.*

Membership of the Group

The following were appointed by The Methodist Council September 2009:

- **Revd Graham Carter (Chair)** – former President of the Methodist Conference
- **Revd Alan Ashton** - over 32 years experience of the situation, has family living in East Jerusalem. A frequent traveller to Palestine and Israel
- **Revd Warren Bardsley** – returned accompanier with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel
- **Dr Elizabeth Harris** – Senior Lecturer in Comparative Study of Religion, Hope University
- **Steve Hucklesby** – Policy Adviser, Joint Public Issues Team

- **Revd Nichola Jones** – member of Friends of Sabeel and frequent traveller
- **Revd Marian Jones** – frequent traveller with contacts in Israel/Palestine
- **Dr Stephen Leah** - Peace campaigner with contacts in UK peace and justice community and in Israel/Palestine
- **Revd Samuel McBratney** – Lecturer in Religion and Social Ethics at City University London

A number of other readers or consultants to the group were invited to comment on draft work. As the Joint Public Issues Team is a venture between three UK denominations, the Baptist Union of Great Britain and United Reformed Church were invited to comment at draft stage.

2. Introduction

“Pray not for Arab or Jew, for Palestinian or Israeli, but pray rather for ourselves that we might not divide them in our prayers but keep them both together in our hearts.”
(A prayer of a Palestinian Christian)

Methodist people in the UK cherish their links with a worldwide communion that today includes around 70 million Methodist members. Our relationships with sisters and brothers across the globe help to heighten awareness of injustice. Through hearing the accounts of people’s personal experience, the impact of exploitation, oppression and poverty is exposed.

Although Israel and Palestine is constantly in the news the full implications of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories on the Palestinian community are not well appreciated. Israel militarily occupied the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the Syrian Golan Heights in 1967. After 43 years, it remains the occupying power and thus responsible under international law for the welfare of the Palestinian inhabitants of these territories. The Occupation, however, causes great suffering to Palestinians as well as Israelis and some of these effects are described in Section 5.

The World Council of Churches has sought to address the lack of awareness of the situation by instituting The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). This programme, which is supported financially by the Methodist Church, places volunteers for a total of 3 months amongst Palestinian and Israeli communities. Those who serve on a short-term placement subsequently commit themselves to telling their stories in their country of origin. A total of 12 volunteers from the Methodist Church in the UK have served as Ecumenical Accompaniers and have spoken at numerous church gatherings. It is, in part, in recognition that these personal accounts need to be told that the Methodist Conference asked for this report.

Story: Testimony of a Methodist Ecumenical Accompanier

I was a General Practitioner for over 30 years. It was an enormous privilege to have been allowed to accompany so many wonderful people along significant stretches of their life journeys.

Being an Ecumenical Accompanier is somewhat similar. For three months we accompany ordinary Palestinians along a short but significant stretch of their life journeys. We stand beside them as they strive to maintain some sort of normality to their lives in the face of the continuing occupation and the human rights abuses associated with it. We support Israeli peace activists as they demonstrate against the occupation and try to give practical help to those suffering as a result of it.

I remember sitting in a small ward in the Maqassad Hospital on the Mount of Olives with the parents of a teenage boy who had been shot in the head by Israeli police during a peaceful demonstration against the Gaza War. The television was showing continuous footage of the war – and we talked about peace. I can hear Hamam's father now in his slow voice, 'All we want is peace – peace for Palestinians, peace for Israelis, peace for everyone.' Never once did I hear this man, a devout Muslim, utter one word against the Israeli soldier who shot his son.

For many Ecumenical Accompaniers, our three months living in a country under occupation are a life-changing experience. We return home with a passion for the country, a passion for the people and a passion for peace and justice for all. That's why we continue to engage in the struggle, to write letters, to start projects and to travel around the country giving presentations and urging others to campaign with us.

Liz Burroughs

The conflict in the Middle East is constructed on a history of competing narratives. Yet in the midst of this it is all too easy to overlook the breadth of common understanding that exists. An appreciation of the political context enables us to develop appropriate responses. Otherwise, as if with headlamps rushing towards us, we become petrified. On hearing the pleas of others we take upon ourselves a duty of reflection and action.

The Methodist Church in Britain/United Reformed Church report *Peacemaking: A Christian Vocation*¹ affirms that the task of peacemaking is for each individual and for the whole church and a crucial part of faithfully following Christ. Even when the outlook for international relations looks bleak we are called to loving service, sustained by the influence of Christian hope.

When Jesus Christ confronted the political and religious powers of his day, he chose to ride on a donkey in fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah that a new king would come who was 'righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey', who would proclaim peace to the nations, and whose rule would extend 'from sea to seas, from the River to the ends of the earth'.²

Consequently this report can be read as a call to action in solidarity with all in the Middle-East who long for an end to violence and injustice. It begins with an analysis of some of the relevant theological issues associated with the conflict before continuing with a summary of the historical background. The detailed description of the nature of the Occupation, combined with the moving testimonies of individuals who have been affected by it, provides a crucial focus for our response. In our recommendations we call for an end to the Occupation, an end to the suffering it is causing and for actions that we hope will support both these aspirations and the cause of peace with justice for all in the region.

Soldier's Story : Breaking the Silence

It is young Israeli soldiers, conscripted into the IDF at the age of 18 who are at the sharp end of the Occupation, particularly at separation barriers and checkpoints. In Hebron where 1500 IDF soldiers guard

¹ *Peacemaking: A Christian Vocation*, The Methodist Church/The United Reformed Church, London, 2006, www.methodist.org.uk

² *Ibid*, pg 71

an Israeli community settler of 500 mainly located in the old city there is a Palestinian population of 140,000. An Orthodox Jew who served in Hebron tells of the human rights abuses he and his fellow-soldiers were called on to perpetrate. On his discharge he founded a movement called 'Breaking the Silence' whose main goal is to '...promote a public debate on the moral price paid by Israeli society as a whole due to the reality in which young soldiers are facing a civilian population every day and controlling it.' He tells of returning to Hebron as a civilian to apologize to a family whose home he had systematically trashed for no apparent reason. He says; 'In the short term I have little hope for the future of the Middle East. But I know that when I get up in the morning I have to do the right thing'. (*Breaking the Silence, Testimonial Booklet, 2, Jerusalem 2005*)

3. A Methodist Theology of the Holy Land?

It is perhaps unremarkable that the World Methodist family is one of the only major denominational families not to have a physical presence in what is often referred to as the Holy Land. However, it does set an appropriate context for a discussion of Methodist theology around the very difficult set of issues thrown up by the current situation in the Middle East. This is not that Methodists are uninterested in what occurs in the region but rather that they seek to be disinterested, recognising their status as outsiders but nevertheless supporting all efforts towards a just and lasting peace.

Theological reflection on the Middle East normally rotates around two axes – the idea of covenant and a concept of 'holy land' - so it is important that a Methodist perspective also deals with these issues.

Covenant is a term very familiar to British Methodists as it has become part of our liturgical heritage if nothing else. The Covenant Service draws heavily on imagery from the Hebrew Bible as it calls Methodists each year to reflect on their personal and collective pilgrimage and renew their commitment for another year. What is less certain is how much Methodists seriously reflect on their identity as a covenanted people and how this relates to other communities, especially the Jews. It would be for another report to explore this idea further and glean, for example, whether the Covenant Service itself has been or could be the basis of a Methodist-Jewish interfaith dialogue.

In the context of the Middle East, covenant is a much vaunted and complex concept. One writer suggests that the idea has become such a dominant part of Israeli national identity that even atheists talk of being given the land by the God they don't believe in³. Many Christians believe that the Israel they read about in their Bibles is the same Israel they see in modern news footage and that modern Israelis are the Israelites of old. They believe that the promise made to Abram in Gen 12:1-3 means that the land between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean was promised to the Jewish people and might articulate this belief without much further thought as to how it is worked out in the messy politics of the modern Middle East.

There is no question that, according to the Biblical witness, covenantal promises were made to Abraham and his descendants and these, in part, related of a specific piece of land⁴. Arguably,

³ see Sorek, T and Ceobanu, A., 2009, Religiosity, National Identity and Legitimacy: Israel as an extreme case, in Sociology 43(3): 477-496

⁴ For example: Genesis 17:8

Genesis in particular mentions at least three different areas of land⁵. However, this covenant raises three different issues – possession, inheritance and validity. The question of validity is perhaps the most controversial – basically, does this covenant still operate in the contemporary world and, if so, what means should be used to make it a reality? Obviously for Christian theology, this raises the question of how the New Covenant established in and through Jesus Christ relates to and affects those previously established. Particularly relevant for reflection on Israel/Palestine is a theology of supersessionism, whereby the Church believes itself to have succeeded the Jewish people as the New Israel, and inherited all the promises previously made by God. This theology has sometimes led to a perverse tradition of anti-Judaism and possibly even anti-Semitism within Christianity, and has sometimes resulted in the charge of ‘Christ-killer’ being the justification for pogrom, murder, discrimination and Holocaust against the Jewish people throughout Europe. No post-Holocaust Christian theology can fail to deal with this ugly legacy especially given the fundamental connection between the Shoah and the creation of the modern State of Israel.

Following on is the question of who can legitimately claim to be Abraham’s descendants and hence heirs to the promises. Since the patriarch is claimed by all three monotheistic religions – Christianity, Islam and Judaism - does it follow that all three are legitimate inheritors of the covenantal promises and therefore questions about priority become meaningless? There is still a great deal of work to be done by Methodists in thinking through the relationships with those who claim Abraham as their spiritual father.

Lastly, there is the question of possession; what covenants contain and how they should be understood. It sits uncomfortably with many modern Methodists to imagine a God who promises possessions to individuals or groups; there is a distaste, for example, with a ‘health and wealth gospel’. So the idea that God would not only give land to a group of believers but also dispossess another group of believers to do so, conjures up a notion of favouritism severely challenged by the New Testament. At the very heart of the Hebrew Bible’s concept of covenant is the notion of a relationship and with it, a set of responsibilities and it is that which Methodists look to affirm⁶. Interfaith dialogue and understanding has led many Methodists to revise their notion of who is to be included in covenantal relationships with God, but there is still greater understanding needed on the relationship between the spiritual and the material. Methodists, however, would want to reiterate with Jews and Muslims alike, the central tenet that believers are committed to a life of love in action to all.

Covenants also raise for Methodists the idea of solidarity and so we are confronted with Methodists’ relationship with the Christian people of Palestine, the original Christians. This brings us back to the lack of a permanent Methodist presence in the Holy Land that makes ongoing relations more difficult. It is important here simply to raise the question of the sort of relationship that would be appropriate for British Methodists to have with Palestinian Christians in the context of our mutual membership of the New Covenant. In addition, there is a need to hear the various theological voices being articulated by the Churches of the Holy Land, including the liberation perspectives offered by the Sabeel Centre (see Ateek, N, 1989, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation*) and the call for justice and peace in the *Kairos Document* of December 2009.

⁵ For example, in Gen 28:13 God says to Jacob "The land on which you lie"; in Gen17:8 it is "all the land of Canaan" and in Gen 15:18 it is "from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Ken’ites, the Ken’izzites, the Kad’monites, the Hittites, the Per’izzites, the Reph’aim" and so forth.

