

# CHRIST AT THE CHECKPOINT

Blessed are the Peacemakers



Co-editors:

Manfred W. Kohl  
Munther Isaac

## About this book

This Book contains the most important papers from the second, third, and fourth Christ at the Checkpoint conferences that took place in Bethlehem. The themes of these conferences were: "Hope in the Midst of Conflict" (2012), "Your Kingdom Come" (2014), and "The Gospel in the Face of Religious Extremism" (2016).



Diyar Publisher

ISBN 978-9950-376-38-0



9 789950 376380

*First Edition*

## ***Christ at the Checkpoint***

***Manfred W. Kohl***

***Munther Isaac***

---

**ISBN: 978-9950-376-38-0**

**Copyright © 2018 Diyar Publisher**

***Art direction : Diyar Publisher***

***Designer : Engred Anwar Al-Khoury***

***Printing press: Latin Patriarchate, Beit Jala***

---

***Supported by :***

***Bethlehem Bible College***

***All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in critical articles or reviews,  
no part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without prior written  
permission from the publisher.***

- 1. Palestinian Christians   2. Christian Zionism   3. Religious Extremism  
4. Evangelical Theology   5. Arab Christians   6. Theology of the Land**

---

***w w w . d i y a r . p s***

# Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>About Christ at the Checkpoint .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>The Christ at the Checkpoint Manifesto .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Part 1: Voices of Palestinian Christians</b>	
1. <b>A Testimony to God's Faithfulness / 2012</b> <i>Bishara Awad</i> .....	15
2. <b>The Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Palestinian Perspective / 2016</b> <i>Alex Awad</i> .....	21
3. <b>The Delegitimization of Palestinian Christians / 2016</b> <i>Jack Munayer</i> .....	31
4. <b>A Testimony of Palestinian Women in the Midst of the</b> <b>Conflict / 2012</b> <i>Shireen Hilal</i> .....	45
5. <b>Transforming Hearts through Non-Violence / 2012</b> <i>Sami Awad</i> .....	51
<b>Part 2: Biblical Response to Christian Zionism</b>	
6. <b>What Can We Tell When We Return Home? / 2016</b> <i>Manfred Kohl</i> .....	65
7. <b>A Biblical Response to Christian Zionism / 2016</b> <i>Hank Hanegraaf</i> .....	75
8. <b>Abraham in the New Testament / 2012</b> <i>Gary Burge</i> .....	93
9. <b>Christian Zionism as Imperial Theology / 2016</b> <i>Munther Isaac</i> .....	105

### **Part 3: The Gospel in the Face of Religious Extremism**

10.	<b>The Gospel and Religious Extremism / 2016</b> <i>Efraim Tendero</i> .....	121
11.	<b>Jewish Extremism and a Gospel Response in Israel-Palestine Today / 2016</b> <i>David Neuhaus</i> .....	133
12.	<b>My Jewish Neighbor / 2016</b> <i>Yohanna Katanacho</i> .....	143
13.	<b>Religious Extremism: Radical Islam and Violence / 2016</b> <i>Chawkat Moucarry</i> .....	153
14.	<b>A Christian Response to Radical Islam / 2012</b> <i>Colin Chapman</i> .....	179

### **Part 4: Blessed Are the Peacemakers**

15.	<b>Evangelicals and Peacemaking / 2014</b> <i>Geoff Tunnicliffe</i> .....	195
16.	<b>Christ, Violence and Peacemaking Today / 2012</b> <i>Ron Sider</i> .....	207
17.	<b>Jesus, Muslims and Violent Extremism: Five Commands for the Road to Peace / 2016</b> <i>Rick Love</i> .....	223
18.	<b>The Kingdom of God / 2014</b> <i>Salim Munayer</i> .....	239
	<b>Biographies</b> .....	251
	<b>Endnotes</b> .....	257

## Introduction

Christ at the Checkpoint has become a movement. Over the last decade it has become known far beyond the Middle East. Alex Awad was the first to express the idea of bringing together people from both sides of the checkpoint. Alex, a well-known Palestinian Christian and author living then in Jerusalem and serving as pastor of the East Jerusalem Evangelical Baptist Church, traveled daily to Bethlehem, where he taught at Bethlehem Bible College and served as dean of students. He had to cross the checkpoint twice a day. Quite often he was not allowed to pass. Over the years, the checkpoint and the separation wall have become a symbol for Palestinians of what it means to live under occupation.

The first Christ at the Checkpoint conference was held in March of 2010. The theme was “Theology in the Service of Justice and Peace.” The host and organizer of the conferences was the Bethlehem Bible College. The first conference was a great success, with speakers from Palestine, Israel, Europe, and North America. Paul Alexander edited the papers in the series Justice and Peace, funded by the John Temple Foundation.

Who would have thought back in 2010 that Christ at the Checkpoint would become such an influential movement that would stir so many discussions and debates? Over the last eight years, a serious conversation took place in these conferences over what it means to be a follower of Christ in the midst of the conflict. The stressing question was: “What would Christ say or do if he were to stand in front of a checkpoint today?”

Since 2010 every two years another Christ at the Checkpoint conference has been held. More and more individuals from around

the world have attended. The planning committee of Palestinian and international leaders appointed Munther Isaac as conference director. The themes of the succeeding conferences were: March 5-9, 2012, "Hope in the Midst of Conflict"; March 10-14, 2014 – "Your Kingdom Come"; March 5-13, 2016 – "The Gospel in the Face of Religious Extremism." The most important papers of these conferences are gathered in this volume.

At these conferences the intolerable situation of Palestine is simply explained. The cry for justice is expressed loud and clear. The occupational pressure and inhumane actions are openly addressed. Leaders from around the world speak strongly against the increasing apartheid developments. Furthermore, the theologies that enable and justify injustice and privilege were challenged. The desire was to shift the conversation from the arena of end-time theology into an honest and challenging discussion on how to be a peacemaker in this conflict-ridden region. In addition, in times when religion has been used to support political positions and even oppression, we insisted that faith in Christ and being part of his kingdom compels the followers of Jesus to speak truth to power, advocate for justice and offer a vision of peace and reconciliation.

As one reads the papers one senses the deep love and compassion expressed by the various presenters. Speakers at the Christ at the Checkpoint conferences have emphasized their commitment to Scripture as the Word of God, the Lordship of Jesus Christ as Savior and Messiah, and the great commandment of loving God and neighbor. No paper at any of the conferences has expressed hate towards any people-group or religion.

Some attacked Christ at the Checkpoint. All accusations by uninformed outsiders that Christ at the Checkpoint promotes "love for Jesus but hate for Israel" are absurd. In response, we continued

to invite people who self-identify as “Christian Zionists” to speak and present in the conferences, believing that we should speak to one another rather than speak about the other. Sadly, only a few were willing to participate and help to establish better understanding.

At the same time, many more joined Christ at the Checkpoint in this journey of studying scripture together “at the checkpoint.” Today, eight years after the first conference, and despite all the progress we made, it is still the case, we believe, that evangelical Christians, by and large, have not contributed positively towards resolving the conflict here. In fact, most would argue that some evangelical Christians in the USA are making things worse here for all parties involved. More needs to be done, and the papers in this volume will help pave the way for a more constructive conversation.

The presentations of the last three conferences have been divided into four parts. The first part gives voice to Palestinian Christians, a community that has often been forgotten and neglected. In this voice, the reader will hear about what it means to have hope in the midst of the conflict, and what it means to trust in Christ and follow his kingdom-teachings. The second part offers biblical and theological challenges to the theology of Christian Zionism, a theology that has ignored justice and marginalized the Palestinians, and promoted a God who privileges and discriminates.

The third part offers a Gospel-response to the rising religious extremism in our region, and suggests ways to engage as evangelicals with peoples of other faiths. In the fourth and last chapter, theologians and leaders offer ways through which Christians can be peacemakers in our world today. The overarching theme in these two chapters is “building bridges not walls”.



We would like to express our gratitude to those who presented these papers and allowed us to publish them in this volume. Their contribution made this volume possible. We also wish to express our gratitude to Tina Whitehead who gathered the papers and helped us with the editing. Tina's love for the Palestinian church and commitment to justice and peacemaking cannot be overstated.

We hope that this volume will open eyes about the reality in Palestine and Israel, and see the role theology plays in all of this, and be inspired to work for a just peace for all the peoples of this land.

*Manfred W. Kohl and Munther Isaac*  
*May, 2018*

# About

## Christ at the Checkpoint

The Mission of Christ at the Checkpoint is to challenge evangelicals to take responsibility to help resolve the conflicts in Israel/Palestine by engaging with the teaching of Jesus on the Kingdom of God.

