

# Middle East Notes

## Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

### June 28, 2012

[Read previous weeks' Middle East Notes](#)



*Please note: Opinions expressed in the following articles do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

*Also note that the Middle East Notes will publish every other week in July and will take a vacation in August. We'll resume the mailing in September.*

This week's Middle East Notes includes materials concerning the successful CMEP conference, the Kairos USA document, a detailed lecture by Dr. Richard Falk and an article by Avraham Burg on the mislabeling of products made "across the Green Line" in settlement.

- **The June 22 Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletin** reports on the recent Advocacy Conference, when CMEP supporters gathered in Washington, D.C. to pray and advocate for peace in the Holy Land. Also noted is continued violence on the Israeli Egyptian border, Gaza and Southern Israel.
- **Further information about the Kairos USA document** (mentioned in last week's Middle East Notes, and signed by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns) is offered with a statement from the drafters committee and advisors. Learn how to connect with the mission of Kairos USA.
- **Video: The economic, legal and moral cost of war: A forum on Israel, Palestine and the United States:** Dr. Richard Falk, UN Special Rapporteur on Palestinian Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, addresses the importance of working for justice and the need to expose lies of U.S. elected officials collaborating with the government of Israel.
- **Keep the Green Line – for the sake of a better Israel:** Avraham Burg writes in the *Independent* that he, as an Israeli, has decided to not buy any product that comes from the settlements. He will not cross the Green Line, not to promote public causes and not for family events. He believes that everything happening across the Green Line is the dark alter ego of Israel, and that preventing the mislabeling of products as "Made in Israel" would be a giant leap for Middle East peace.

#### 1) Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin

June 22, 2012

**2012 Advocacy Conference success:** CMEP supporters representing almost 25 states gathered at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. this week to pray and learn to effectively advocate for peace in the Holy Land at the annual Advocacy Conference. On Monday participants received updates about the situation on the ground from some of the most knowledgeable people in the field and learned how to work in their communities around the country.

On Tuesday, attendees gathered at the Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church for the Congressional Prayer Breakfast. House of Representatives [Chaplain] Father Patrick Conroy and California Congresswoman Lois Capps expressed the importance of faith while being a peacemaker.

With updated information and renewed faith, participants took their messages of peace to the halls of Congress, where they met with almost 80 representatives and senators. They spoke about continuing funding to the Palestinians, opposing policies that stand in the way of a shared Jerusalem and supporting the Palestinian Christian community. Each office received an invitation from the Jerusalem Churches in the Holy Land inviting them to “come and see” the local Christian communities and listen to voices often drowned out in the conflict.

Also on Tuesday, the distinguished Chief Palestinian Negotiator Saeb Erekat sat down with a small group of prominent retired diplomats, politicians, church leaders, business people and other influential members of the community that sit on the CMEP Leadership Council. Mr. Erekat highlighted the efforts the Palestinians are taking to lay the groundwork for a future state and the status of negotiations. He thanked CMEP for being a steadfast supporter of peace.

The busy calendar of events concluded at the State Department when Leadership Council and board members met with Ambassador David Hale, the U.S. Envoy for Middle East Peace. [Attendees] were encouraged by signs that the peace process is still moving forward. Ambassador Hale listened to the concerns of those around the table including the ongoing terrorist activity from Gaza and Sinai affecting Southern Israel, pending actions by the Congress that would be barriers to peace, challenges facing Palestinian Christian clergy and worshipers, and planned demolitions in Area C, specifically in the Susiya village in the South Hebron Hills. ...

**Violence on Egyptian border and in Gaza and southern Israel:** During the conference, CMEP supporters received a sad reminder about how urgently the people in the region need peace.

On Monday three militants crossed from the Sinai Peninsula into southern Israel and opened fire on construction workers building the security fence along the border. Two workers were injured in the attack and a third, an Arab-Israeli citizen, was killed.

Soldiers killed two of the militants, one Egyptian and one Saudi, who claimed to be members of a group affiliated with al-Qaeda. Israeli officials are not sure whether or not this incident was related to the two rockets fired from Sinai into Israel over the weekend.

Violence also emanated from Gaza after 130 rockets were shot into leaving several Israelis injured and damaging apartment buildings. Thus far, Israeli reprisal airstrikes have killed eight Palestinians including a 14-year-old civilian.