⁶ see for example, Deut 15:4-11; 30:1-1:20; Isaiah 42:1-9

Whilst the term 'Holy Land' is one used today to avoid difficult political realities, it also arises from the previous discussion on covenant and God's promises to his people. Whilst many world faiths and Christian denominations have developed an idea of a holy space, this notion is one that has not been developed in Methodism. The ground on which chapels stand is not traditionally consecrated and there is not even the idea of orientation for worship (i.e. ensuring worshippers face in a particular direction of the compass). This does not mean that Methodist theology has nothing to say about holiness or the Holy Land – quite the opposite.

At the very core of Wesleyan thinking lies the doctrine of Christian perfection, growth in holiness. For John Wesley, this doctrine had two aspects, the personal and the social. For individuals, holiness was the personal pursuit of entire sanctification achieved through cooperation with the Holy Spirit and resulting in perfect love. For John, this was achievable and demonstrable in this life, for Charles, only theoretically possible. But, in Wesley's words, 'there is no holiness but social holiness'⁷, an understanding that the quest for personal holiness was only achievable in concert with others, and that personal holiness manifested itself in social justice. In other words, holiness in Wesleyan understanding is about relationships and structures built on love in action which is justice. Given that understanding, for a land to be called holy by Methodists, it would have to exhibit civil and political institutions that delivered justice and nurtured human flourishing for all its residents. In this sense, all land and no land can be marked out as a 'Holy Land'.

In Rowan Williams' paper, Holy Land and Holy People, given in 1994, reference is made to the idea of a paradigm nation, where the Biblical People of God are given a homeland in order to better facilitate the promotion of a community life defined by wisdom and justice⁸. For Williams, the homeland is not an end in itself, but is seen as necessary for wisdom and justice to flourish. Thus, Israel's vocation as the paradigm nation, revealing to the rest of humanity how the divine will is to be fulfilled, can be pursued. This accords with Wesleyan understandings of land, namely that land can be no more than the space in which the vocation is practiced. Given this understanding, the modern State of Israel, if it claims also to be the homeland for the ancient Jewish People of God, must take seriously this vocation as the paradigm nation where justice and wisdom are seen to be done.

For Methodists, there are many issues which need further theological reflection. Given, for example, that Methodist theology often prides itself in its grounding in reality, how then do Methodists speak of the political situation in the Middle East in meaningful ways, particularly in conversation with other faiths? In Methodist theology and practice, there is an ongoing commitment holding in creative tension prophetic witness and pastoral engagement. In the context of the Middle East, every uttered word is analysed and dissected for hidden meaning and potential bias. Methodists need to think carefully about the words they use and the range of meanings they hold if they are to maintain both prophetic and pastoral dimensions in their engagement with the parties in the region and their supporters in Britain.

In speaking of the political situation, we also need to be particularly mindful of the Palestinian Christian community. The Israeli/Palestinian conflict is often portrayed as one between Muslims and Jews. In so doing the needs of the Palestinian Christian community are neglected. As befits its location amongst the holy sites of ancient Palestine, this is a Christian community that has

⁷ The Works of John Wesley, Jackson Edition, "Preface to 1739 Hymns and Sacred Poems", vol. 14:321 See also Wesley on Social Holiness, Johnston McMaster, 2002, http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/wc_Eur_John_Mcmaster_Wesley_on_Social_Holiness.pdf (Accessed 7th January 2010)

⁸ See also Rowan Williams' Lecture to the 5th International Sabeel Conference "Holy Land and Holy People" in Jerusalem in 2004, <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/1175> (Accessed 7th January 2010)

existed since the earliest centuries of the Christian church. It is furthermore a diverse community with the Greek Catholic (Melkite) Christians forming the largest group, but also including representatives of the Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Greek, Romanian, Russian and Syrian Orthodox churches⁹.

Amongst the challenges faced by this community, however, is its declining numbers. There are currently around 125,000 Palestinian Christians in the Israel/Palestine compared to about 400,000 Palestinian Christians who are living outside the country. The number who have emigrated looks set to increase as more and more Christians leave their homes in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, the Galilee and elsewhere. In Bethlehem, for example, an estimated 357 families or 10% of the Christian population left the town between 2000 and 2004¹⁰. There are thus increasing fears that in the years to come, the Holy Land could see an “emptying” of Christians. The plea of the Christian community in Israel/Palestine is for visibility with Western Christians and to have their voice heard. As such, one of their most significant recent moves has been the publication in December 2009 of their Kairos Document - a cry for justice for Palestinian Christians under Occupation¹¹. How do we address such concerns?

International law and human rights have come to the fore in the debate around Israel and Palestine. Whilst it must be acknowledged that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Charter and the Geneva Conventions, as the basis of humanitarian law, have strong Judeo-Christian roots, there is still theological work to be done as to how such law is interpreted and implemented. British Methodists would do well to listen to the perspectives of Palestinian Christian theologians in how they respond to questions of national sovereignty and humanitarian intervention, the rights of minorities and the place of individuals in a wider community.

This report does not have sufficient space to explore fully the place of Christian Zionism in the ongoing problems of the Middle East. It is certainly the case that the huge majority of the pro-Israel lobby in the US is made up of Christians, many of whom interpret the apocalyptic writings in Scripture to mean that the modern State of Israel and its government must be held above criticism whatever policy is enacted. From time to time, the Methodist Conference has undertaken critical study in order to determine whether certain beliefs are acceptably held by Methodist members. The two areas of Zionism and also Christian Zionism both require exploration.

Methodists often demand practical outcomes from theological reflection and it is the hope of the authors of this report to inspire action from local Methodist members and congregations. Deriving from our responsibilities as people of Covenant, Methodists are spurred to a life of love in action, the Christian definition of justice. For that reason, Methodists will always seek to find themselves on the side of the oppressed and not the oppressor, and will commit themselves both to practical action to alleviate the worst aspects of injustice and poverty, and to campaigning to overcome structures that perpetuate profound inequalities and loss of human dignity. Despite the complexities, Methodists are compelled to engage with the situation as it is, to bring compassion, a willingness to listen and learn from the stories of all those involved, and a burning passion for the sort of justice on which lasting peace can be built.

⁹ Whose Land? Whose Promise?, Gary M Burge, 2003, The Pilgrim Press, ISBN 0-8298-1660-7, pg 190-204

¹⁰ Open Bethlehem, <http://www.openbethlehem.org> (Accessed 7th January 2010)

¹¹ A moment of truth: a word of faith and hope from the heart of Palestinian suffering, Dec 2009

4. Historical background

An understanding of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict requires an understanding of the history.

4.1 Prior to 1917

In 1856, on the eve of the Crimean War, the population of the current area of Israel/Palestine was around 500,000. They were Arabic speaking and mainly Muslim but around 60,000 were Christians from a variety of different denominations, whilst around 20,000 were Jews.¹² In addition, there were around 50,000 soldiers from the Ottoman Empire and about 10,000 Europeans. The territory had been a part of the Ottoman Empire for several centuries and in the thousand years prior to this, it had been variously controlled by Egyptian Mamluks, successors of the Kurdish King Saladin, European Crusaders and the Caliphs of the Abbasid Islamic Caliphate.^{13 14} The Israel of the Bible had long since disappeared and instead, an established society of Arab peoples had developed in the region.

The roots of the political philosophy of Zionism – the idea that the Jewish people should have a homeland of their own – were largely a development from 19th century Europe¹⁵. It developed out of the persecution of the Jews particularly in Eastern Europe^{16 17}. Jewish people had been harshly persecuted in many parts of Europe throughout the previous centuries, however, latterly, pogroms against the Jews in Russia, following the assassination of Tsar Alexander I in 1881, had led to the emigration of Jews to both the United States and one of the earliest modern Jewish migrations to Palestine. The views of and Christian Zionists from both the UK and US, such as John Nelson Darby, Lord Shaftsbury and others who noted the Biblical roots of Judaism in Palestine, were also influential¹⁸. Such Christian Zionists followed the idea of Dispensationalism, whereby there are believed to be seven periods of time during which humanity has or will be tested according to some specific revelation of God, Israel and the Church are separate and the millennium will be the culmination of God's purposes for Israel¹⁹.

The father of modern political Zionism is considered to be Theodor Herzl. Following the anti-Semitism unleashed by the notorious Dreyfus trial in France, Herzl published his book, "The Jewish State" in 1896²⁰. In it, he argued that it was impossible that the Jews could ever be

¹² A History of Modern Palestine, One Land, Two Peoples, Ilan Pappé, Cambridge University Press, 2004, ISBN 0-521-55632-5, pg 14

¹³ A History of the Arab Peoples, Albert Hourani, Faber and Faber Limited, 1991, ISBN 0-571-21591-2

¹⁴ Islam, A Short History, Karen Armstrong, Phoenix, 2002, ISBN 978-1-84212-583-0

¹⁵ Israel and Palestine, Competing Histories, Mike Berry and Greg Philo, 2004, Pluto Press, ISBN 978-0-7453-2566-0, pg 1-5

¹⁶ Dan Cohn-Sherbok, 1992, The Crucified Jew: Twenty Years of Christian Anti-Semitism, London: HarperCollins.

¹⁷ Marc Saperstein, 1989, Moments of Crisis in Jewish-Christian Relations, London: SCM Press

¹⁸ Christian Zionism Road-map to Armageddon? Stephen Sizer, 2004, Inter-varsity Press, ISBN 1-84474-050-1, pg 26-66

¹⁹ Idid, pg 266

²⁰ The Jewish State, Theodor Herzl, 1896

assimilated into European society, and that therefore, the only sure way in which the Jewish people could be protected was to establish their own state. Herzl investigated various locations, including Argentina, Uganda, the Sinai Peninsula and Palestine²¹.

Following Herzl's death in 1904, established Zionist opinion settled on Palestine. Meanwhile, as Jewish emigration continued, tensions arose with the local Arab population, with some Arab leaders sensing problems in the future and even making representations to their Turkish masters to limit Jewish immigration^{22 23}. Zionist leaders such as the British Chemist Chaim Weizmann skilfully lobbied British political leaders to support Jewish self-determination in Palestine and during the height of the First World War, as British troops were about to enter Ottoman Jerusalem, a declaration was issued by the British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour promising a national home to the Jewish people, with the proviso being that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and national rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine". This declaration was received to widespread rejoicing in many Jewish communities²⁴, despite the fact that only 11% of Palestine's population was by then Jewish²⁵. It was viewed with great concern by Sharif Hussein and Arab leaders, who thought the British had promised them independence in the area as a reward for joining the British side of the First World War against their common Turkish enemy²⁶. It also appeared to contradict the terms of the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1918 by which the British agreed to divide the Near East into spheres of influence with the French.