We are a community of evangelical Christians who believe that following Jesus with integrity means that our lives are formed by our love for God, the teaching of the Bible and a fearless life of discipleship in the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We believe that one of the first hallmarks of discipleship is love for both our own community and for our enemies. We wish to find Jesus at the center of everything we do and to make his life our life. Which means finding courageous love for Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews alike.

We also believe that our discipleship requires a prophetic voice. We feel compelled to address the injustices that have taken place in the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine, particularly the Palestinian lands under occupation. We gather with many communities from around the world to say that our present circumstances are intolerable and do not reflect the righteousness of the Kingdom of God. We abhor violence. And we believe that standing up nonviolently to injustice is an acceptable expression of our faith.

We do not condemn the Jewish people and we reject any forms of anti-Semitism. In fact, many of our supporters are Israeli

Jews who believe that the present Israeli treatment of the Palestinians does not reflect the deeper moral values of Judaism itself. We simply wish to find a life in the entire Holy Land that is free of discrimination and injustice, where each person can live without prejudice toward their race or religion. This also means we reject theologies that lead to discrimination or privileges based on ethnicity. World-views that promote divine national entitlement or exceptionalism do not promote the values of the Kingdom of God because they place nationalism above Jesus.

Since 2010, under the auspices of Bethlehem Bible College and led by Palestinian Christians, we have sponsored an international conference every other year exploring the obstacles to peace in our world and the opportunities for peace-making that spring from our Christian faith. We pray that we are faithful to Jesus and regularly confess our shortcomings when we fail to exhibit Jesus' highest call to love. We also call upon evangelical Christians everywhere to join us in the hope that we can build a better world where goodness and truth reign free and where the love and fairness of God are common.

# The Christ at the Checkpoint Manifesto

1. The Kingdom of God has come. Evangelicals must reclaim the prophetic role in bringing peace, justice and reconciliation in Palestine and Israel.
2. Reconciliation recognizes God's image in one another.
3. Racial ethnicity alone does not guarantee the benefits of the Abrahamic Covenant.
4. The Church in the land of the Holy One has borne witness to Christ since the days of Pentecost. It must be empowered to continue to be light and salt in the region, if there is to be hope in the midst of conflict.
5. Any exclusive claim to land of the Bible in the name of God is not in line with the teaching of Scripture.
6. All forms of violence must be refuted unequivocally.
7. Palestinian Christians must not lose the capacity to self-criticize if they wish to remain prophetic.
8. There are real injustices taking place in the Palestinian territories and the suffering of the Palestinian people can no longer be ignored. Any solution must respect the equity and rights of Israeli and Palestinian communities.
9. For Palestinian Christians, the occupation is the core issue of the conflict.
10. Any challenge of the injustices taking place in the Holy Land must be done in Christian love. Criticism of Israel and the

occupation cannot be confused with anti-Semitism and the delegitimization of the State of Israel.

11. Respectful dialogue between Palestinian and Messianic believers must continue. Though we may disagree on secondary matters of theology, the Gospel of Jesus and his ethical teaching take precedence.
12. Christians must understand the global context for the rise of extremist Islam. We challenge stereotyping of all faith forms that betray God's commandment to love our neighbors and enemies.

*Conference Committee*

# **Part 1**

## **Voices of Palestinian Christians**

# 1

## A Testimony to God's Faithfulness

*Bishara Awad<sup>1</sup>*

### Welcome to Christ at the Checkpoint

Welcome to Bethlehem and to Christ at the Checkpoint Conference. We are delighted that you are joining us in Bethlehem, the birth place of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. As I look before me I see many personal friends, friends of Bethlehem Bible College, friends of the Palestinian Church, friends of the Palestinian people and above all friends of God. My prayer is that we all can connect together in spite of our differences to give Glory to God.

We are honored to have you with us. Take advantage of these few days, meet someone new and seek ways to share your journey of faith. Many of you have taken risks to come and rub shoulders with us. We value this very much. Some of you have been unfairly attacked in the media for participating in this conference. Thank you for standing with us. Some have stayed away for fear that they personally, or their organization, will suffer loss. We understand their concerns and we know they are with us through their prayers. Many of you are heads of organizations or spiritual leaders of large and small churches around the world. You left your home and work to be with us. Words are insufficient to express our appreciation for the honor of your presence and participation.

The Psalmist said, “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever, I will make known your faithfulness to all generations” (Psalm 89:1).

## **A Journey of Faithfulness**

If I have to give a title to describe my life’s journey so far, I would call it “A Journey of Faithfulness”—not my own faithfulness but rather God’s faithfulness. In 1948, God looked at a poor orphan boy from a war-torn neighborhood in East Jerusalem and God decided to bless that boy and his family. I am what I am today because of the grace of God that was poured richly on me through Jesus Christ. Let me share with you just a few highlights of my journey so you can praise God with me.

In 1948 and during the first Arab-Jewish war, my mother, siblings and I lost our father and soon after, we became refugees. Mother suddenly found herself totally responsible to care for seven children; the oldest was 10 years old and the youngest was 6 months old. Into the darkness of this situation we began to realize that we were not abandoned by God. Day after day we began to witness his blessings.

The first blessing in my life was to have a mother who not only committed her life to the welfare of her seven children, but who was also a dedicated Christian who taught us to love God and love all the people around us, including those who did much harm to our family. Her influence and example are what led me to give my life to Christ at an early age. I want to thank my brother Alex who wrote a book about mother, *Palestinian Memories, the Story of a Palestinian Woman and Her People*.<sup>2</sup> In this book, Alex is depicting a Palestinian Christian family who lived in Palestine for hundreds of years and



how mother went through all the wars and the struggles of life. I praise the Lord for faithful mothers.

A second blessing was for me and my brothers to be granted scholarships to attend St. George's School in Jerusalem which is one of Jerusalem's most prestigious schools. A third blessing was when I received a scholarship to study in the U.S. A fourth blessing was when I returned home from the US and began to serve my people and my country under the sponsorship of the Mennonite Central Committee. I was a missionary to my own country. It was during this time that I received the greatest blessing in marrying a beautiful Palestinian girl from Gaza. Salwa has walked with me and encouraged me throughout this journey.

## **Divine Healing**

A great miracle took place as I was directing the Mennonite Secondary School (today Hope Secondary School in Beit Jala). God miraculously healed me of hatred towards the Jewish people. In spite of Mother's teachings about love and forgiveness, I was harboring strong feelings of hate towards the Jewish people. At the orphanage school, where I was the principal, I noticed that my ministry was not fruitful in the lives of the students. I wanted them to experience the love of God as much as I experienced it. But I failed until I went to the Lord in earnest prayer, asking the Lord, 'What is wrong and why can't I make a difference in the lives of my students?' The Lord pointed to my heart that was full of bitterness. I knew then that the problem was within me. When I prayed for healing and forgiveness for my enemies, the Lord, in turn, healed me and forgave me and filled me anew with his love. I became a different person. Even my students were able to see the difference. That impacted them and they began to open their hearts to the grace of God and I could see spiritual progress in their lives.

## **Bethlehem Bible College**

At the Hope School the Lord gave me the vision to start a Bible College in Bethlehem. In a meeting of pastors, priests and church leaders from Palestine I challenged them about the need to start a Bible College. They all agreed. One pastor, however, gave me a check for \$20 and said, "Bishara, you can do it. Start the College!" We formed a board and I was chosen to be the principal. I called my brother Alex in the States; he and his wife and family left everything and came to help us with this new venture. It is amazing how God put things together. Our first nine students met in evening classes at the Hope School. Since then, the Lord has greatly blessed us. One miracle followed another. Later, we were able to buy the buildings that make up our current campus--a miracle worth 1.8 million dollars. God is faithful! These miracles were all accomplished by the grace of God, the help of God's people around the world, through a committed Board of Directors and a great team of faculty and staff. Now I see God's faithfulness through the men and women who have graduated from Bethlehem Bible College and are now serving the Lord in this land. Most all of the pastors and Church leaders in Israel and Palestine are graduates of Bethlehem Bible College. God indeed is faithful!

I am very proud to tell you that as of today we have 117 students. Bethlehem Bible College has extensions in Gaza and Nazareth. God is faithful, and we praise His Name.

## **The Reality on the Ground**

The fact of God's faithfulness never dimmed my eyes from seeing the realities around me:

- the reality of the conquest of my homeland,
- the reality of the displacement of over 750,000 Palestinian refugees in 1948 (our family were among them),
- the reality of the tragedy of 1967 when suddenly all of our people either became refugees banished around the world or left in their homeland to struggle and live under a harsh military occupation.