Interestingly, for the first time in more than a year Hamas resumed ... rocket attacks against Israel. Hamas sat out the last round of violence in March and worked to broker a cease-fire.

Abu Dhabi English-language paper the National published an editorial condemning the resurgence of violence by Hamas by saying that the violence is “counterproductive.” ...

[\*\*Read the entire Bulletin on CMEP's website.\*\*](#)

## **2) Call to action: U.S. response to the Kairos Palestine document**

### ***A statement from the Kairos USA committee and advisors***

In the spring of 2012, when 60 Minutes aired its segment on the decline of Christianity in the Holy Land, millions of viewers became aware of the plight of the Palestinian people. The program also introduced viewers to the Kairos Palestine document, [A moment of truth: A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering](#), a summons from the Christians of Palestine to world Christians to stand with the Palestinian people in their nonviolent struggle for their human and political rights. Like the 1985 "Challenge to the Church" of Kairos South Africa and Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," the Palestinian document is a call to the church to take a stand for justice.

[Kairos USA](#) is a new initiative of U.S. Christians in response to one of the most urgent situations facing the church today: the need for a just peace in Israel and Palestine. The mission of Kairos USA is to take a bold, prophetic stand in support of our Palestinian sisters and brothers, as well as our Jewish brothers and sisters in the State of Israel who suffer from the social, psychological and spiritual costs of militarization and war itself. There is an urgent need to support nonviolent resistance in Palestinian and Israeli civil society and to continue to build the growing international grassroots movement for a just peace.

**A prophetic movement:** Given the dominant role played by the U.S. government through its financial and diplomatic support of Israel, U.S. Christians have a particular responsibility to learn the facts of the situation and to act to bring about a peace based on justice. [Call to action: U.S. response to the Kairos Palestine document -- A word of confession and faith from Christians in the United States](#) is our founding statement (below). We urge you to [visit our website](#), read the statement, and join this prophetic movement.

### ***A word of confession and faith from Christians in the United States***

The mission of Kairos USA is to mobilize the churches in the United States to respond faithfully and boldly to the situation in Israel and Palestine. In December 2009, the Christians of Palestine brought forth "A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering." In 2011 and again in 2012, U.S. clergy, theologians and laypersons gathered to write this response to the Palestinian document. In gratitude for the courageous witness and call to action issued by our Palestinian sisters and brothers, and inspired by the prophetic church movements of southern Africa, Central and South America, Asia and Europe that have responded to the call of our sisters and brothers in Palestine, we have prayed for the guidance of the Spirit so that we might also respond with integrity, love and wisdom.

We begin with a confession of sin to Palestinians in the State of Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, the diaspora and in refugee camps in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. As U.S. Christians we bear responsibility for failing to say "Enough!" when our nation's ally, the State of Israel, violates international law. Our government has financed Israel's unjust policies and has shielded its government from criticism by the international community. At the outset of the current U.S. administration, our government led Palestinians to believe that

at last we would pursue a political solution based on justice. But the “peace process” has continued to be no more than a means for the continuing colonization of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the imprisonment of Gaza and the intensification of the structures of oppression.

As Christians addressing the Palestinian cause we must also acknowledge our shameful role in the historic persecution of the Jewish people. We recognize the dehumanizing and destructive power of doctrines and theologies that denigrated Judaism. Our predecessors perpetuated anti-Semitic stereotypes, practiced scapegoating and cloaked prejudice, hostility and murder itself in the robes of our religion. We confess that our churches failed to resist, and sometimes even aided and abetted pogroms, mass dislocations of Jews, and the calamity of the Nazi Holocaust itself. In so doing, they betrayed the teaching and example of the one we claim to follow. We speak for and with our forebears in expressing deep remorse. With a commitment to never forget those failures and to be instructed by them, we pledge ourselves to growth in faithfulness, compassion and justice.