4.2 1917 to 1947

Following the First World War, the territory of Palestine and trans-Jordan was designated by the League of Nations as a mandate of the British. The policy of the British Government navigated between the competing demands of their old Arab allies of the First World War and the Zionist sympathies of many leading politicians. Thus, Abdullah, a son of Sharif Hussein, was supported as Emir of Transjordan, whilst Jewish immigration into Palestine and the economic development of the Jewish community was allowed to continue. Assurances were given by the British Government to the Palestinian community that this support for Jewish immigration would not be allowed to jeopardise their rights. However, the growth of the Jewish community inevitably raised fears amongst the Palestinians that their own rights would become compromised²⁷. Such fears were not assuaged by the development of the Revisionist Zionist ideas of Ze'ev Jabotinsky. In 1923, he wrote of the need for "an iron wall which they (the Arabs) will be powerless to break

²¹ Israel and Palestine, Competing Histories, Mike Berry and Greg Philo, 2004, Pluto Press, ISBN 978-0-7453-2566-0, pg 3,4

²² A History of Modern Palestine, One Land, Two Peoples, Ilan Pappé, Cambridge University Press, 2004, ISBN 0-521-55632-5, pg 51

²³ Israel and Palestine, Competing Histories, Mike Berry and Greg Philo, 2004, Pluto Press, ISBN 978-0-7453-2566-0, pg 5,6

²⁴ Isaiah Berlin: A Life, Michael Ignatieff, 2000 Vintage, ISBN 0-099-57731-3, pg 27

²⁵ Israel and Palestine, Competing Histories, Mike Berry and Greg Philo, 2004, Pluto Press, ISBN 978-0-7453-2566-0, pg 7

²⁶ Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace, Avi Shlaim, 2008, Penguin, ISBN 978-0-141-01728-0, pg 8,9

²⁷ A History of the Arab Peoples, Albert Hourani, Faber and Faber Limited, 1991, ISBN 0-571-21591-2, pg 331

down.” The aim would be to break the Arab will to resist the Zionist project to establish Jewish political domination in Palestine. The Revisionist Zionist ideas of Jabotinsky were to become highly influential amongst leaders of the later Israeli Likud party.²⁸

The increased tensions with the native Arab population in Palestine resulted in a 1922 British White Paper designed to soothe Arab fears. Jewish immigration nevertheless continued, and in 1937, in the face of a full scale Arab revolt, the Peel Commission proposed that 20% of Palestine, in the north-west, should become a Jewish state with 80% designated for the Arabs²⁹. These plans were never carried through and by 1939, the Arab revolt had been suppressed by the British. The Arab Revolt, 1936-39 had begun with a 6 month long General Strike which up to that time was the longest anti-colonial strike in history. The nationwide insurrection which followed was put down with brutal ferocity by British forces during which 5000 Palestinians were killed and 10,000 wounded. Many others were forced to flee or went into exile. In an Arab population of around one million, this represented 10% of all adult males. The revolt expressed not only the strong will of the Palestinian people for self-determination, but revealed the deep divisions within their leadership. Rashid Khalidi says, ‘...the crushing of the 1936-39 revolt largely determined the outcome of the 1948 war for the Palestinians; the failures of their leadership and the absence of the structures of state, contributed to their military and political defeat in both cases. This heavy legacy affected them significantly thereafter’³⁰. A new white paper in 1939, designed to pacify Arab opinion and which aimed to limit Jewish immigration has been criticised by many Jews as blocking a key escape route from increasing Nazi terror in Europe. It resulted in growing Jewish paramilitary activity against the British in Palestine.

The catastrophic Jewish experience of the Holocaust in Europe³¹ gave added strength to the call for a Jewish state in Palestine³². Political pressure had also been growing in both Europe and the US for such a move, with Zionist leaders in the US, for example, issuing the Biltmore Declaration for a Jewish state³³. Others, however, such as the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, warned that a Jewish state “might prove a constant factor of unrest in the Middle East”³⁴. Meanwhile, Jewish paramilitary organisations continued their violence, with attacks including the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem³⁵. In 1947, the British decided to end the mandate and hand the question of Palestine over to the United Nations. On 29th November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted to partition the territory, with 56% going to the third of

²⁸ The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World, Avi Shlaim, 2000, ISBN 978-0-14-028870-4, pg 11-16, 353-354, 395 etc

²⁹ Israel and Palestine, Competing Histories, Mike Berry and Greg Philo, 2004, Pluto Press, ISBN 978-0-7453-2566-0, pg 13

³⁰ The Iron Cage, Khalidi, Oneworld Publications 2006, ISBN 978-1851685820, p.105

³¹ Auschwitz: The Nazis and the “Final Solution”, Laurence Rees, 2005, BBC Books, ISBN 0-563-52296-8

³² Declaration of Establishment of State of Israel
<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+the+Peace+Process/Declaration+of+Establishment+of+State+of+Israel.htm> (Accessed 8th November 2009)

³³ American Zionism and U.S. Foreign Policy 1942-1947, Richard Stevens, 1970, Institute for Palestine Studies, pg 1-16

³⁴ Israel and Palestine, Competing Histories, Mike Berry and Greg Philo, 2004, Pluto Press, ISBN 978-0-7453-2566-0, pg 24

³⁵ Holy Land, Unholy war, Anton la Guardia, 2001, John Murray, ISBN 0-7195-5601-5, pg 116

the population who were Jewish³⁶. Jerusalem and Bethlehem were to be international cities. This was accepted by the Jewish leadership of David Ben-Gurion, although not the paramilitary organisations of later Israeli Prime Ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir. The Arab leadership rejected the plan out of hand.³⁷

4.3 1947 to 1967

The Israeli state was established several months after the UN partition plan, with the plan itself forming the basis of continuing UN negotiations. Meanwhile the plan ignited a civil war, a war which the Israelis call the War of Independence and the Palestinians call *al-Nakba*, or the Catastrophe. Israelis were well organised and fought hard for their state, with 6000 of their population being killed. Meanwhile, military pressure from the Zionists resulted in the disintegration of the Palestinian society, with 750,000 Palestinians being forced from their country. Around 250,000 Palestinians had already been expelled before the unilateral declaration of the Israeli state by David Ben-Gurion on 14th May 1948³⁸. Some historians have argued that, whilst not its aim, the Palestinian expulsion was the direct result of the Israeli military Plan Dalet to capture territory³⁹. Others argue it, and massacres such as that at Deir Yassin, were part of a deliberate policy of ethnic cleansing⁴⁰. Meanwhile, following the Israeli declaration of independence, several Arab countries attempted to intervene in support of the Palestinians, although there is much evidence of secret collusion in the carving up of Palestine between the strongest Arab leader, King Abdullah I of Jordan and Israel⁴¹. The result was that Israel secured its independence on 78% of the territory, having expelled around 80% of the Arab population⁴². In 1949, Israel was admitted to the United Nations, the General Assembly of which also called for the repatriation of the Palestinian refugees back to their homes.

The formation of the State of Israel was to many Jews, a triumph. There was a massive increase in immigration, including from Arab states. The events leading to Israel's formation had produced tensions within several Arab states between Jewish and Muslim communities that had previously co-existed for many centuries. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Israel organised the migration of Jews from Iraq, Yemen, Morocco and other Arab states.^{43 44}

³⁶ An Israeli in Palestine, Jeff Halper, 2008, Pluto Press, ISBN 978-0-7453-2226-1, pg 111

³⁷ Israel and Palestine, Competing Histories, Mike Berry and Greg Philo, 2004, Pluto Press, ISBN 978-0-7453-2566-0, pg 27,28

³⁸ The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine, Ilan Pappé, 2007, Oneworld, ISBN 978-1-85168-467-0, pg 119

³⁹ The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World, Avi Shlaim, 2000, ISBN 978-0-14-028870-4, pg 31

⁴⁰ The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine, Ilan Pappé, 2007, Oneworld, ISBN 978-1-85168-467-0

⁴¹ Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement and the Partition of Palestine, Avi Shlaim, 1988, ISBN 978-0198278313

⁴² Israel and Palestine, Competing Histories, Mike Berry and Greg Philo, 2004, Pluto Press, ISBN 978-0-7453-2566-0, pg 36

⁴³ Last Days in Babylon: The Story of the Jews of Baghdad, Marina Benjamin, 2007, ISBN 978-0-7475-9328-7

⁴⁴ Not the Enemy: Israel's Jews from Arab Lands, Rachel Shabi, 2009, Yale University Press, ISBN 978-0-300-12275-6

Attempts to reach a resolution to the conflict achieved limited success. Politically, the Palestinian society had been broken, but despite an armistice between Israel and its neighbouring Arab states, no peace treaties were signed. King Abdullah I of Jordan was assassinated by a Palestinian nationalist for his suspected collusion with Israel. An offer of a full peace treaty with Israel by the Syrian leader Husni Zaim was rejected⁴⁵ ⁴⁶. As the Israeli leader Moshe Sharrett worked to establish trust with the Arab states, elements of the Israeli army attacked Gaza and Qibya in the West Bank⁴⁷. In 1956, Israel together with the UK and France attacked Egypt and occupied parts of the Sinai desert. US President Eisenhower intervened to order all 3 countries to withdraw. Meanwhile, Israel developed alliances with more distant states such as Turkey, Iran and Ethiopia.

In 1964, the Palestinians finally achieved an independent political voice, through the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Tensions between Israel and its neighbours rose in the mid 1960s, partly as a result of cross border raids by both Israelis and Arabs. In 1967 these tensions culminated in the Six Day War in which Israel fought against Egypt, Jordan and Syria. Israel's overwhelming victory began with their destruction of the Egyptian air force, and culminated in the Occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Egyptian Sinai peninsula and the Syrian Golan Heights⁴⁸. The United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 242 calling for withdrawal from the territory occupied in the war and stating the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. This Resolution has formed the basis of most subsequent peace negotiations.

4.4 1967 to 1987

Israel's emphatic victory in the Six Day War and their Occupation of large areas of additional land gave them renewed confidence in the region. It gave them vast political power and credibility as an ally of the Americans. Their capture of East Jerusalem including the old city and its key religious sites was of huge symbolic significance. To the Palestinians and the Arab states, however, the war was a disaster. To Palestinians it was *al-Nasqa*, or "the setback". Aside from the loss of territory, all the Arab states and particularly the Hashemite King Hussein of Jordan – who was a descendent of the prophet Mohammed - mourned the loss of Jerusalem, the third holiest city in Islam⁴⁹. Muslims lost de facto control of their third holiest Mosque - the Al Aqsa Mosque - as well as the Dome of the Rock or Haram-al Sharif. To Christians, the loss of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was of great significance. Overall, the strategic balance in the region was also transformed.

Contrary to the 4th Geneva Convention, almost from the moment that Israel captured the territories, it began both to build settlements on occupied land and demolish Palestinian infrastructure. Some Israelis justified this in the name of security whilst others claimed that the

⁴⁵ An Israeli in Palestine, Jeff Halper, 2008, Pluto Press, ISBN 978-0-7453-2226-1, pg 91

⁴⁶ The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World, Avi Shlaim, 2000, ISBN 978-0-14-028870-4, pg 45-46, 52-53

⁴⁷ *ibid*, pg 90-93, 123-129

⁴⁸ Six Days: How the 1967 war shaped the Middle East, Jeremy Bowen, 2003, Simon and Schuster, ISBN 0-7434-4969-0

⁴⁹ Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace, Avi Shlaim, 2008, Penguin, ISBN 978-0-141-01728-0, pg 252-254

West Bank in particular rightly belonged to Israel⁵⁰. The Israeli Defence minister Yigal Allon also proposed his “Allon Plan” for the retention of key parts of the West Bank. The PLO, meanwhile, launched guerrilla raids into Israel from Jordan. The majority of the Jordanian population were by this time Palestinian refugees. Fearing a takeover of his own country, King Hussein ordered the expulsion of the PLO from Jordan to Lebanon in 1970.