On top of these, add all the challenges of surviving as a Palestinian Christian under the political, religious and economic pressures that continue to blow at us even today. Many of my siblings could not bear to live in our homeland. They left under pressure or were deported by the Israeli authorities and were scattered around the world. But even as homeless refugees, we found our refuge in God and God helped us to stand and be resilient in the face of daily challenges.

## **Christ at the Checkpoint**

Ladies and gentlemen, friends from around the world, fellow Palestinian compatriots, Arabs, Muslims and Israeli friends, I trust that this conference, *Christ at the Checkpoint: Hope in the Midst of Conflict*, will highlight both the glorious reality of the faithfulness of God and the heartbreaking realities of the political challenges that we experience in the Land of the Holy One.

The purpose of this conference is not to point fingers of blame or to demonize any person, race or state, but rather to take an honest look at the history, the wars, the occupation, the wall, the violence and counter violence, and the checkpoints, and to listen to the voice of Christ as to how to deal with or what to make of these realities. My fellow Palestinian Christians, Messianic Jews and Christians from around the world: we can't continue to hide our heads in the sand and

be oblivious to all the injustice, violence and pain that is taking place in this land. The least we can do is to ask the question, *"What would Jesus say and do under these circumstances? And what would Jesus have us say and do in response to the suffering of the people of this land?"* As a Bible College in Bethlehem, our faculty and students are always searching to find out what the Word of God teaches about the realities around us. We read in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus called us to be peacemakers but how can we, surrounded by so much injustice, be peacemakers? We want to find out how can we, Palestinian Christians, in spite of the fact that we are a minority, under occupation and besieged within our dissected communities by miles and miles of walls, fences and hundreds of checkpoints, our lands continuing to shrink and seized by Jewish settlements, [how can we] hold on and proclaim a message of peace, hope, love and reconciliation?

We come to you ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters not with a pre-cooked meal. Rather, we invite you to our theological kitchen. In these special days we want to worship together and study God's word together and fellowship together and seek the face of God in order to discover the grace of God in each other. We do not have to agree on everything but we will agree to listen to each other and to honor, respect and love everyone.

We are here in Bethlehem to learn from each other and coach each other through the pathways of justice and peace. And we hope from this place, 2000 years after the birth of the Prince of Peace, we can proclaim, with God's help, a message of peace, hope and goodwill that will touch the hearts of Israelis, Palestinians and people of all faiths all over the world. Thanks again for blessing us through your coming. God bless you.

# 2

## The Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Palestinian Perspective

*Alex Awad*<sup>1</sup>

In Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, Ramallah, Nablus and Jenin, it is not unusual these days to be standing near an Israeli checkpoint and see a masked young Palestinian throw rocks at Israeli troops. If one stands in the same position for a while, you may hear the sound from a siren of an ambulance that is approaching to take an injured Palestinian to the nearest hospital either because he or she is choking from tear gas inhalation or due to a bullet that injured the young person or ended his or her life. Palestinian parents who hear the siren pray that the injured or dead is not their child. On the other side of the political divide you may hear the siren of an ambulance taking an injured or a dead Israeli to the nearest hospital with a prayer offered from an Israeli parent that the injured or dead from the violent attack is not a loved one. This is the reality in the land that we call "holy." This is an attempt to respond to the question: How did we get to this position? In the following 12 points, I present a summary of the history and development of the Arab-Israeli conflict *from a Palestinian perspective*.

## **Arabs and Jews are not eternal enemies**

History is a witness that Arabs and Jews are not eternal enemies. Any respectable book of world history will tell us that Arabs and Jews lived in relative harmony for nearly 1400 years when, during most of this time, Jews were brutally persecuted in Europe due to anti-Semitism. Where did the worst atrocities against the Jews take place? Certainly not in the Middle East! The pogroms, crusades, inquisition and holocaust all took place in Europe. When Jews wanted to escape anti-Semitic persecution in Europe, they ran to Arab capitals such as Baghdad, Damascus, Alexandria and Cairo. In these Arab-Muslim cities, Jews thrived for hundreds of years. Historians also can assure us that the Golden Age of Jews in the Diaspora was when they lived in Spain under Islamic rule. Looking at historical evidence, we can conclude that Arabs and Jews are not eternal enemies.

A few biblical scholars point to the sibling quarrels between Isaac and Ishmael to give a theological rationale for the Arab-Israeli conflict. These scholars avoid the story of how Ishmael and Isaac worked hand in hand as adults. This is illustrated in the story of their joining together at the burial of their father (Genesis 25:7-10). They also skip the story where God promises blessings upon both Isaac and Ishmael in Genesis 21.

## **Palestinians did not start the Arab-Israeli conflict**

The Arab-Israeli conflict was not started by Palestinians. While Palestinians were enduring the brutal domination of the Ottoman Turks, secular Jews in Europe began dreaming and scheming of colonizing an area of the world outside of Europe to escape persecution. Theodore Herzl, the founder of Zionism, was not a religious

Jew. Originally, he suggested that the Jewish state should be set up in Uganda or Argentina but, influenced by religious Jews and a group of Christian Zionists, he began to advocate for Palestine as the future state for the Jews. Herzl knew that the land was inhabited by Palestinian Arabs. He called for their expulsion to neighboring countries.

He wrote:

“ Both the expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly.... [by] spiriting the penniless population across the border, by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country.”<sup>2</sup>

In the first Zionist Congress in 1879, Zionists agreed that Palestine would become the future home for the Jewish people. How can Palestinians be blamed for a conflict that was planned and designed in Europe and was later forcefully imposed on them?

## **The guilt of the Holocaust in Europe influenced the partition of Palestine**

When the Jewish underground terrorist groups began targeting British bases and killing British officers during the British Mandate over Palestine, the British decided to surrender Palestine to the United Nations. Under pressure from the United States, the United Nations accepted a partition plan that was totally unacceptable to Palestinians. The Palestinians could not fathom why more than half of Palestine was given to the new immigrants coming from Europe while the native population of Palestine were asked to settle with less than 50% of their country at the time when they owned 86 percent of the land and when they were two thirds of the population. Guilt feelings in Europe and the West related to the Holocaust weighed heavily on Europeans as they worked out the partition plan. Western

powers wanted to solve the “Jewish problem.” No European nation wanted to solve the Jewish problem within its borders. Even the United States and Canada turned back ships crowded with Jewish refugees. Creating a Jewish state in Palestine to solve the Jewish problem became the ideal solution. This explains why most of the land mass in the partition was given to the Jewish newcomers. This also clarifies why Western powers were silent as Israeli forces began to ethnically cleanse Palestine from its indigenous population. Palestinians rejected the partition and hoped that the surrounding Arab countries would come to their aide. The Arabs came after 300,000 Palestinians had already been ethnically cleansed. They came late, unprepared and lost the war. Israel ended up grabbing the territory given to it by the UN plus the territory that it gained during the war.

### **Ben-Gurion and early Israeli leaders ordered and acted upon the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948**

David Ben-Gurion wrote:

“After we become a strong force as the result of the creation of the state, we shall abolish partition and expand to the whole of Palestine.”<sup>3</sup>

Western, Israeli and Palestinian historians have overwhelmingly agreed that Ben Gurion and Israeli leaders in his close circle planned and executed the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. Israeli archives have been searched by historians such as Benny Morris and Ilan Pappé to illustrate the ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

During the war, the Israelis ethnically cleansed another 500,000 Palestinians from their cities, towns and villages. Palestin-



ians ran to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan the West Bank, Gaza and Egypt hoping that they would return home after the war was over. But the Israelis fortified their new borders so that any Palestinian man, woman or child that attempted to return to his or her home was shot and killed at the border. In addition, the Israelis destroyed many of the Palestinian villages that they conquered to get a message to the Palestinian refugees that there was nothing to return to.

The Red Cross gave the destitute Palestinians tents, and these squatter areas became known as Palestinian refugee camps. After ten years the United Nations, acknowledging failure to repatriate them, built them small houses to replace the worn-out tents. However, late in 1948, the UN passed the following resolution:

“Refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and those wishing not to return should be compensated for their property (UN Resolution 194).”

## **The invasion and takeover of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights in 1967 exasperated the Arab-Israeli conflict rather than solving it**

A second war broke out in 1967. Menachem Begin admitted that Israel started what is known as the Six Day War:

“The Egyptian army concentrations in the Sinai approaches do not prove that Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him.”<sup>4</sup>

By the end of the six days, Syria lost the Golan Heights, Jordan lost the West Bank and Egypt lost the Gaza Strip and the Sinai

Peninsula. President Jimmy Carter was able to bring Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat together to sign a peace accord that returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt and Egypt became the first Arab country to acknowledge Israel as a legitimate state. Israel was not willing to include the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights in this peace deal.