In light of these tragic failures, we must repent. We must work and even suffer for peace, filled with a heart of love for both Israelis and Palestinians. We know that raising questions about our churches’ and our government’s support for the State of Israel’s policies exposes us to the charge of anti-Semitism—and for many of us the risk of the loss of hard-won bonds of friendship with Jewish colleagues, friends, and the Jewish community at large. We believe that the charge of anti-Semitism is unfair and in error. Too often, however, unwilling to pay this price, we have failed to speak the truth as we see it and in this way follow Jesus’ path of love and forgiveness as the way to justice and peace. But now we are called to speak the truth, as our faith in the life and ministry of Jesus directs us. We firmly believe that it is precisely in this way that we express not only our commitment to the dignity and human rights of the Palestinians, but our dedication to the humanity of our Jewish sisters and brothers.

We acknowledge and affirm “the reality on the ground” described in the Kairos Palestine document. Many of us have seen with our eyes, heard with our ears and felt in our hearts the painful realities of life in the Palestinian territories. We have witnessed the daily, grinding humiliation of women and men, young and old; the deaths of civilians; the demolition of homes; the ethnic cleansing of Jerusalem; the destruction of hundreds of thousands of olive trees; the unlawful and brutal practice of administrative detention; the relentless land taking and construction of illegal colonies that have made a contiguous and viable Palestinian state impossible. None of these actions has brought the State of Israel the security it seeks. Israel is pursuing a course that is fruitless and corrupting, both morally and politically. We have also observed with deep sadness the damage inflicted on Israeli society, particularly its young people. We can no longer be silent; we can no longer betray the core of our Christian faith as expressed in Matthew 25: “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

We call upon our Christian sisters and brothers in the United States to join with us in the following actions:

- **Learn:** Move beyond stereotypes, longstanding prejudices and biased, oversimplified reporting, toward a well-considered, more complex understanding of the Middle East, its conflicts and the yearnings of its peoples for justice, peace and co-existence.
- **Build personal relationships:** Visit the land and meet Palestinians, including Palestinian Christians, and Israelis working for justice and peace—listening to their stories, understanding their pain and hearing their hopes and dreams.
- **Enrich worship and congregational life:** Take initiative in our places of worship to pray and preach justice and peace in Palestine and Israel, pursue opportunities to learn and study about the situation, explore cultural and economic exchange and challenge your congregation to participate in the blessed calling of peacemaking.
- **Engage in theological reflection:** Examine flawed biblical interpretations and unexamined theology that have shaped attitudes and perceptions leading to and allowing the present injustice to continue unchallenged. Pursue open and active theological inquiry and encourage study and reflection, in order to guide your actions in striving to follow Jesus' injunction to "interpret the present time" (Luke 12:56).
- **Participate in nonviolent action:** Translate concern into action. Support those—in Israel, the occupied territories and throughout the world—who work to end the illegal occupation through peaceful means. We urge Christians to become educated about the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions and to explore this and other forms of legitimate, nonviolent resistance.
- **Advocate with the U.S government,** as Christians who are committed to justice, peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians. Support political candidates who do the same.

The favorable time is now! We invite you to read and study this document; to see it as a spur to action. It is a call to individuals, churches, schools, human rights organizations and interfaith partners to join with all who embrace nonviolent resistance to injustice. It is a call to listen to the same Spirit that inspired the Civil Rights movement in this country and the struggle to end Apartheid in South Africa. We issue this call in the absolute conviction that God calls us to compassion—to join the struggle for justice and equality in the spirit of Matthew 25. We issue this call in the faith that, even when the cause appears most hopeless, God's light shines in the darkness, and the darkness will not overcome it.