A variety of international peace initiatives were started in these years. The UN Jarring Commission and US Secretary of State William Rogers proposed various means by which withdrawal from occupied territory by Israel could be combined with peace. Secret negotiations between Israel and Jordan also continued with the blessing of Egypt’s President Nasser⁵¹. Meanwhile frustration at the lack of progress towards peace and on-going Occupation in Sinai, resulted in a War of Attrition between Israel and Egypt⁵². A full scale war between Egypt, Syria and Israel developed in 1973 and the Palestinian cause became associated in Western minds by a succession of airline hijackings. In 1974, Arab states recognised the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in their Rabat Declaration.

The year 1977 saw a right-wing shift in Israeli politics, when Labour, which had governed Israel since independence was replaced by Likud under Menachem Begin. Likud believed in the right of Israel to settle permanently in the West Bank and thus accelerated the pace of illegal settlement building. Meanwhile, President Sadat of Egypt, in a dramatic move, flew to Israel to address the Knesset and call for peace. This initiative resulted in the Camp David accords, Israeli withdrawal from Sinai, a commitment to Israeli negotiations with the Palestinians as equals, and peace with Egypt⁵³.

In 1980, Israel formally annexed Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan Heights, actions which were condemned by the UN Security Council in Resolutions 478 and 497. In 1982 following the attempted assassination of the Israeli Ambassador to London, Israel invaded Lebanon in order to expel the PLO. This it succeeded in doing, but around 17,500 people were killed⁵⁴. After the withdrawal of Yasser Arafat and the PLO leadership to Tunis, Phalange militia invaded the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla and around 1700 people were massacred. An Israeli Commission of Inquiry found that the Israeli commander Ariel Sharon had “personal responsibility” for the massacre⁵⁵. The massacres led to huge protests in Israel calling for peace⁵⁶. In 1986 Israeli power in the region was illustrated by the revelation by Israeli nuclear technician, Mordacai Vanunu, of a large Israeli nuclear arsenal⁵⁷.

⁵⁰ Israel and Palestine, Competing Histories, Mike Berry and Greg Philo, 2004, Pluto Press, ISBN 978-0-7453-2566-0, pg 54-55

⁵¹ Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace, Avi Shlaim, 2008, Penguin, ISBN 978-0-141-01728-0, pg 265, 281

⁵² Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World, Avi Shlaim, 2000, ISBN 978-0-14-028870-4, pg 289-298

⁵³ Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid, Jimmy Carter, Simon and Schuster, 2006, ISBN 978-0-7432-8502-5, pg 48-50

⁵⁴ The Great War for Civilisation, Robert Fisk, 2006, Harper Perennial, ISBN 1-84115-008-8, pg 1037

⁵⁵ Ibid, pg 623

⁵⁶ Holy Land, Unholy war, Anton la Guardia, 2001, John Murray, ISBN 0-7195-5601-5, pg 132

⁵⁷ The Secrets of Israel’s Nuclear Arsenal Revealed, The Sunday Times, 5th October 1986, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article4794714.ece (Accessed 17th Nov 2009)

4.5 Since 1987

In 1987, following a fatal incident in Gaza, the first Palestinian “Intifada” or “shaking off” began⁵⁸. The causes of this uprising have been attributed to frustration at the 20 year Occupation by Israel⁵⁹. This Intifada, which lasted from 1987 to 1991, was mainly associated with stone throwing and popular unrest within the Occupied territories, together with a corresponding firm response by Israeli forces. Whilst the Intifada itself was spontaneous, the PLO rapidly attempted to gain control of it on the ground.

In 1988, following disengagement from the West Bank by Jordan, the Palestinian National Council, issued its Algiers Declaration recognising Israel, accepting all UN Resolutions dating back to 1947 and calling for a Palestinian state on 22% of British mandated Palestine. The year of 1988 also saw initial Israeli backing for the establishment of the Islamic resistance movement of Hamas^{60 61}.

Following the UN sponsored war to remove Iraq from Kuwait, the United States led a concerted effort to achieve a peace settlement in the Middle East. The initial public stage for this was the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991. Peace negotiations continued with hopes of a breakthrough being transformed by the election of Yitzhak Rabin as the Israeli Prime Minister⁶². Following secret talks in Oslo between Israel and the PLO, Rabin and Arafat shook hands on the White House lawn and signed a Declaration of Principles which established an agenda for future peace negotiations. The PLO restated its recognition of Israel whilst Israel recognised the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Fundamental to the negotiations was that the difficult questions of the status of Jerusalem and the right of return for Palestinian refugees should be left until last. Such “final status” issues should be resolved within 5 years, but in interim agreements known as Oslo I and Oslo II, Israel agreed to withdraw from defined areas of the West Bank and Gaza and allow for the creation of a semi-autonomous Palestinian Authority.

In 1995, the peace process suffered a devastating blow with the assassination by an Israeli extremist of Yitzhak Rabin. Meanwhile, Israeli settlements continued to be built in the West Bank, a new Israeli Government was elected that was opposed to the Oslo peace process and violence from extremists on both sides spread mistrust. Frustration at a perceived lack of progress towards peace led to the outbreak of a second Palestinian Intifada in 2000.

The violence that characterised the second Intifada was much greater than that which had been seen before. In total from September 2000 to December 2008, around 5000 Palestinians and 1000 Israelis were killed due to violence⁶³. Israeli attacks were noted for their use of F-16s,

⁵⁸ Whose Land? Whose Promise?, Gary M Burge, 2003, The Pilgrim Press, ISBN 0-8298-1660-7, pg 46

⁵⁹ Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World, Avi Shlaim, 2000, ISBN 978-0-14-028870-4, pg 451

⁶⁰ Israel and Palestine, Competing Histories, Mike Berry and Greg Philo, 2004, Pluto Press, ISBN 978-0-7453-2566-0, pg 87

⁶¹ Hamas: A Beginner’s Guide, Khaled Hroub, 2006, Pluto Press, ISBN 0-7453-2590-4

⁶² Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World, Avi Shlaim, 2000, ISBN 978-0-14-028870-4, pg 502-545

⁶³ <http://www.btselem.org/English/Statistics/Casualties.asp> (Accessed 8th Nov 2009)

missiles, military helicopters, armoured bulldozers and army raids in civilian areas⁶⁴. At least until 2006, Palestinian attacks were characterised by suicide bombings in Israeli cities⁶⁵. Meanwhile, in 2004, the US President Bush in an exchange of letters with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon appeared to recognise Israeli control of the major illegal settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem⁶⁶. On the ground, Israel built a wall through the occupied West Bank in a move which was declared illegal by the International Court of Justice⁶⁷. In 2005, as Sharon ordered the withdrawal of settlers from Gaza, the number of West Bank settlers increased. Gaza itself remained under Israeli control. In 2006, the Palestinians elected Hamas as their Government, a move which resulted in Israel, the US and the EU boycotting the Palestinian Authority. In 2007, a short lived unity Government between Hamas and Fatah dissolved in a brief civil war, resulting in Hamas taking charge in Gaza and Fatah in the West Bank. Israel immediately strengthened its siege of Gaza preventing many supplies from reaching the territory⁶⁸. In December 2008, tensions between Israel and Hamas resulted in war during which around 1400 Palestinians and 13 Israelis died⁶⁹. Throughout all this time, poverty and unemployment within the Palestinian territories increased, increasing numbers of Israeli settlers moved into the territories and the prospects for peace with justice seemed ever more remote. In addition, the needs of the millions of Palestinian refugees had still not been addressed. The stipulation in Arthur Balfour's 1917 declaration, that the formation of a Jewish state should do nothing to prejudice the rights of the existing communities in the region, had yet to be fulfilled. As the Palestinian-American author and academic Edward Said once stated, the Palestinians remained the "victims of the victims".

⁶⁴ For example: Shielded from scrutiny: IDF Violations in Jenin and Nablus, Amnesty International 2002, MDE 15/143/2002.

⁶⁵ For example: Without distinction: attacks on civilians by Palestinian Armed Groups, Amnesty International 2002, MDE 02/003/2002

⁶⁶ Obstacles to Peace, Jeff Halper, 2009, Creative Commons, ISBN 978-965-90262-1-4, pg 163-168

⁶⁷ Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall on Palestinian Occupied Territory, 9th July 2004, International Court of Justice

⁶⁸ The Gaza Strip: A Humanitarian Implosion, 2008, Amnesty International, Christian Aid, Cafod, Care, Mediciens du Monde UK, Oxfam, Save the Children UK, Trocaire

⁶⁹ Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, 2009, UN Human Rights Council, Richard Goldstone.

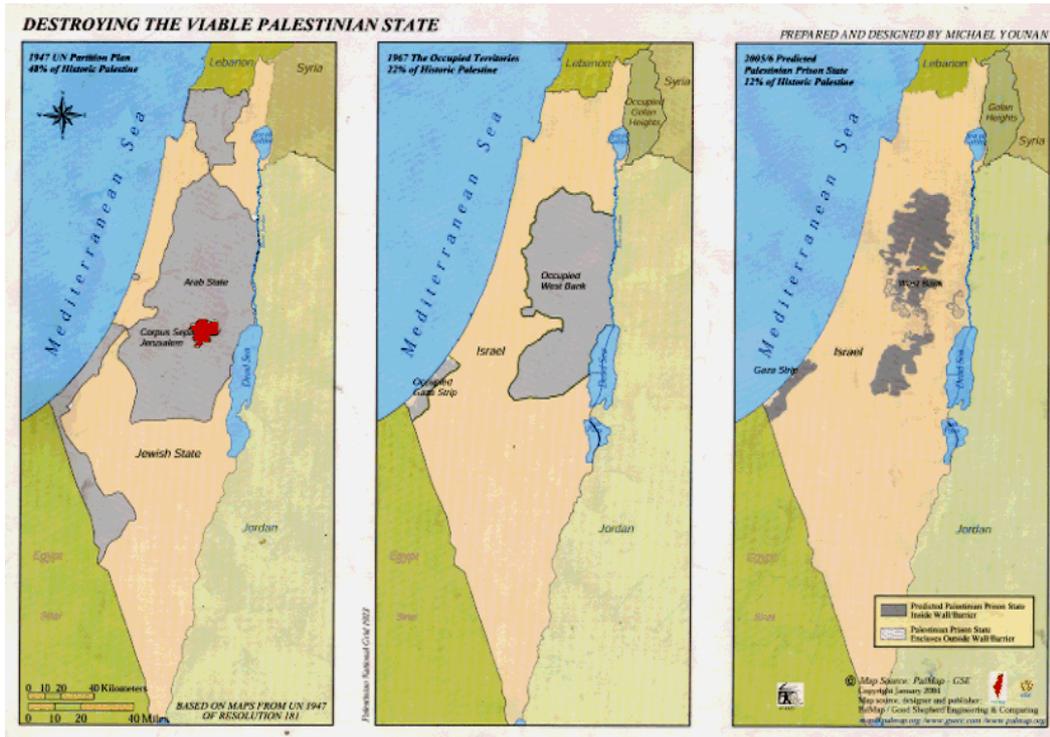


Figure 1: The reduction of the territory available to the Palestinians over time⁷⁰.

5 The Israeli Military Occupation of Palestinian Territories

5.1 The Meaning of Occupation

'When I lived in Bethlehem I understood what I had always known. Jesus was born, lived and died under Occupation and this is what it is like.'