## **The promise of the Oslo Peace Accords crumbled under the power of the Israeli right and their greed to colonize and settle the West Bank**

President Bill Clinton was able to influence Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat to sign a Memorandum of Understanding that would lead to a two-state solution and establish peace between Israelis and Palestinians within 5 years from the date of the signing of the Oslo Peace Accords in 1993. There was a lot of optimism. Rabin declared that there would be no building of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. This angered the far right in Israel and they waged a hate campaign against Rabin that resulted in his assassination by a radical Israeli. Leaders after Rabin continued to support the colonization of the West Bank.

## **The colonization of the West Bank has become the biggest obstacle to a just peace in the Middle East**

Today, there are over half a million Jewish settlers living in the West Bank. They are against the creation of a Palestinian state

and they continue to steal Palestinian lands and turn them into Jewish settlements. Why are Jewish settlements in the West Bank an obstacle to peace?

- Jews living in the West Bank want to continue to be citizens of the State of Israel and will fight against their future inclusion in a Palestinian state or their eviction from the West Bank.
- Jews living in the West Bank want to pay taxes to the State of Israel and to have total economic, social and educational separation from their Palestinian neighbors.
- Jews living in the West Bank want to be enlisted in the Israeli army and would do all they can to prevent the partition of the State of Israel which to them includes the West Bank.
- Many settlers in the West Bank believe that God gave them the land and it would be blasphemous for any Israeli leader to give any part of the West Bank to Palestinians.

**Palestinian anger at Israeli colonization**, along with the international inability and failure to stop Israeli violations of Palestinian rights to life and freedom, drove Palestinians to frustration which resulted in non-violent and violent acts against the Israeli army and Israeli citizens.

**The continued colonization of the West Bank** has all but killed the possibility of the two-state solution and dashed all Palestinian hopes of a just end of the conflict.

**While the US exerted much effort in reaching a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict**, all efforts failed due to the inconsistencies and contradictions of the American approach.

While on the books the US calls for two independent states, an end to Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and a just solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees, in reality, the US has used its influence at the United Nation, and through unlimited, political, economic and military support for the State of Israel in contradiction of its stated political positions, to solidify and protect Israeli actions in the Palestinian territories.

**The Obama administration seems to have given up on trying to reach a solution** and is focusing more on fighting radical Islamist movements in Syria, Iraq, Libya and other areas of the Middle East.

While this strategy is appealing to the American public, in the long run, it will fail to bring peace to Arabs, Israelis or Americans. If America is genuinely aspiring to see lasting peace in the Middle East, America must continue to focus on solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**In spite of the fact that Israelis and Palestinians see themselves trapped in the middle of a dark tunnel,** many see hope at the end of the tunnel and are willing to continue the struggle for a just and lasting peace.

Here is a list of some signs of hope:

- Many young people in the US are getting their news from the electronic media and are more eager for peace than blind support for the State of Israel.
- Many Israelis and Jews are fed up with the policies of the current Israeli government and some are becoming the strongest advocates of Palestinian rights.

- The desperation of the Zionist lobby in alleging that more and more people are anti-Semitic as they lose support especially among evangelicals.
- Internationally, and especially after the Gaza war, Israel has become isolated. Many countries who are close friends of Israel are ready to recognize a Palestinian state.
- Most Palestinians, including President Mahmud Abbas, have committed to non-violent methods to resist the illegal occupation of their land.
- Churches in the US, including some evangelical churches, are increasingly focusing on issues of justice rather than their historic interpretations of Biblical prophecies when dealing with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.
- The BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions) movement is gaining momentum in many parts of the world.

# 3

## The Delegitimization of Palestinian Christians

*Jack Munayer*<sup>1</sup>

My topic, The Delegitimization of Palestinian Christians, refers to the types of pressures, the types of things that have been said, mostly by Christian Zionists, about Christian Palestinians. This is in light of events like Christ at the Checkpoint, in light of Christian Palestinians speaking up, and this is a new phenomenon to be more active in speaking about the theology of the land and similar subjects.

Try to imagine that you have a pastor in the land who says ‘a Christian Arab leader says that Israelis are like Nazis’ with a big Nazi flag next to him. Then, you have a second person who puts a photo-shopped picture of my dad with a terrorist with a knife and Hamas tunnels in the background. So, this raises the question, how are we supposed to react as Christians to these things? This has been done by members of the body! What are we supposed to do about this?

Why is this important to us as Christian Palestinians? First of all, we want to preach the Gospel and share our theology with the rest of the body. It is important for us to be part of the discourse and these sorts of attacks are trying to stop us. We want to share our narrative, to share our culture and share our history! This is important to us.

And the third thing is that we want to speak out against injustice. This is part of who we are.

Why is it important to you, people who come from overseas? The conflict has been exported to your governments, to your media and social media, and especially to your churches. Churches take a very active role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And, therefore, it should be more than just a point of interest. It is also a point of responsibility.

## Labeling of Palestinian Christians

So, let's look at some of the delegitimization attacks, and when I say delegitimization what I'm saying here is that it is a discrediting attempt. It's trying to avoid the argument by attacking the person. While some of these will be just generalized propaganda rhetoric, the Evangelical Church, unfortunately, tends to follow.

**Antisemitism:** The first one, which I'm sure a lot of you are very familiar with, and is by far the most commonly used label, is antisemitism. Now, antisemitism here isn't really used in the true sense of the word. It really isn't used as the discrimination against Jews, but rather it is used in a way that means that if you don't accept my point of view, if you don't accept my theology, then you are anti-Semitic. It is used as a way to distract from the main subject. So, I could be speaking about the wall, and at some point, we will end up talking about antisemitism. Noam Chomsky discusses the use of antisemitism at Harvard where there was a discussion of how Harvard should react to the attacks in Jenin in 2002, where many civilians died. Someone brought up the issue of antisemitism, and then, for the next couple of months, the only issue was antisemitism in Harvard, which didn't exist. Jenin disappeared and the Palestin-

ians disappeared. This is the danger that exists with delegitimization. The issues that we are bringing forward will be forgotten and we will be forgotten in light of this type of labeling.

***Replacement Theology:*** The second is Replacement theology. But just to emphasize this, it's not Replacement theology in the way it's understood in theological academic literature. Here it means that if you do not agree with my understanding of scripture, then you are a replacement theologian, which then, by definition, means that you are anti-Semitic, and we are back to square one. This has been used constantly in an absolute manner. You're either in the Christian Zionist camp or in the Replacement theology camp. One of the dangers here is that it not only dehumanizes and delegitimizes Palestinian Christians, but it is also dangerous for Jews who suffer from real Replacement theology, and those who suffer from real antisemitism.

Now, if I look into a lot of the rhetoric that is being used (and for those of you who are following online I'm sure you've noticed that this conference is a little controversial), there is already a question as to whether we are Christians at all, whether we actually believe in Jesus. It's as if the issue of the land and the issue of chosenness are a precondition to salvation.

***Terrorism Supporters:*** The third label that is used is "terrorism supporters." This is an accusation which has been increasing over the past few years. It began with 'you're not really addressing terrorism enough,' then it changed to 'you're justifying terrorism,' now it's 'supporting terrorism.' I'm sure you can imagine what the next step is. When you apply this label, it gives you the justification of removing the humanity from the other, and you can then do whatever you want to them. Palestinian Christians have repeatedly condemned all types of violence publically, from both sides, but these



statements are then twisted within a certain agenda. Some Christian Zionists have even claimed that the very theology that we are discussing somehow influences attacks on civilians.

**Chrislam:** The next label I want to point out is “Chrislam” or some form of Christianity and Islam. Basically, the claim here is that we have not been able to come up with this theology on our own, so we must have been influenced by Muslims. In other words, when we look at the situation around us, we could not have come to these conclusions by ourselves; they must have come from Islam, which from their point of view, is evil. This is playing on Islamophobia, particularly in the West, and it is attempting to keep us quiet. If they do not succeed in silencing us, they then push us into this Chrislam category. I think that this is patronizing and even racist, that we are unable to produce something positive and organic in our own situation. Some have even said that we are using Jesus as a form of jihad. It’s as if our Palestinian theology is feeding into Chrislam and Chrislam is feeding into Palestinian theology and the conclusion is that we are opposing God’s will.