**Kairos USA Committee:**

**Dr. Gary Burge**, Wheaton College and Graduate School

**Dr. Pauline Coffman**, Israel/Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

**Dr. Elizabeth W. Corrie**, Candler School of Theology

**Mr. Serge Duss**, Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding

**Rev. Cotton Fite**, Episcopal Peace Fellowship/Palestine Israel Network

**Mr. Tom Getman**, The Getman Group

**Rev. Steven D. Martin**, New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good

**Ms. Allison K. Schmitt**, Kairos USA

**Mr. Rick Ufford-Chase**, Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

**Rev. Donald Wagner**, Friends of Sabeel North America

**Bishop Don Williams**, United Church of Jesus Christ

**Advisors to “Call to Action:”**

**Dr. Mark Braverman**, Friends of Tent of Nations North America

**Ms. Elaine L. Enns**, Bartimeaus Cooperative Ministries

**Mr. Rifat Odeh Kassis**, Kairos Palestine

**Mr. Ched E. Myers**, Bartimeaus Cooperative Ministries

June 2012

**3) Video: The economic, legal and moral cost of war: A forum on Israel, Palestine and the United States**

Friends of Sabeel recommends this lecture by Dr. Richard Falk (professor emeritus, Princeton University), who addresses the importance of working for justice. He speaks on such issues as the cover-up of the attack on the *USS Liberty*, deception regarding the start of the 1967 war, the danger of the current buildup for war with Iran, and much more. Falk is an expert on international law and serves as the UN Special Rapporteur on Palestinian Human Rights in the Occupied Territories.

Falk delivered the speech on June 8 during an event titled "The economic, legal and moral cost of war: A forum on Israel, Palestine and the United States," presented at University Temple United Methodist Church in Seattle WA.

[Video of Dr. Richard Falk](#) (one hour, six minutes)

**5) Keep the Green Line – for the sake of a better Israel**

**Avraham Burg, *The Independent*, June 7, 2012**

Amid the darkness surrounding the Middle East peace process, we now see a ray of light. Since 2009, the United Kingdom has been taking measures, in accordance with European consumer protection rules, to ensure that settlement products – goods you might find on your supermarket shelves that have been produced in the occupied Palestinian territories – are no longer labelled as “made in Israel.”

After a meeting of the EU Council of Foreign Ministers last month, several European member states now appear ready to follow the British initiative. Denmark has already announced it will do so. Member states also committed to ensure that settlement products were excluded from preferential treatment under the EU-Israel Association Agreement.

Contrary to what you may think, EU member states which take these measures act in Israel’s interest. They do so because they take steps that defend and reinforce the Green Line, the pre-1967 border between Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Green Line is of decisive importance to achieving Middle East peace. It is the line that was drawn in green pencil on the maps that were on the table at the time of the cease-fire agreements between Israel and the Arab states, signed in 1949. Regrettably, this line survived only until the 1967 war.

During this war, Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Ever since, efforts of consecutive Israeli governments to blur this line and, ultimately, to erase it have not ceased. The Green Line has disappeared from the official maps of the State of Israel. Schools were even prohibited from presenting it in educational materials.

The large-scale and expansionist settlement enterprise erodes the Green Line every day. Residential communities, now housing more than 500,000 settlers, were established within occupied Palestinian territory in order to make us forget the Green Line's existence and prevent the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. It should long have been clear to every Israeli that anything located inside the Green Line is the democratic, legal, normative Israel, and anything beyond the line is something else: undemocratic, illegal, not normative. Not ours.

But the Israeli people's eyes are blind, their ears are deaf and their leaders are flaccid and weak. This is precisely the situation in which civilised societies urgently need feedback and intervention from the outside: to mirror the absurdity of the situation created and to focus attention on the damage of human and political blindness. To tell Israel that it is impossible to be treated as "the only democracy in the Middle East," while it is also the last colonial occupier in the Western world.

It is not anti-Semitic and not anti-Israel to convey these messages. On the contrary: the settlers, the conquerors and their political allies – including Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel – are the real enemies of Israel's future.

Indeed, anyone who wants to erase the pre-1967 border is essentially asking to erase the basic values on which the State of Israel was established: democracy, equality, the rule of law, secularism and modernity. Colonising Palestinian land across the Green Line goes in the opposite direction: it generates fanatic, nationalistic, fundamentalist and anti-democratic energies that threaten all civilised Israeli foundations.

I have decided to not buy any product that comes from the settlements. I do not cross the Green Line, not to promote public causes and not for family events. Because everything happening across the Green Line is the dark alter ego of Israel. Its hidden personality is manifest there. Evil, aggressive and impenetrable. This personality threatens to take over the good and humane parts of the legitimate Israel. With international help, we must return these demons to their bottles, or rather to those positive domains for which this state was established. ...

[\*\*\*Read the entire piece on the Jews for Justice for Palestinians website.\*\*\*](#)

*Avraham Burg was Speaker of the Knesset (1999-2003) and Chairman of the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization.*