(Rev. Pat Woods, US Lutheran minister, EAPPI volunteer)

As we have seen, the Occupied Palestinian Territories are those captured by Israel from Egypt, Jordan and Syria, following the war of June 1967. They consist of the West Bank of the Jordan River, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights. The Sinai Peninsula was handed back to Egypt in 1982. Although belligerent occupation is not unlawful per se, it is intended to be a temporary state of affairs. International law prohibits the unilateral annexation or permanent acquisition of territory as a result of the threat or use of force. United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 (22/11/1967) calls for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territory occupied in 1967; for recognition of the sovereign territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and the right to live in peace with secure, recognized boundaries. UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (11/12/1948) concerns the fate of the 750,000 Palestinians made refugees in 1948 in relation to the rights of all displaced people under the International Charter of Human Rights. It resolves that 'the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date'. Up

⁷⁰ © Map Source: PalMap – GSE Copyright April 2005 Map source, designer and publisher: PalMap / Good Shepherd Engineering and Computing

to the present time, none of those refugee families has been permitted to return. Most still live in camps located in Lebanon, Jordan and the West Bank itself. With every passing day, the Occupation is assuming a semblance of permanence, significantly reducing the possibility of a viable Palestinian state.

Testimony: Religious Israeli settler from East Jerusalem

The majority of Israeli settlers in the West Bank, for example in settlements such as Efrat and Maale Adumim, are economic settlers. They have been attracted to live in the settlements due to Government housing subsidies, more attractive neighbourhoods and for similar reasons. However, during my time in Jerusalem in 2007, I spoke to a religious Israeli settler living in Occupied East Jerusalem. His reason for living in one of the settlements was for ideological reasons.

His parents had come to Israel from England in 1969, but he himself had been born on a Kibbutz. He spoke of his love of Jerusalem, his belief that the Messiah will come to Jerusalem and how he believes that Jerusalem is the centre of the Jewish nation. King David himself used to live in Jerusalem 3000 years ago and it was clear to him that it belonged to the Jews in the Bible. He believes that it is important that what he described as "Arab squatters" be removed from "Jewish land" in Jerusalem and he is very active in helping with this. He was clear that in his opinion, there is no Occupation, the Palestinians have no rights to the land and rather that the Palestinian state lies in neighbouring Jordan. He stated that, in his opinion, God will in at some point in time, destroy the Muslim Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

(Personal communication, Stephen Leah, during visit to Jerusalem with the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions)

5.2 The Face of Occupation

a) Loss of Freedom and Access : Checkpoints and closures

'Checkpoints do not stand alone..they are the tip of the iceberg' (Israeli women's peace group, Machsom Watch)

According to UNOCHA* at the end of October 2009⁷¹ there were a total of 578 obstacles inside the West Bank (i.e. excluding the Green Line crossings), including 69 permanently staffed checkpoints and 488 unstaffed obstacles, (roadblocks, earth mounds, earth walls, road barriers, road gates and trenches). Of the 69 permanent checkpoints, 37 are located along the separation barrier⁷². All this, in a land area about the size of Wales. For Palestinians, the resulting restrictions on movement are extremely severe. Access to essential medical services is difficult; periods of waiting at checkpoints can stretch to two hours, sometimes more; schooling and work patterns are disrupted. When this happens on a regular basis it amounts to a deep humiliation and the morale of the people is weakened. However, it is important to understand that physical restrictions on movement are only one aspect of the problem. The administrative obstacles are one of the most potent means of restricting Palestinian movement and access. For instance, in 1967 the government of Israel (GOI) carried out a census of Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza (WB&G) and only those in the country at that time were included as legal residents and provided with ID cards. From that time the GOI has retained full control of the population registry, despite the fact that the Oslo accords required that it transfer this control to

⁷¹ West Bank movement and access update, November 2009, UNOCHA* (United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs).

⁷² HCJ (Israeli High Court of Justice), Sarhan et al v. Commander of IDF forces in Judea and Samaria et al, response of the State Attorney's office , 18/11/92, Section 7. Cited in "Restriction on Movement: Forbidden checkpoints and roads" B'tselem p.8.

the Palestinian Authority (PA)⁷³. Under occupation, administrative restrictions on movement are defined and implemented by Orders of the Military Commander of the West Bank. These are arbitrary and highly unpredictable. In addition to holding ID cards, Palestinians are often required to obtain permits for nearly all movement outside of their greater municipal area. Around Nablus there have been periods when GOI instituted a ban on all males between 13 and 35 from leaving the area⁷⁴. This permit regime also keeps families apart; a Palestinian living in Bethlehem whose wife and family are resident in Jerusalem does not have the automatic right to co-habit, but, if their application is granted, it is the “special benevolent act of the Israeli authorities”⁷⁵. The PA ministry of Civil Affairs estimates that there have been some 120,000 *applications* for family re-unification since 2000; only those classified as ‘exceptional humanitarian cases’ have been granted⁷⁶. Permits are temporary and must be renewed on a regular basis.

Story: Diary of an Ecumenical Accompanier in Bethlehem

Monday 26th January 2009 Checkpoint in the morning. Queue opened at 5.10am. Called the army humanitarian hotline. Turbulence in the queue because the people with -00 permits were not being let through the car gate and had to pass through the pedestrian gate. The people in the line got upset. Very crowded in the first queue. Those who joined the line at 4.30 were not in the metal detector section until 6.40 – a wait of 2 hours 10 minutes. The first metal detector wasn’t working, the third was working and people were passing through normally but everyone who passed through the second detector had to go into the inspection room and wait their turn. The turnstile was kept closed, there was severe overcrowding in the area and much disquiet. All this meant that those who chose this queue were not through to the final section until 7am and others, 7.20, even though they had been queuing since 4.30. We contacted the army commander who went through to the troubled area. After that things were better but the final section was not clear of the crowds until 8.15 am.

Thursday 29th January 2009 At the ID booths, two men with permits to work in Jerusalem were bringing children with appointments at the eye hospital in Jerusalem. They were not let through, even though they had a letter showing the time and place of the appointment because they didn’t have a special permit to visit the hospital. I phoned the humanitarian hotline asking if they could be let through but to no avail.

NB – Jerusalem is only five miles from Bethlehem.

The intricate, pervasive system of checkpoints and barriers which dominate the lives of the majority of Palestinians means that they have little or no control over the essential transactions of everyday life. Access to water for domestic and agricultural use is determined by the GOI. Per capita water consumption for household and urban use in Palestinian communities averages around 60 litres a day compared to the World Health Organisation recommended minimal amount of 100 litres per person. By comparison, an Israeli citizen consumes some 280 litres a day - almost 5 times more⁷⁷. As mentioned above, the arbitrary nature of closures also

⁷³ The Israeli-Palestine Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Annex 3, Art.28(1)

⁷⁴ UNOCHA, West Bank closure count and analysis, September 2006

⁷⁵ Movement and access restrictions in the West Bank; World Bank Technical Team, May 2007, pg 5

⁷⁶ Information provided to B’tselem (Israeli Human Rights Organization) on 14th August 2005

⁷⁷ B’tselem Annual Report 2007

constitutes a major problem in terms of trade and the movements of goods. Holding a valid permit does not necessarily guarantee the ability to cross a checkpoint. Soldiers determine whether or not a permit is valid. Requirements can be changed without notice at permanent and/or 'flying' checkpoints and comprehensive closures banning all movement can be imposed at any time. According to B'tselem⁷⁸, in 2006 there were 78 such days and there are typically blanket closures during public holidays in Israel. A World Bank report states, 'unsurprisingly these restrictions make the movement of people and goods more expensive, inefficient and unpredictable and have a chilling effect on economic activity. Beyond the personal hardship an economy cannot run effectively if there is significant uncertainty about the ability of workers to reach their jobs, goods reaching their markets or entrepreneurs being present to manage their place of business'.⁷⁹

b) Loss of land : Settlements

'Woe betide those who add house to house and join field to field until everyone else is displaced and you are left as sole inhabitants of the countryside.' (Isaiah of Jerusalem, chapter 5 verse 8)

Since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, Palestinians have seen more and more of their land disappear. The territory allocated by the UN proposal for a Palestinian state has been systematically confiscated, i.e., stolen, and built upon by Israeli settlers. This process has intensified since 1967. There are currently 129 settlements with a combined population approaching 450,000, over half of whom live in East Jerusalem⁸⁰. In addition, there are roughly 100 illegal "outposts" which have been established with some degree of Israeli government support. The settlements are linked by a network of roads which are available for use by Jewish Israelis only. A majority of the settlers are "economic", induced to migrate to Israel by generous financial and property concessions; others are religious, highly motivated and fiercely ideological. There are many well-documented instances of attacks on Palestinian farmers by these settlers. Violence includes destruction of crops as well as attacks against the person. In more than 90% of cases monitored by Yesh Din⁸¹ where investigations of settler violence were conducted the case was closed without any indictment. The settlements have spawned a landscape referred to as "Swiss cheese", in which Palestinian communities appear as 'Bantustans' or 'cantons', effectively isolated from each other. The settlements within the West Bank disrupt the normal functioning of the Palestinian economy by restricting Palestinian access to major roads and by the erection of the 'separation barrier' which will be considered later.

It needs to be stressed that the settlements are *illegal* under international law, over one-third having been built on Palestinian privately owned land. Their existence and growth constitutes a major obstacle to a just and sustainable peace in the region.

Story: Difficulties of the Olive Harvest: Witness of an Ecumenical Accompanier in Yanoun, northern West Bank. Abu Yahya was the first resident of this small rural village to be attacked by youths from the nearby settlement of Itamar. One day in 1996 he was tending his sheep when a stranger approached.

⁷⁸ B'tselem: Closures – figures on comprehensive closure days: Annual Report 2007, pp17-25

⁷⁹ Movement and access restrictions in the West Bank; World Bank Technical Team, May 2007

⁸⁰ Christian Aid 2008

⁸¹ 'A semblance of Law: Law enforcement on Israeli citizens in the West Bank'; Yesh Din – Israeli Volunteers for Human Rights (June 2006)

Being short-sighted he thought it was someone local and went to offer a handshake and a cigarette. He was badly beaten with his own walking stick, left with several broken bones and blinded in his left eye. That was twelve years ago, but the problems caused by Itamar's ever-expanding presence remain. The presence of international observers is particularly important during the olive harvest. Violent Israeli settlers often armed with M-16 machine guns do their best to make it difficult for Palestinians to reach their trees, many of which they have tended for generations. The Israeli Defence Force (IDF) which has an obligation under the Geneva Conventions to keep order in the Occupied Territories often fails to protect Palestinian civilians from abuse by settlers.

'Whatever the settlers want the army does it', claimed farmer Ahmad Khadar. 'Last year the IDF set limits within which we could pick our olives. We agreed and got on with the work. But the settlers came and told the army to move the limits back and they did. It meant that we couldn't harvest all our trees'. Apart from human rights organizations, Israel's Attorney General has noted 'a lack of appropriate law enforcement against Israelis' in the West Bank. (Source: Journal Letter from Israel/Palestine, November 2008. Names have been changed throughout.)

c) Loss of Homes : demolitions and evictions

'...nothing in my Israeli experience could make sense of it....I knew Israel's Occupation policies had little to do with security..but pursuing my own affairs, I did what other Israelis do. I didn't inquire too closely, I didn't cross the membrane'

(Jeff Halper, An Israeli in Palestine p. 36)

It is estimated by ICAHD⁸² that since 1967, 24,167 Palestinian homes have been demolished in the Occupied territories. In East Jerusalem alone there were 670 house demolitions between 1994 and 2006. An indication of the acceleration of this policy is that almost two-thirds of these orders were carried out in the last 4 years of that period (402). As an intrinsic aspect of the same policy, increasing numbers of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem have been evicted from their homes during the last decade.