Let’s now look at some of the literature that is being written about Palestinian Christians. One is ‘Christian Palestinianism,’ with the “C” in the shape of a crescent, again with the idea that we are promoting some sort of Islamic theology, or that we ourselves are Muslims in disguise. Another has a picture of a Palestinian priest saying that we are ‘waging an anti-Israel crusade,’ which is rather ironic when you consider the use of these words coming from Westerners. A third title, in Dutch, claims that the Christian Palestinians are a continuation of the Nazi agenda, that what we are presenting is a continuation of the Nazi ideology. So, as you can see, we are being accused of being Muslim, Nazi terrorists who believe in Replacement theology. If all these combined labels leave you in confusion, spare a thought for us.

## Delegitimization of Palestinians

Now, let us look at some of the general delegitimizations of Palestinians. This strategy is not just a denial of our theology and faith, but it also applies to our everyday life and politics. The first one, and I'm sure everyone has heard this, is that there is no such thing as a Palestinian people. The second is that there is no occupation. And the third one is that "you are lucky to be living in Israel or the occupation. You could be living in Syria.

*There's no such thing as a Palestinian people.* This was presented to the Knesset by Likud member Anat Berko three weeks ago. She said there could be no such place as Palestine because there is no "P" in Arabic. With this logic, it is like saying there is no such food as 'hummous' in America, because there is no "ح" in English. While this is somewhat humorous, by taking away someone's identity, again you're stripping them of their humanity. If Palestinians are not a people, then they don't deserve rights and we can do what we want.

My story counters this. When I was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, my teacher told us that the land was empty and that there were no Palestinians before the Jews came, and when the Jews did come, the Palestinians just joined along and made no serious contribution. This church [showing pictures] was built by my ancestors in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, and is part of our faith contribution to this land. It's a very ancient contribution, a significant contribution. The second one is a document, a letter written to my great-grandfather, saying that the history of the Munayer family traces back to the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. However, since we don't have the letter "P," the church must have built itself and for 800 years, my family must have been wandering around without any form of identity, searching for the elusive letter "P."

***There is no occupation.*** Let's bury this argument once and for all. The General Assembly has stated that the wall and settlements being constructed by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are illegal. Now, some people might counter, claiming that the UN is biased against Israel, especially the General Assembly. There are many countries that don't like Israel, so we shouldn't take them seriously. But the Security Council as well, in Resolution 242, uses the language, "the withdrawal of Israeli forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict." So, this isn't just the Security Council; Israel, itself, signed the 242 document and accepted it. If that's not convincing enough, let's look at the Israeli High Court of Justice which says that since 1967, Israel has been holding the areas of Judea and Samaria (as they call it) in belligerent occupation, that the authority of the military commander is inherently temporary, as belligerent occupation is inherently temporary. So, can we move past this argument? For the people who claim there is no occupation this information is available, but it's meant to distract from the injustices that are being brought forth.

***You are so lucky to live in Israel:*** The third one is a particularly important point. I don't hear this sometimes; I don't hear this many times; I hear this all the time. "You are so lucky to live in Israel." And it's true. I benefit from a lot of things in Israel. I am lucky not to be a Syrian refugee at the moment. I'm even more privileged than my brothers and sisters in the West Bank, with the types of economic and health benefits that I have. *But I think that it is despicable to use the Syrian refugee's suffering to justify what is going on here.* It's the equivalent of someone punching me in the stomach repeatedly and saying that I'm so lucky that I'm not being punched in the face like that person over there. And I think this is a particularly unhealthy way of approaching the conflict.

One of my Israeli professors said that the way that we should particularly understand the Israeli Palestinian approach to this is that when an Israeli Palestinian wakes up in Haifa, he does not compare himself to someone in Yemen; he compares himself to his Jewish neighbor. If we're thinking about this in the occupied sense, then when a Palestinian turns his tap on to get water, he does not think of the water rates in Qatar, but compares it to the settlement next door that has swimming pools.

To affirm this point, I want to look at this quote.

“The people who have become emotionally involved over the Israeli-Palestinian issue overlook the fact that the Arabs here earn higher wages, lives in better homes, get better medical treatment and have greater economic hopes for themselves and their children than any other Arabs in the region. If you destroy the strength of the Israelis here, then surely the Arabs themselves will recognize that their own prospects for prosperity and advancement must be immeasurably dimmed.”

This is an excuse that is used all the time. Now, this isn't the original quote, and before I go on to the original, I want to state that I'm not comparing and saying that these are the same. All I'm looking at are structures of power and excuses that are used to justify the current systems.

“The people who have become emotionally involved over the South African issue overlook the fact that the blacks here earn higher wages, lives in better homes, get better medical treatment and have greater economic hopes for themselves and their children than any other Arabs in Africa. If you destroy the strength of the Israelis here, then surely the Arabs themselves will recognize that their own prospects for prosperity and advancement must be immeasurably dimmed.”

This is the original quote. And, again, I'm not comparing the Apartheid exactly. This is not the purpose of the discussion, but there certainly is the same sort of discussion happening over economic benefits, compared to freedoms and compared to equality. This was said, by the way, by John B. Connally who is the former Republican candidate and the former governor of Texas at a conference in South Africa, in support of the Apartheid system.

## Silencing Palestinian Christians

***Monopoly over Narrative:*** So, we've looked at a lot of these different delegitimizations. Let's go back to the question, why is this important to us? There is an attempt to create a monopoly over narrative, a monopoly over discussions, a monopoly over truth, when we are trying to talk about the conflict. There are only certain discussions that people want us to have and don't want us to engage in others. And, if we stray from this one narrative, then we are ostracized, or we are delegitimized. The goal for these people, and for certain Christian Zionist organizations or media outlets, is to shut down any dialogue about the situation. You can't question, meet, discuss opinions and stray from their narrative. If you don't believe me, ask some of the international speakers who have come here about some of the pressures they've been under.

Also, we see the phenomenon of a "foul" in football [soccer], where you play the man and not the ball. In other words, you attack the person but you don't deal with the issue. It's so much easier to slander (all the Palestinian speakers have been slandered, you can just Google their names to find out), and it's so much easier to attack them as people rather than deal with the issues they're bringing forth. So, what is the consequence of this monopoly? What is the consequence of this activity? We have been uninvited and excluded

from many different conferences, activities, and churches, because of Christian Zionist pressure. Mubarak Awad was recently uninvited from Trinity Lutheran Seminary for a conference entitled, "Seeking Peace in the Holy Land." You might say that maybe Mubarak is a trouble-maker, maybe they take issue with him, but there were no Palestinians present at the conference at all! How could you have a discussion on "Seeking Peace in the Holy Land," without Palestinians?

If we look at a further use of this monopoly, I call this the "token Arab," and what some of you might be familiar with, the "Uncle Tom." The token Arab is saying we have a native who will say what we want to say, and agrees with us, and we will push him to the public platform and use him to justify what we are doing. The Uncle Tom is the submissive native, the one who doesn't speak up, even though he might not agree, because he doesn't want to rock the boat. And where some might speak about imperialism, I'm talking about colonialism. Throughout all of history, particularly under the British who were experts in this, there has been a colonial use of the natives to divide society. Colonials use natives to cause internal conflict among the local population and they use natives to justify their positions. For example, the British might build a train or a train track in one of the countries they were colonizing and say that they were helping the natives, when, actually, it was used to take natural resources. The same thing is being done here. For example, "I have a Palestinian friend who says that there is no occupation, therefore there can't be an occupation." These are the types of arguments that I'm talking about.

From the Palestinian Christian perspective and throughout colonial history, what is the local's motivation in all of this? The incentive is that they hope to benefit from wealth, power, prestige and influence gained from the colonizers, and thereby retain or improve

their social, political or economic situation. Now, I'm not saying that all Palestinians who are Christian Zionists or who are pro-Israel are doing this for these reasons. It is very possible that there are people who really hold these opinions, and God bless them. The problem is that people and groups are using these locals and manipulating the discussion by taking these people who have these opinions and saying that this represents Christian Palestinian opinion, and not what *they* (like Christ at the Checkpoint) are saying. It's a form of silencing Christian Palestinians and it is completely unacceptable.

***Financial and status exploitation.*** There are financial and status pressures put on specifically by Christian Zionist organizations to stop Christian Palestinians from speaking out. This could be the withholding of finances: "We want to support your ministry or your church, but you can't speak up about these issues." "You can speak up about how you're being persecuted by Islam but don't speak about the political situation. Don't speak up about checkpoints." You can complain that there is radicalism; you can complain that you're a minority, and some of these points are legitimate, but the point here is that there is almost a blackmailing tactic to shut people up. You might not be invited to conferences; old international friends might question you (What do you think about Christ at the Checkpoint? What is your opinion on the checkpoints?). And then you have to make a difficult decision.