In addition, during Operation Cast Lead and the bombardment of the Gaza Strip in December/January 2008/9 over 4,000 homes were destroyed. Most of these have not been rebuilt due to the Israeli military embargo on building materials.

Story: Salim and Arabiya Shawamreh

Salim and his wife Arabiya bought a plot of land in a village outside Jerusalem and applied for a building permit. It was turned down on the grounds that it was 'zoned agricultural land'. However there were no crops being grown on this rocky scree at all. He applied again (each application costs \$5000); this time it was turned down because 'the land is too steep', notwithstanding the existence of dwellings on surrounding hills, built on equally steep slopes. He applied again, only to be told that there were 'missing signatures from the previous owners on the deed', so after the Occupation authorities refused to say which signatures they required, Salim produced the signatures of hundreds of people and invited them to pick the two they needed. Again the application was refused. With a growing family to house and the Oslo peace process under way, it seemed highly probable that a Palestinian state would emerge. Salim took the risk and decided to build the house. In this respect he was acting like many at the time. However on 9th July 1998 his home was surrounded by 200 soldiers and he was told, 'you have fifteen minutes to leave.' Salim was driven from the house and beaten. Arabiya locked the door to try to protect the

⁸² Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions

children. She was dragged from the house by one of the soldiers. The children fled, one of whom was missing for seven hours.

ICAHN were determined to rebuild the Shawamreh home. With the help of Israeli, Palestinian and international volunteers the house was re-built. And demolished again in August 2000 and re-built. And demolished again in 2001. It was rebuilt and demolished for the third time in 2003. With the family unable to cope anymore with the trauma, Beit Arabiya was re-built again as an international centre for peace and reconciliation. So far it remains standing. It is dedicated to the memory of Rachel Corrie a 23 year-old American activist, crushed by an Israeli bulldozer in Gaza whilst protecting the home of a Palestinian woman and three children, and to Nuha Sweidan who was nine months pregnant when she was killed in her own home some time earlier in similar circumstances. **(Source: Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions)**

Story: the Hanoun and Al Ghawi families

They came for them at dawn on a Sunday in early August 2009, heavily armed police wearing helmets and riot shields broke down the metal doors of two houses in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah and dragged two Palestinian families out onto the streets. It was over in minutes, the Hanoun and Al Ghawi families evicted from what had been their homes for the past five decades and with their possessions thrown onto the pavement before the sun had fully risen. Within hours, young religious Israeli settlers had been moved in guarded by dozens of armed police and their own private armed security guards. Both families sleep on mattresses on the street outside their homes, and spend the day sitting in the shade watching settlers walk in and out of their front doors. 'I don't know how they sleep', said Maher Hanoun, 51. 'we were here in our house legally..that is the important point'.

'I am dying a hundred times a day' said Nasser Al Ghawi. 'This is my house, this is what is left of my furniture. I have nowhere else to go. This is where I was born.'

Both the Hanouns and the Al Ghawis were among 28 Palestinian families who were given houses in Sheikh Jarrah, then under Jordanian control having become refugees after 1948. Ir Amin, an Israeli organization that works for a more equitable Jerusalem says, 'the State of Israel needs to re-consider the consequences of this process which allows Jews to claim ownership of property that may have belonged to them pre-1948 but prevents the same claims from being realised by Palestinian residents..this could place the State of Israel in an impossible position'. Another Sheikh Jarrah family facing possible eviction says, 'they want to build a wall of settlers and eventually no Arabs will be allowed through.' **(Source: Guardian 25th August 2009)**

d) The Separation Barrier

'For Jabotinsky the Iron Wall was a metaphor. In the crude hands of Sharon and his colleagues this metaphor is being metamorphosed into a monstrous physical reality'

(The war of the Israeli historians, by Avi Shlaim, p.9)

Epitomising the increasingly desperate plight of the Palestinian people and the Israeli obsession with security, this barrier, begun in 2002, will, on completion, cover a distance of 702 km - 4 times as long and twice as high as the Berlin Wall. It is described in a recent UNOCHA report as consisting of 'fences, ditches, razor wire, groomed sand paths, an electronic monitoring system, patrol roads and a buffer zone.' Around 45 km of the constructed barrier consists of a 8-9 metre high concrete wall particularly in urban areas..⁸³ Far from following the Armistice (UN Green)

⁸³ Five years after the International Court of Justice advisory opinion (UNOCHA July 2009)

Line it bites deep into Palestinian territory sometimes by several kilometres. It not only separates Israelis from Palestinians, but Palestinians from family members and friends. In rural areas it effectively cuts them off from their olive trees and fruit/vegetable plantations. With the construction of the barrier, GOI has declared the land in between the route of the barrier itself and the Green Line a “closed area” for an indefinite period of time by the Israeli military. This ‘seam zone’ accounts for roughly 8.5% of the territory of the West Bank. About 50,000 Palestinians in 38 villages and towns will find themselves in the seam zone once the barrier is completed. Furthermore, approximately half a million Palestinians live within 1km of the barrier on its eastern side and many of these people have been negatively affected by a structure that cuts through properties, economic networks, service access routes and neighbourhoods.⁸⁴

Palestinians who find themselves residents of the seam zone are required to apply for a permit (permanent resident ID) from the Civil Administration in order to remain in their homes and gain access to their property. Even if Palestinians have the required permit the barrier acts as a significant physical hindrance to movement, because passage is only available via gates operated by the IDF often on a temporary, ad hoc basis. In a recent UNOCHA report⁸⁵ it was estimated that more than 50% of communities surveyed no longer had direct, regular access to their land and that roughly 60% of families owning land in the seam zone area of the northern West Bank could no longer access it because they were refused permits by the GOI. These findings were re-enforced by another recent study funded by the New Israel Fund and the British Embassy in Tel Aviv and conducted by the Israeli organization Bimkom⁸⁶ which stated, ‘the route of the Separation Barrier... totally ignores the daily needs of the Palestinian population and is focussed almost exclusively on the desire to maintain the fabric of life of Israeli settlers’. It also states that it is causing serious damage to residents’ healthcare needs and undermining social and family life.

On 9th July 2004 the International Court of Justice declared the separation barrier illegal and called on Israel (the Occupying Power) to ‘cease construction, dismantle constructed parts and provide reparation to those materially damaged by the construction.’⁸⁷

Story: Monitoring the barrier gates; Extract from the weekly log of Ecumenical Accompaniers in Jayyous and Falamyra, October 2008

Thursday, Jayyous, South Gate. *We arrived at 7.50am. Many men, women and donkeys were waiting. The gate was opened on time. The control was completed in ten minutes but two men were denied access to their land very close to the gate. They had land also in the Falamyra district with permits only valid for that gate. The DCL (Israeli District Co-ordination Liaison Office) will only accept one permit per person, per agricultural gate. The men had previous experience of some soldiers allowing them to pass without permits for this gate. One of the men showed us that he had a valid working permit to go to Tel Aviv but could not go to his land 250 metres on the other side of the South Gate. To walk from Falamyra Gate to the land close to this gate would take three hours each way. He was not allowed to walk along the patrol road parallel to the wall but was forced to walk across country on agricultural tracks.*

⁸⁴ Movement and access restrictions in the West Bank; World Bank 2007 p.18

⁸⁵ OCHA special focus Occupied Palestinian Territories, November 2006

⁸⁶ MacIntyre D. & Penketh Anne, Independent Newspaper, 23rd January 2007

⁸⁷ ICJ, Legal consequences of of construction of the Wall in OPT’s, para 141

Friday, Falameya Gate. We arrived at 4.40am A few men already there. The gate was supposed to open at 5am but no soldiers arrived until 5.20. Then they had problems starting up the generator to make the turnstile function. We twice called the Humanitarian Hotline who answered that they could do nothing due to technical problems at the gate. At 5.40 the gate opened but not the turnstile. About 12 men, 3 women and 3 tractors were waiting. This morning no animals passed. One man with permit for Gate 109 was denied access. We asked the soldiers about opening hours but they were not sure themselves. After some discussion they said from 5.15 for 12 hours. **(Source: Five years after; summary of the humanitarian impact of the barrier, UNOCHA, July 2009, p.26)**

Story: Abu Jamal

Abu Jamal is a UNWRA-registered refugee, his father having fled from Jaljoulia to Jayyous in 1948. He is 34 and has been farming since he was 14. The family holding comprises land he inherited from his father and some he bought himself. It includes olive groves and five greenhouses. In the initial round of allocation in 2003, Abu Jamal was refused a permit 'for security reasons'. After a successful appeal he was granted permits, on one occasion for a period of two years. His last permit was valid only for three months for the 2007 olive season and expired in December. Since then, he has been refused repeatedly, again on 'security grounds'. His brother Saleh now tries to look after all the family greenhouses..he is hard-pressed to carry out his own work, during the limited times the gate openings allow, in addition to looking after the well whose water irrigates the land of dozens of farmers. Abu Jamal describes his frustration at sitting in his home during the most productive time of the year, knowing that his brother can't do all the work and that tomatoes and cucumbers will wither from lack of care. 'We have the ability to work. We just need the permits. I feel like a refugee all over again.' **(Source: Humanitarian Impact of the Barrier, UNOCHA 2007 p.18)**

e) Collective Punishment and Administrative Detention

Two other aspects of the Occupation also form a vital part of what ICAHD's Jeff Halper calls 'the matrix of control'. *Collective punishment* is the disproportionate response to acts of violence in which whole families or communities are singled out to be "punished". An outstanding example of this was the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip at the end of 2008 and the continued blockade.

Administrative detention is the practice by which the state can detain civilians without charge or trial, such detention being by administrative order (usually by the Israeli military), rather than by judicial decree. As at February 2009 Israel was holding more than 560 Palestinians in administrative detention facilities run by the Israeli Prison Service (IPS)⁸⁸. Many of those detained are young people who can be held up to six months or longer and the order can be arbitrarily extended without limit. Some have been kept for years, often without knowing what crime they are charged with. Torture and extreme harassment frequently occurs during these periods of detention. Although International Law authorizes the practice of administrative detention under rigid rules for state security reasons, it should be noted that Israel has never defined the criteria for what constitutes 'state security'. The practice has come under severe criticism by Amnesty International, who believe that it breaches Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which makes clear that 'no-one should be subjected to arbitrary detention; deprivation of liberty must be based on grounds and procedures established by law'.

⁸⁸ Sahar Francis, lawyer and director of Adameer Centre (Prison Support and HR Association)

In total, many thousands of Palestinians are currently detained by Israel. The Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, B'tselem, reported that in November 2009, 296 children below the age of 18 were detained.⁸⁹ After the elections of 2006, a total of 47 Palestinian Parliamentarians were detained including the Speaker of the Parliament, Aziz Dweik⁹⁰. Mr Dweik, who was in bad health, was only released in 2009.⁹¹

Small cracks of hope; bereaved families

During my time in Jerusalem as an Ecumenical Accompanier our team met two remarkable men, Avner, an Israeli Jew, and Ibrahim a young Palestinian from Bethlehem. Avner had served in the Israeli army, left in 1973, married and raised his family in Jerusalem. In 1996 his 14 year old daughter was killed in a suicide attack in the west of the city. He spoke of his grief, anger and despair. Ibrahim was brought up in a Bethlehem refugee camp where 15 members of his family lived in one room and shared the same bathroom. At the beginning of the second intifada his father was returning to Bethlehem when he was shot by an IDF sniper, for no other reason that he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Ibrahim said: 'I knew I had a choice – either to continue this cycle of violence or seek another way'. Avner and Ibrahim were contacted by the bereaved families' circle, which was founded to bring people together from both sides of the conflict.. A miracle that those two men were together in the same room and that they work together for reconciliation and peace, within Israeli and Palestinian society and beyond. As they left us Avner put his arm round Ibrahim's shoulders and said: 'this man is not just my friend. He is my brother whom I love even more than some members of my own family. Together we are making small cracks of hope in the wall'. ***(Personal testimony, Warren Bardsley, former Ecumenical Accompanier placed in Jerusalem)***

f) The situation in Gaza

Despite the withdrawal of Israeli settlers from the Gaza Strip in 2005, the territory's borders, airspace, coastline, access to imports, electromagnetic sphere and population registry remain under the control of Israel and thus, according to bodies such as the Red Cross, the territory remains under Occupation. In addition, whilst around 8000 settlers were withdrawn from Gaza, in the following year a total of 12,000 Israelis settled in the Occupied West Bank⁹².

In 2006, the Islamic resistance movement of Hamas were the clear winners in the Palestinian elections. Fatah, the party that had been led by Yasser Arafat and which had for many years been dominant in Palestinian politics, was beaten into second place. Consequently, power within the Palestinian Authority was transferred to Hamas and its new Prime Minister, Ismail Haniyeh. Despite the certification by international observers that the election result was free and fair, it was not, however, accepted by Israel or other key powers such as the United States and European Union. Due to the leadership of Hamas in Government, these powers imposed severe financial and other sanctions on the Palestinian Authority. Amongst these were the freezing of tax revenues that under a 1994 agreement, Israel had collected on behalf of the Palestinians. Their key objections to Hamas' presence in Government were that it had not unambiguously accepted Israel's right to exist, it had not accepted previous agreements with Israel and it refused to finally and completely renounce violence.

⁸⁹ http://www.btselem.org/english/Statistics/Minors_in_Custody.asp (Accessed 6th January 2010)

⁹⁰ Israel releases 198 Palestinian prisoners, The Guardian, 26 August 2008

⁹¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8114717.stm>, BBC News, 23rd June 2009 (Accessed 6th January 2010)

⁹² Avi Shlaim, How Israel brought Gaza to the brink of humanitarian catastrophe, The Guardian, 7th January 2008

In February 2007, the leaderships of Fatah and Hamas met in the city of Mecca to agree a coalition or unity Government. The hope was that with both main parties in power together, and with Fatah's repeated acceptance of the US, EU and Israeli conditions, the sanctions would be lifted. However, behind the scenes, and with the sanctions still causing desperate poverty in both the West Bank and Gaza, huge tensions were building between Fatah and Hamas. In June 2007, these tensions resulted in violent conflict in Gaza and the de facto takeover of the territory by Hamas. The West Bank was then taken over by Fatah.

Following this takeover of Gaza by Hamas, the Israeli Government imposed severe restrictions on the access of a wide variety of goods and services as well as people to and from the territory. The Methodist Conference of 2008 noted a report by 8 aid and human rights agencies which described conditions in Gaza as a "humanitarian implosion"⁹³. At that time, 80% of families in Gaza relied on humanitarian aid compared to 63% in 2006. The blockade was reported to be destroying public service infrastructure in Gaza, hospitals were experiencing power cuts of 8-12 hours per day, emergency medical treatment for residents of Gaza within Israel was being denied and 30-40 million litres of sewage was being discharged every day into the sea due to the lack of fuel to pump or treat human waste. Justice Richard Goldstone has stated in his recent report to the United Nations, his view that Israel retains its responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention, to ensure Gaza is adequately supplied with humanitarian resources.⁹⁴

Since that time, the conflict between Israel and Hamas not only resulted, according to Justice Goldstone, in around 1400 Palestinian and 13 Israeli deaths, but also widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure in Gaza. Justice Goldstone, reports, for example, the "deliberate and systematic" targeting of "industrial sites and water installations"⁹⁵, as well as "extensive destruction of houses and private property".⁹⁶

A year after the start of the Gaza war, a group of agencies including Amnesty International, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Medical Aid for Palestinians, Mercy Corps and Oxfam International, reported that the blockade is still preventing Gaza from rebuilding. Only 41 truckloads of construction materials have, for example, been allowed to enter since January, whereas the task of rebuilding will require thousands of such truckloads.⁹⁷ In addition, there have since been reports that the siege will be tightened further on the Egypt/Gaza border, by the construction of a metal wall designed to prevent smuggling of goods via cross border tunnels.⁹⁸

Story: Dr Izzeldin Abuelaish, and the killing of his daughters

Dr Abuelaish, a physician from the Gaza Strip, was a voice from the war zone, telling Israeli radio and TV in fluent Hebrew about life under fire during Israel's invasion of Gaza.

⁹³ The Gaza Strip: A Humanitarian Implosion, 2008, Amnesty International, Christian Aid, Cafod, Care, Mediciens du Monde UK, Oxfam, Save the Children UK, Trocaire

⁹⁴ Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, 2009, UN Human Rights Council, Richard Goldstone, pg 100

⁹⁵ Ibid, pg 279

⁹⁶ Ibid, pg 269

⁹⁷ Failing Gaza: No rebuilding, no recovery, no more excuses, 2009, Amnesty International et al

⁹⁸ Egypt building underground metal wall to curb smuggling into Gaza, The Guardian, 10th December 2009

During the war, Abuelaish, a 53 year old gynaecologist, widower and father of eight stayed with his extended family in a 5 storey building in Jabalya in Gaza. There were 25 people in all. They were unable to leave for fear of being shot. There was no water, electricity, gas or phone. He charged his mobile phone from a radio battery.

Amongst Abuelaish's daughters was his eldest Bisan, 20. After the death from leukaemia of his wife, Bisan was effectively mother to his younger children. She was a senior at Gaza's Islamic University and had met Israelis at a peace camp in New Mexico. When the fighting in Gaza began, she had received calls from Israeli friends, worried for her safety.

After lunch one day, the doctor's daughters and 2 cousins went to the girl's bedroom. Then, the unspeakable happened. An Israeli shell hit the room where his daughters had gathered, killing 3 of them and a cousin.

"I found my daughters in pieces," he said. His eldest, Bisan, was among the dead.

The Israeli army said they were investigating and claimed they had been fired on from the building "or its vicinity". But Dr Abuelaish said there were no Hamas fighters in the area and he would not have allowed them near his home.

"Even if someone was firing, why did they shoot only at my daughters' room?" he asked.

(Chicago Tribune 17th January 2009)

g) The plight of Palestinian Israelis

Whilst much has been said about the situation faced by Palestinians living within the Occupied Territories, it is important not to neglect the challenges faced by Palestinians living within Israel. The definition of Israel as a "Jewish state"⁹⁹ has profound implications for the rights of the 1.4 million members of the Arab minority, those Palestinians and their descendents who remained within Israel after its foundation. Thus, for example, the law of the right of return to Israel applies preferentially to Jews, no matter where in the world they were born. Arabs who may have been born within the current recognised boundaries of Israel are not accorded this right. There are large disparities in the provision of public funds between Jewish and Arab communities, and this has affected the level of service in areas such as education, roads and housing¹⁰⁰. Discrimination in employment is common place. Currently, despite being 20% of the population, only 3.5% of Israeli land is in Arab-Palestinian ownership. Many Bedouin villages in the Negev Desert are "unrecognised" and so remain unconnected to municipal services such as water, and are frequently demolished. The official Israeli Or Commission Report, released in 2003, provides details of some of the discrimination faced by Israeli Arabs.

In recent years, support for this discrimination amongst Israeli politicians has grown. Since the election of the Government of Benjamin Netanyahu in February 2009, additional discriminatory measures have been proposed¹⁰¹.

⁹⁹ Declaration of Establishment of State of Israel

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+the+Peace+Process/Declaration+of+Establishment+of+State+of+Israel.htm> (Accessed 8th November 2009)

¹⁰⁰ The Other Side of Israel, Susan Nathan, 2006, Harper Perennial, ISBN 978-0-00-719511-4

¹⁰¹ The Political, Legal, Socio-Economic Status of the Palestinian Citizens of Israel 2009, Jafar Farah, Cornerstone Fall 2009, Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center

- A bill to outlaw Nakba mourning. Whilst the foundation of the state of Israel is a cause of celebration to many Jews, it is a time of mourning for Arabs as they remember their compatriots who were forced to leave their homes in 1948. Criminal punishments for commemorating the Nakba have now been removed from the bill, but denial of funding to institutions involved is still being proposed.
- A bill to criminalise the public denial of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state – thus inhibiting the peaceful campaign for equal rights for both Jews and Arabs.
- A loyalty Oath bill, which would force any who wish to retain citizenship that they must declare their loyalty to Israel has a Jewish state. This bill has been rejected by a ministerial committee, but was a key commitment of the Yisrael Beiteinu Party, an important member of the Israeli Government's ruling coalition
- A bill to make it easier for the Government to revoke the citizenship of Israelis who are deemed to have betrayed the state. The current Interior Minister has said he will use it to revoke citizenship of former MK Azmi Bishara and 34 other Arab citizens.
- The continuation of the Citizenship and Entry into Israel law, which denies the rights of Palestinians who reside in the West Bank or Gaza to live in Israel, even though they may marry Israeli citizens. This law disproportionately affects Arab citizens of Israel, who are most likely to be married to Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has stated that this law violates international human rights law.

5.3 The Ending of Occupation

There are two words which Palestinians use to describe their experience during the past 60 years. One is *nakba* meaning 'catastrophe'; the other is *nish'ul* which means dispossession. A report produced in December 2009 by leading Palestinian Christians¹⁰² states,

'We.....declare that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is a sin against God and humanity because it deprives the Palestinians of their basic human rights bestowed by God. It distorts the image of God in the Israeli who has become the Occupier just as it distorts this image in the Palestinian living under occupation..'

Gila Svirsky, a Jewish Israeli says: 'The Occupation must end – primarily for the sake of the Palestinians, but also for we Israelis...*it is eating away our soul*'¹⁰³

This goal will not be achieved easily, but it is an essential step towards a just and sustainable peace for both Israelis and Palestinians. The burden of this report is that it has now become an urgent necessity.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In working towards a statement for the Methodist Church to make on the situation in Israel-Palestine, two things stand out from the work that we have undertaken:

¹⁰² A moment of truth: a word of faith and hope from the heart of Palestinian suffering, Dec 2009, pg 5

¹⁰³ Warren Bardsley, personal communication to Jerusalem EAPPI Team, September 2008

1) that a greater understanding of the theology that underpins differing attitudes and actions to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict needs developing, in order that proper theological reflection and conversations may underpin the attitude of the Methodist Church and Methodist people;

2) that because of the complex nature of the situation and insufficiency of media reports a full awareness of what is actually happening in Israel/Palestine is largely lacking among many people.

It is recognised that any statement by the Methodist Church will be somewhat lacking in strength and authority unless these issues are addressed. However we are charged with bringing a proposed statement to Conference and we believe that the previous occasions when Conference has considered issues relating to the situation between Israel and the Palestinian people gives enough background to make such a statement with confidence.