So, this is a message specifically to the Palestinians here, and also elsewhere. We have a psychological imbalance of power. Are we going to submit or are we going to speak up? Not because this is necessarily the only truth, but if you believe that what is going on is an injustice, then what are you going to do? I leave that question to you.

## **What is your Role as Internationals**

One of the things that I've been thinking about is "what is your role as internationals?" One of the international students asked me, if the international community has played such a role in the conflict, how can we be part of the solution? I think that the international community here is more than just a visitor's role; we need you when it comes to helping us find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is depressing to see this kind of slander and attack, and if you've gone through the amount of nonsense online blogs and news, it is very tiring and draining, and it's very difficult to speak positively and celebrate what we have.

How can we speak positively in this situation? What is my message here? Am I just going to complain that we're under multiple pressures? No. First of all, we need to declare that all these different attacks, whether the labeling of anti-Semitism or the use of money to pressure people, are forms of religious extremism. But it's more than just religious extremism; it's more than just the inability to take in new information and to react in an almost militaristic way; it's feeding into the occupation. It's feeding into the attempts to cause us to submit. And my question to you is: What is the role we want our churches to play in this conflict? Do we want voices that use such violent imagery? Do we want the type of nasty attacks that attack people personally? Or do we want a more positive message, especially when we disagree?

Christian Palestinians are by no means perfect and Christ at the Checkpoint is by no means perfect. We need your help to continue to improve our theology, to continue to improve our intellectual discussion as to what is going on around us, and we want to do this



without further attack. How can we do this without further polarizing each other? We need you to help us demonstrate positive ways of having this discussion.

One of the highlights of the last conference was the discussion between Gary Burge and Dan Juster. Not because of any theological conclusion that they came to. What I was touched by was how respectful they were of each other. That was the first time that I had ever seen a theological discussion on the land done with such respect, done with listening. I want to see us imitate this kind of discussion; I want to see us have this type of discussion on the land where we clearly don't agree, but we are going to respect each other and reinforce each other's humanity, rather than delegitimize it.

Finally, if you see yourself connected to the issues here and if you've been touched by the things you've seen and heard, then speak up! We need voices that will speak positively about what is going on here. We need you. We could have had this conference just with locals, but we need the international community to be an active part in what is going on here. As the activist Frederick Douglass said, "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will." So, we need you to help break down the structures that already exist, especially within the church.

A second quote is: "If we wash our hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless, then we are siding with the powerful. We do not remain neutral." Being silent does not keep you neutral; putting your head down does not keep you neutral. It puts you with the powerful. I'm not saying that Christian Palestinians here are powerless, but clearly we have lots of different pressures that are against us. We're a minority within our own communities. We're under pressures from the conflict itself, whether it's the occupation or racial discrimination. And when people stay silent about these

issues, they're not just brushing them aside and not getting involved, they're allowing these systems of injustice to continue to exist.

If we go back to my final point, and if you do choose to speak up about what you've seen, if you do want to challenge some of the things that we've discussed during the conference, the power structures, these attacks, then let's do it, without becoming radicalized ourselves. The danger here is that when we see these attacks, when we're put under this pressure, that we ourselves will respond negatively, and we can't afford to do that. We do not want to do unto others what they are doing unto us. We don't want to advocate while demonizing or dehumanizing the other side, i.e. people who hold opposite opinions from us.

Finally, let me just ask you this question. What is your message to me? Or to echo what the young adult Christian Palestinians asked us last night, what is your voice for the young Palestinian Christians? Is your voice saying that we have to deal with all these different odds that are against us, and yet when we try to speak up, we get put down? Is this the message you have for us, or is there something else? So, I just want to leave you with that. One of the things that we've found in the conference for the young adults is that there is a complete absence of hope amongst a lot of the young people. Someone said that they're neither optimistic nor pessimistic, but they still have hope. We need that hope because we don't even have that. I ask that you keep us young people in your thoughts and prayers and that you continue to speak up about our situation in the Land.

# 4

## **A Testimony of Palestinian Women in the Midst of the Conflict**

*Shireen Hilal*<sup>1</sup>

It is a pleasure to be standing before you all today. I would like to talk today about women leaders in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. I do not have all the answers, but I do have some experience in this field, and I hope that these thoughts that I share will be a blessing to some of you.

### **My Experience as a Woman in the Conflict**

I am very aware of the conflict in my everyday life. I have to commute to university through checkpoints. I see Israeli soldiers on a regular basis. I see the wall here when I drive around Bethlehem. I see Jewish settlements flourishing and expanding on our land. I see how the conflict affects families, women and children. We are all affected by the conflict, and it is uniquely challenging for each group.

Some people think that the conflict has no direct effect on families. As a woman, wife, and mother, I know differently. It is a challenge to raise children in this environment. How can I teach my children a sense of space and belonging, when so many others

challenge our rights on this space and whether we belong to this land in which we were born? When I teach my children about right and wrong, the issue of justice comes up. Children know from their personal arguments with other children when something is not fair. This small-scale idea of justice is just the beginning. When we go around our city, the question of fairness, or justice, comes up when we see what is happening around us. How can I teach justice to my children? Is it only an idea to understand, or is it an ideology we implement in our daily lives?

The conflict limits our economic and career opportunities, as it is not easy to find a good job to support a family. We want to give our children the best education, but we need to pay for it. Then there is the issue of safety. Is it safe for my children to go to the playground? We do not know when settlers or the Israeli army may come by, and I do not want my children alone in such a situation. The conflict does not only affect me and my husband, but my children and their future. What will employment be like in the coming years? What opportunities will be available to my children? We are surrounded by demonstrations and instability, and I do not know what road my children will take to fight against and reject the injustice they see from our home. In many ways, these all come from a fear of losing my children, or of not being able to give them what every child deserves. I fear that my children will be deprived of the basic requirements of life – a good education, an enjoyable childhood where they can play freely or go to a zoo. Many of us Palestinians are restricted in our movement, limited to traveling freely only a few times a year; some are deprived of this freedom of movement completely.

Sometimes when a person complains of lack of freedom, or water, another answers: “you need to be thankful as there are people in Somalia that have no shelter, or places in Africa where they do not have access to medicine and are dying from terrible diseases.” I

agree that we need to be thankful, but a mother cannot help but be concerned for the well-being and future of her children.

## Turning to the Bible

In situations like this, who can we go to? Who will offer us a shoulder to cry on? With whom can we share our grievances when we wonder, who understands our pain and suffering? In times like this, we turn to the Bible. We come with pain, struggling, and frustration. I look to find comfort. I look at the stories in the Bible and I read many things of great figures who went through difficult situations and overcame them, but what affects me most is the story of the women. Women who, like me, were wives and mothers. Women who lived in less than ideal situations where they sometimes had to struggle to have their voices heard. I recognize these women's hearts; we share similar hopes and fears. And it is these very women who influenced great change, not only in their own lives, but in the lives of those in their surrounding community.

Today I would like to talk about three women who have influenced me. These three women are Abigail, Rizpah and Mother Mary. I am sure that you know the stories of these three women, so I will only briefly discuss their roles, and then share with you what I find most inspiring and striking about them.

**Abigail:** We find Abigail's story in 1 Samuel 25. We see that she was a *courageous* woman who was willing to confront an angry David with 400 armed men, to *intercede, make peace* and plead for the lives of others. She was *wise*, and perceptive, and realized that she could make a difference by coming forward, and in her wisdom, she was also *generous*, as she came to meet David with food for all his men. She spoke *prophetically* to David and helped him refrain

from spilling more blood. She was *faithful*, as she believed in God and brought his message to David.

Abigail was certainly a woman of integrity and destiny, and she inspires me to be courageous in taking a stand, to be wise in my approach, to intercede on behalf of my people, to live generously, to speak truth to those in power, and to live faithfully. But there is something else here, as well. She takes her role of a woman and a wife seriously and reaches out to the enemy of her husband and family. Instead of coming with words of condemnation or an act of violence, she comes to meet David bringing food and in doing so she builds bridges. I think she can be a model for Palestinian women in our conflict. She can teach us how we can offer words and acts of peace, how we can reach out to the enemy through acts of hospitality, and perhaps change their hearts in the process.

**Rizpah:** Next, I would like to share with you a lesser known character named Rizpah. Her story is told in 2 Samuel 21:1-14. During David's rule there was a famine in the land due to bloodguilt on Saul's house for what Saul had done to the Gibeonites. In order to try and make this right, David turned to the Gibeonites and asked them what they required. They requested that seven of Saul's sons be handed over to them to be killed. The bodies were left outside, and Rizpah, the concubine of Saul whose two sons were among the seven, stood by the bodies and kept the birds and animals away from them. When David heard what Rizpah was doing, he had the bones of Saul's seven sons taken down and buried. When this was done, God removed the famine from the land.