Our recommendations come from the basis provided by previous Conference decisions¹⁰⁴ and a recognition that the situation in Israel/Palestine has deteriorated and that the suffering of the Palestinian people has become worse. In addition, we have been mindful of relevant statements by our partners in the World Council of Churches¹⁰⁵ as well as recent statements by Palestinian Christians, including Kairos report released in December 2009¹⁰⁶.

6.1. Recommendations

6.1.1 that, wherever possible, the work of the Methodist Church and Methodists on this issue should be done in partnership with Christians of all denominations, with interfaith groups and with the Jewish and Muslim communities

6.1.2 that the Methodist Church should issue the following statement:

In the belief that peace and reconciliation depends upon justice, fairness and mercy, the Methodist Church has consistently expressed its concern over the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands by the state of Israel. That further occupation continues to take place not only compounds the state's illegal and immoral action but also makes any accommodation with the Palestinian people and future peace in the region much less possible. The importance of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in affecting the peace of the whole Middle East, not to say the peace of the world would indicate the responsibility of other nations not to exacerbate the situation by supplying arms to any party. The Goldstone report into the recent conflict in Gaza indicates the seriousness of actions taken by both sides and needs to be taken seriously if there is to be any progress towards peace. The proposed visa restrictions which limit entry to Palestinian Authority areas damage Israel's reputation abroad and the current "Citizenship and Entry into Israel" law restricting the residential rights of married

¹⁰⁴ For a summary see: http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/pi_ipconfresolutions02-009_0809.pdf (Accessed 27th Dec 2009)

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/geneva-2009/reports-and-documents/report-on-public-issues/statement-on-israeli-settlements-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territory.html> (Accessed, 28th December 2009)

¹⁰⁶ See Section 5.3 of this report

couples will lead to separation of such couples or the withdrawal of citizenship for one partner.

The Methodist Church, therefore:

- *calls upon the government of Israel to end the occupation and engage in discussion with Palestinian authorities with a view to withdrawal from settlements, which are illegal under international law, and from other occupied areas including East Jerusalem.*
- *repeats its call to the Israeli government to pull down the Separation Wall that is dividing Palestinian communities, depriving people of agricultural land and denying Palestinians access to health care.*
- *repeats its call for the blockade of Gaza, which aid agencies say is causing great suffering to many ordinary people, to be lifted*
- *calls for a full arms embargo against all sides in the conflict.*
- *expresses its objection to the proposed visa regulations limiting entry into Palestinian Authority areas*
- *expresses its objection to the current laws restricting residential rights for Palestinians and calls upon the government of Israel to rescind them.*
- *expresses its concern that the Goldstone report has been rejected by both parties to the Gaza conflict and believes that the report should be accepted by both sides.*
- *calls for Muslims, Christians and Jews, wherever they may live within Israel/Palestine, to be able to freely travel to and worship at their holy sites in Jerusalem.*
- *repeats its call for respect for the rights of Palestinian refugees for justice and a secure future.*

In a complex and ever developing situation, it is important that opinion should be adequately informed. Therefore, Conference calls upon the Methodist people to keep up to date with information about the situation in Israel/Palestine, to reflect on the theology that is needed to underpin a proper Christian approach the Israeli-Palestinian problem, and study what it means to be peacemakers in their own context.

In listening to Church Leaders and our fellow-Christians in Israel Palestine as well as leaders of Palestinian civil society we hear an increasing consensus calling for the imposition of boycott divestment and sanctions as a major strategy of non-violent resistance to the Occupation. The Conference notes the call of the WCC in 2009 for an 'international boycott of settlement produce and services'¹⁰⁷ and calls on the Methodist people to support and engage with this boycott of Israeli goods emanating from illegal settlements.

- 6.1.3 that the Faith and Order Committee engage, as soon as possible, with the theological issues needed to underpin the approach of the Methodist Church to the Israeli/Palestinian situation in order to bring a report to Conference.
- 6.1.4 that theological reflection takes place to discuss and critique Christian Zionism.
- 6.1.5 that, in the meantime, the Methodist people be encouraged to engage with such theological resources as are already available (listed in the Appendix) in order to reflect on the issues from a sound theological base.

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/geneva-2009/reports-and-documents/report-on-public-issues/statement-on-israeli-settlements-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territory.html>

(Accessed, 28th December 2009)

- 6.1.6 that such theological reflection should include the question of what it means for Christians to be peacemakers in their own situation within a broken world.
- 6.1.7 that the Methodist people be encouraged and enabled to support, by prayer, by visits to Palestinian Christians and churches with such organisations as are listed in the Appendix, and by whatever other practical means may be possible, our fellow Christians living in Israel/Palestine and to acknowledge that some Methodists would advocate a total boycott of Israeli goods until the Occupation ends.
- 6.1.8 that a communication network be used and maintained and educational events be arranged around the Connexion in order to inform Methodist people of developments in the situation in Israel/Palestine, enable the sharing of information at the local circuit and church level and encourage appropriate action.
- 6.1.9 that Districts, Circuits and Churches be encouraged to support the World Council of Churches week of prayer and action for a just peace in Israel/Palestine at the beginning of June and also to endorse the Just Peace for Palestine initiative of the Amos Trust¹⁰⁸
- 6.1.10 That Methodists be encouraged to write to their MPs, MEPs and Government ministers to call for urgent help to be given to those who are suffering as a result of the Occupation. That the Methodist Council direct the Connexional Team to make appropriate representations to the UK Government and European Commission calling for action bring an end to the Occupation and the siege of Gaza and for further Government pressure to be applied to allow a process of serious peacemaking to take place that eschews violent conflict.

7. Appendix A – Further Resources

Recommended organisations offering tours to Israel/Palestine

The Amos Trust, <http://www.amostrust.org/>

Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, <http://www.icahd.org/eng/> and <http://www.icahd.uk.org>

Zaytoun, <http://www.zaytoun.org/>

DVDs

The Iron Wall, A film by Mohammed Alatar, Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees, available from ICAHD UK, PO Box 371, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 2EU, info@icahd.uk.org, or from the ICAHD UK website at <http://www.icahd.org/icahdukdev/eng/resources.asp>. A powerful film on Occupation

Jerusalem: The East Side Story, film by Mohammed Alatar, Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees

¹⁰⁸ See <http://www.justpeaceforpalestine.org/>

Bethlehem: Hidden From View, Presented by Garth Hewitt, The Amos Trust, <http://www.amostrust.org>, designed to explain the effect of Occupation on the Christian community.

Visit Palestine, A film by Katie Barlow, <http://www.visitpalestine.info>

Walled Horizons, A film by Roger Waters, Produced by the United Nations – Jerusalem, Directed by Johan Eriksson, a 15 minute introduction to the Separation Wall

The Zionist Story, A film by Berek Joselewich

Waltz with Bashir, an animated documentary by the Israeli film maker Ari Folman

Private (15), A film by Saverio Costanzo, a film on the effect of Occupation on ordinary people

Walk on Water (15), Boston Jewish Film Festival winner

Paradise Now (15) Golden Globe Winner and Academy Award 2005, controversial depiction of two suicide bombers, but with no easy answers.

Death in Gaza – HBO film on the shooting of BBC reporter James Miller by an Israeli soldier

Gaza – the Killing Zone, a Channel 4 Dispatches programme on the killing of James Miller and Tom Hurdell

Peace under Siege, 2008, A Christian Aid video on the Occupation

Books on Current situation

An Israeli in Palestine, Jeff Halper, 2008, Pluto Press, ISBN 978-0-7453-2226-1

Obstacles to Peace: A Re-framing of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, Jeff Halper, 2009, Creative Commons, ISBN 978-965-90262-1-4

The Other Side of Israel: My Journey Across the Jewish-Arab Divide, Susan Nathan, 2006, Harper Perennial, ISBN 978-0-00-719511-4

Also aid agency and human rights reports, such as:

The Gaza Strip: A Humanitarian Implosion, 2008, Amnesty International, Christian Aid, Cafod, Care, Medecins du Monde UK, Oxfam, Save the Children UK, Trocaire

Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, 2009, UN Human Rights Council, Richard Goldstone.

Books on Background history

Israel and Palestine, Competing Histories, Mike Berry and Greg Philo, 2004, Pluto Press, ISBN 978-0-7453-2566-8

The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World, Avi Shlaim, 2000, ISBN 978-0-14-028870-4

Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid, Jimmy Carter, Simon and Schuster, 2006, ISBN 978-0-7432-8502-5

A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples, Ilan Pappé, 2004, ISBN 0-521-55632-5

The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East, Robert Fisk, 2006, ISBN 978-1-84115-008-6

Israel and Palestine, Avi Shalim, 2009, Verso, ISBN 978-1844673667

The Jewish State, Theodor Herzl, 1896

Books on In-depth history of specific periods

The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine, Ilan Pappé, 2007, Oneworld, ISBN 978-1-85168-467-0

1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War, Benny Morris, 2009, Yale University Press, ISBN 978-0300151121

Six Days: How the 1967 war shaped the Middle East, Jeremy Bowen, 2003, Simon and Schuster, ISBN 0-7434-4969-0

Books on Jewish Christian Relations

Norman Solomon, 'Themes in Christian-Jewish Relations' in Toward a Theological Encounter: Jewish Understandings of Christianity, Rabbi Leon Klenicki (Ed.), 1991, New York: Paulist Press.

Thomas Aquinas on the Jews, Stephen C. Boguslawski, 2008, New York: Paulist Press

A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations, Edward Kessler & Neil Wenborg, 2005, Cambridge University Press.

Books on the Christian perspective

Whose Land? Whose Promise?, Gary M Burge, 2003, The Pilgrim Press, ISBN 0-8298-1660-7

Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon? Stephen Sizer, 2004, Inter-Varsity Press, ISBN 1-84474-050-1

Zion's Christian Soldiers? The Bible, Israel and the Church, Stephen Sizer, 2007, Inter-Varsity Press, ISBN 978-1-84474-214-1

Bethlehem speaks: Voices from the Little Town Cry Out, Garth Hewitt, 2008, SPCK, ISBN 978-0-281-05956-0

Whose promised land?, Colin Chapman, 2002, Lion, ISBN 0-7459-5111-2

Blood Brothers, Elias Chacour, 1984, Chosen Books

We belong to the Land, Elias Chacour, 1982, Harper Collins, ISBN 0-06-061415-3

Blessed are the Peacemakers, Audeh Rantisi, 1990, Zondervan

Caught in between, Riah Abu El Assal, 1999, SPCK

Hebron Journal, Arthur Gish, 2001, Herald

Bethlehem Besieged, Mitri Raheb, 2004, Fortress, ISBN 0-8006-3653-8

Justice and Only Justice, Naim Ateek, 1990, Orbis Books (USA) ISBN 978-0883445457

A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation , Naim Ateek, 2008, Orbis Books (USA) ISBN 978-1570757846

*****RESOLUTIONS**

A series of Resolutions for the Conference of 2010 have been drafted by the Working Party and are currently under discussion. In the light of the comments received from the February meeting of the Methodist Council, these will be finalised ready to be presented at the Methodist Council meeting of 10th-12th April.

Questions for discussion at the February Methodist Council

At the February meeting of the Methodist Council, we ask the Council to consider the following questions.

1. Do you think the report adequately expresses the position that the Methodist Church should take on the situation in Israel/Palestine?
2. Is there anything that you think needs changing in the report?
3. Is there anything that you think needs adding?