Rizpah stands out to me as a *mourning* woman, who *takes initiative alone*, and *demand*s justice for the burial of her sons and their brothers. In spite of the fact she had a low social standing as she was a slave, she takes a stand through *silent action*. She shows

me that our calls for justice can take a counter-intuitive form. One way we can protest is through silent action, but for all to see. She patiently persevered, waiting months for someone to recognize her call for justice. And her *devoted* act of waiting beside the bodies ends up *saving the entire people* from famine. She might not have known the ramifications of her act of devotion to her family, but it was this small act of justice that needed to be met for the land to be restored, and for God to hear the cries to end the famine.

I look up to Rizpah for all these reasons and more. Mothers often make sacrifices for their children and are willing to take a risk for them. My two-year-old son recently had appendicitis, and his appendix ruptured. At first no one knew what was wrong with him, and I was so distraught, willing to give up anything for the sake of keeping my child or reducing his pain. Rizpah lost two sons, but even in their death, she sought their dignity, wanting them to be afforded the respect of burial.

**Mother Mary:** Finally, I would like to share a few words on Mother Mary. She is the mother of mothers, as she carried our Lord in her womb, and gave birth to him just minutes from where we stand. She exemplifies *holiness*, *piety*, and *humility*. She was chosen to be the mother of our Lord for her devout and humble example to all of us. She lived her life with *strength* and *dignity*, raising a child who grew to do things she did not understand, but she raised him and gave him for God's purpose. She was betrayed and left alone by all Jesus' closest followers, as only Mary and a few other women were the last to stay when Jesus died, and the first to come to his tomb to care for his body.

Mary is a role model for women, as she teaches the importance of faithfulness to God and trusting in the Lord. In spite of everything she had to endure, from a pregnancy no one understood,

to raising a child who would sacrifice himself for all of us, she persevered, fulfilling her God-appointed role. Although we live in a different world than Mary did, some things do not change. God's expectations of his people have not changed, and we should learn through Mary's example to walk faithfully in humility and persevere in our callings.

## **Conclusion**

I am inspired and encouraged by the lives of these three women, and I often reflect on their stories and what they accomplished. I am encouraged to translate their successes into challenges in my context. I want to know how to be like Abigail: to wisely, generously, faithfully, and courageously intercede for my people through acts of hospitality. I want to know how to be like Rizpah here: through taking action and initiative for justice, and through devoting myself to my calling. I want to know how to be like Mary: through practicing faithfulness, devotion, and learning to be humbler. These are my challenges as a woman, a Christian, a Palestinian, an evangelical, and a minority. My calling is to minister here, to Muslims, Christians and Jews. In this one small land we have the opportunity to bless and minister to many peoples and many nations! I want to see the Lord's glory coming from heaven on each individual in this land, this Holy Land, Palestine and Israel. God has a calling for all of us: Palestinian, Israeli, Arab, Jew, Muslim, and Christian. I hope to faithfully fulfill my calling to my people and my land.



## 5

## Transforming Hearts through Non-Violence

*Sami Awad*<sup>1</sup>

The title that I would like to share with you today is called “Transforming Hearts through Non-Violence.” In this talk, I am going to share one story, the story that I know best, which is my story. I don’t want to talk about other people’s experiences and engagement, even though many, many, many Palestinians and Israelis are engaging in non-violence. The only story I am sure of in mind and heart and spirit can only be mine.

As many of you know, I come from a family that has endured tremendous suffering and tremendous pain. At the same time, a family that has truly experienced healing and forgiveness, specifically to those who did this to us. But my personal journey was not easy. Yes, I grew up in a family of faith, but I also did not grow up in a bubble, and I do not live in a bubble now, isolated from the injustices and the violence that I see around me.

I am not ignoring or am isolated from the pain that I saw and continue to see on a daily basis. The pain of seeing a woman cry, rolling on the ground, pulling her hair as she hears the news that her son was just killed. The pain of seeing children walking around,

dazed and confused in a mass of people, looking for their father, not knowing that what these people were there doing was burying their father who was just killed. The pain of looking through the rubbish and rumbling of a demolished home of a little girl who's looking for the arm and leg of a Barbie doll that she used to sleep with every night. The pain of an old village woman hugging an olive tree that was just uprooted, an olive tree that was planted years ago by a very young child that she called "grandfather." This pain is real.

From a young age I grew up, as should be, as must be, in anger. You cannot remain silent, at least internally, when you see such violence. And I challenged everything around me. Who is God? who is the Jesus of my father whom he talks about? Who is the God who allows for this to be? What family am I part of that talks this way but reality is one hundred eighty degrees the other way? But my beautiful family never argued with me. They never pushed me; they never forced me to believe in anything, never tried to convince me of anything they believed in. But the seed was planted. And the seed grew a little bit when I was twelve years old. That famous "knock" came, the knock on one's heart, a knock from a man named Jesus; a man that I grew up listening to stories about him. Beautiful stories in the Bible. Fairy tales even. The Superman that walked on water. I wanted to be like Jesus. I dreamed of walking on water one day.

But now, this Jesus was not a story; Jesus was real, and he simply said to me, "Sami, just open the door. Don't worry. Just open the door and let me in." And for some crazy reason I trusted that voice and I said, "yes." In accepting Christ in me, I thought that was it. Like many people. Now it's the easy life ahead of me. Smooth sailing to the kingdom of God, to heaven. I just have to pray and believe and continue to stay in that spirit and then everything will be OK. I was a member of the club now; a member of the church. An elitist. But that was not it. It was the beginning of a difficult and

challenging journey, but a journey that I was not engaged in alone. That journey included carrying my cross and the cross of my people. And it took me some time, it took me years to begin to realize what that means. And I can say to you with full confidence that I am still in the first steps of this process.

Something else happened at the age of twelve. An uncle of mine who had been living in the U.S. returned to Jerusalem. Mubarak Awad is someone I give the credit and the blame for everything that has me to do with non-violence. Upon his return, he opened a center in Jerusalem called the Palestinian Center for the Study of Non-Violence, and I began to see a place where I could release my anger. And it was during that time that I met a very different image of the Israelis that I had known growing up. You see, for most Palestinians (my daughters included), the sad reality is that the only images we have growing up of Israelis is that of soldiers and settlers.

But then I met the “good” Israelis, the ones who were with us, the ones who were on our side. The ones who stood with us, who fought with us, who were non-violent with us. And I loved them. And for me that justifies everything. But there was still a divide; there was still an “us” and a “them.”

In 1988 my uncle was arrested. He was put on trial and he was deported, specifically because of his work on non-violence. And this raised a question for me: what is preventing Israelis from seeing how beneficial non-violence is? I fully understood then, and fully understand now, that if Palestinians engage in violence that there will be a reaction; it may be a violent reaction. But what was in non-violence that scared the Israeli government so much that they accused this man of being a threat to the national security of Israel? And it was at that time, at sixteen, that I said, “I want to find out.” And I committed my life to studying and engaging in non-violence.

A few months later, my father and my mother saw me becoming a little bit too much politically involved than what I should be as a sixteen-year-old and decided to kick me and my younger brother out of the country, and we ended up in the United States, where I studied Political Science and did my undergraduate degree in Peace and Conflict Resolution. And, of course, when you go to America, like many of us, you learn how to resolve everything through steps: the 7 steps of dieting, the 7 steps of leadership building, the 7 steps of peacemaking...etc. And, of course, the most famous book, *The 7 Steps to Salvation*. And I came back here, fully excited because now I have the answers. Resolving conflict, the 7 steps. I know it. I have a Master's Degree in this. And I came back and started an organization (Holy Land Trust) in 1998.<sup>2</sup>

There were two reasons that led me to start this organization: the *political* reason and the *religious* one. The religious reason was because we were then (in 1996) approaching then the Millennium celebration, the birth of Christ in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. Our friends Robin and Nancy Wainwright come from the U.S. in 1996 and we began talking about the Millennium. Their idea and their vision were so beautiful that I decided to begin working with them that early on. And their idea was to do a reenactment of the journey of the Magi; the whole trip from Iran all the way to Bethlehem.

The short story is that it was a success. Christians from all around the world walked unarmed, unaccompanied by soldiers or bodyguards, on camels for 99 days, in Iraq, in Syria, in Jordan and crossing into the West Bank to celebrate the birth of Christ. Meeting and interacting and praying with the local Muslim communities in these areas. Given little prayers on pieces of paper by the Iraqi Muslims saying, "When you go to Bethlehem to where Jesus was born, please put this prayer in the grotto." These are Muslims asking

Christian pilgrims, white American Christian pilgrims, to pray for them when they are in Bethlehem.

The second reason for starting Holy Land Trust was the reality on the ground; the reality that a peace process that had been going on for some years was failing. The failure of the peace process was because leaders were negotiating while people were still being divided from each other. And for me, the idea of starting Holy Land Trust was to ask the question: "What can we do to strengthen the communities, (communities—plural—Palestinian and Israeli communities) to build a better future, to look at the challenges that face us now and say that we can build a better future for the Holy Land, a land that we all call holy?"

And, of course, as a person committed to non-violence, I became very active, very quickly, in non-violence, especially in the year 2000 when the whole peace process collapsed. I began to engage in political activism, direct actions, and protests. And of course, that was not easy because there was so much violence, so much blood shed, so much terrorism happening, and so much killing and I was rejected by everybody. I had Palestinians accusing me of being a collaborator, of being a Mossad agent, of being a CIA agent. And I had Israelis threatening to arrest me, threatening to arrest our people. I was detained and questioned by them all the time, always attempting to delegitimize us even within our own community.

But, if you're rejected by everybody that means that you're doing what Jesus is asking you to do. Right? That's what I thought. I'm following his teachings; nobody likes me. That must be what Jesus is all about. And I kept convincing myself of that. I was physically not hurting the other. I was not violent. But, at the same time, I really wanted to make them look bad. I really wanted to expose them. I really wanted to show the world how evil they are

to me and my people. In a sense, while I was being demonized and dehumanized by the Israeli, I was actually doing the same thing to them. But added to that was an ego trap, called "I'm a peace activist. I am non-violent."

I would say statements like, "I'm non-violent"; "I'm committed to non-violence, but if somebody else wants to choose violence that's their choice. They can do that. And I won't criticize that because we are in the same struggle for liberating Palestine." I would suggest to them a better approach, a better tactic of engagement.

But slowly, slowly, I began to realize, very simply, that this is not Jesus's way. This is not what Jesus is about. Then, he knocked again; a gentle, soft knock, without judgment, without accusation, as if he were knocking for the first time. And he said, "Sami, open up. I'm here again." And the knock came through the Sermon on the Mount, through reading Matthew 5, at a time when I felt that it was very important for me as a Christian to read the Bible again. And, I'm reading through the Bible, flipping through it and I see the Sermon on the Mount. I almost had this memorized: "Blessed are the..., Blessed are the..." So, I'm reading through it, and then I froze with this knock on my heart. I had to turn back and those words popped up, "Love your enemy, Sami. I'm calling you; I'm commanding you; I'm ordering you as your king, as your father, as your God, to love your enemy."

And that took me on an incredible process. What does Jesus mean, for me as a Palestinian, living in this situation, to love my enemy? And it is a *commandment*. There is no question about it. It is not open to debate and discussion like we like to do about everything else that Jesus says. "Love your enemy". Not "consider", not "think about it", not "I would like for you to...". But: "Love your enemy."

And then, what is this love? Do I go to a group of Israeli soldiers standing at the checkpoint, get out of my car, and say: "Habibi! Come on! You know it! Give me some loving, brother?" (If I do this, there are two places that I will end up in, either in prison or the nearest hospital).

Loving the enemy means to *see* the enemy. *How can you love someone without knowing them?* To get to *know* them. To get to know them even beyond how they know themselves. This is an expression of love: to get to be with them, to get to interact with them, to be in their pain, to be in their sorrow, to be in their joy. Because you can sign a peace agreement with somebody, you can sign a contract with somebody, but at the end of the day, you each go your separate ways. And that's fine in the world that we live in. People do that all the time; nations do that all the time, sign peace agreements. We have one between Jordan and Israel; we have one between Israel and Egypt. Signed peace agreements, where they have their guns pointing towards each other, but not shooting at each other because we have a peace agreement. But there's a benefit. There's an economic benefit, a social benefit. Of course, economically, the U.S. is pumping billions of dollars just to maintain the agreement and we call it "peace."

That's not what Jesus is talking about. Jesus is talking about oneness, complete oneness with the enemy. You never leave someone you love. You actually want to be with them continuously; you think about them all the time; you dream about them all the time; you pray for them all the time. You grieve in their pain and celebrate their joys with them.

The next knock on the door came when Jesus said, "I want you to engage in a pilgrimage... I want you to go to a place called Auschwitz. I want you to visit a death camp called Berkenau. This

is the pilgrimage you will engage in.” And I went. And I saw and experienced as close as I possibly can the reality of what happened in the Holocaust. And I was shocked. We know about the Holocaust. We have heard about it. I saw Schindler’s List and other movies, but never was it real to me. And I began to see the enemy whom I was to love; what their history is and where they came from. What is their pain? Yes, Israel talks about security, security, security. 99% of the language that Israel engages in courts, when Palestinians are being interrogated, when land is being confiscated, when walls are being built, it’s always about security, security, security because it’s the macho term to use.

What is behind security? Fear. There is deep fear in the Jewish community globally but also in the Israeli society specifically. Has my non-violence addressed that fear or not? Or was it just about me—my rights, my justice, my freedom? That’s where Jesus comes in.

A greater understanding of non-violence came to me when I was in a community in Portugal that we are connected with, where non-violence was not just the political thing to do. Non-violence was social; non-violence was environmental. What are we doing to the environment? Non-violence was energy, resources; non-violence was social structures, family structures. How can I claim to be non-violent towards the occupation when I go home after a long day and my daughter comes to hug me and I say, “Move away. I’m tired. I don’t want to see anybody”? If I cannot engage in full love and non-violence with my children, I should not even have the honor of engaging with my enemy in non-violence. To understand that violence is words like “greed,” “jealousy,” “control,” and so many other expressions that are violent.

There is a statement that has been continually in my mind as a Christian, and it goes like this: *I serve not to convert, but I serve*



*because I am converted.* Serve people because you are a follower of Jesus, and you will be a means to create that space where Jesus knocks on their heart.

For me now, non-violence is not just an option, it is and must be the only option. And I am ready to stand in the face of every person, Palestinian or Israeli, who engages in violence and say this is wrong. There is no excuse; there is no justification. There is no way you can say that you had to use violence in this situation.

If I am a follower of Jesus there is no room for any form of violence to be used against anyone. But at the same time, it is about being fully loving and supportive, and being a teacher and an example of even the most violent of terrorists and to say to them: yes, even for you there is space for transformation and healing. The Palestinians and Israelis who use violence are not made genetically by God to use violence against somebody else. There are stories, there are narratives, there are experiences that we all have felt that there is no other option for but to use violence. But we have to say, yes, *there is* another way. And like Gandhi said, he has never found any issue in his life where he did not see a non-violent option. But, if he engages in violence, then it came out of weakness, out of the deepest, weakest point of my life. It is not out of strength, not out of courage, not out of power, but out of weakness that I use violence.

I came to a point where I now understand that non-violence is not just physical, it's not just verbal, but non-violence is also what happens in my heart and in my mind. And how many of us are violent in our thoughts towards others? We stand in front of them and we smile and we shake our heads, but inside of us we think: "I can't wait until this guy gets out of here. This is so boring. Why are you doing this to me? I hate him, but I have to do this. I'm a follower of Jesus. I'm a Christian. I have to look good in front of him."

Try this as an experiment. Next time you are with someone you don't like, try to remember that in those moments somebody else is reading your thoughts – God, the Great One – and just see what happens to you then. Just try it. And if you are able to succeed in trying it once, try making it a practice in your life that every time you have a negative thought about somebody, about something, about a people, about an ethnic group, just remember that God is also reading your thoughts.

We should engage in a process of transformation and healing. This is what non-violence is about. For me, this is what Jesus is about. He came to heal the past; he came to heal the pain of the past and transform people into a new reality; into a new community; into a new kingdom. He did not come to change reality but to transform it. Transformation actually means that everything is actually still the same. What changes is the hearts and minds of people.

I want to conclude by sharing what the title of the conference means to me. "Christ at the Checkpoint" is a very controversial title. The title alone has been attacked by so many people. And I just want to explain what "Christ at the Checkpoint" means to me. When people read this, there is an immediate assumption that Christ is standing with *the oppressed* waiting at the checkpoint; that Christ is one of the thousands waiting in line for hours every morning at the checkpoint to cross to go to work; that Christ is found in the woman who is standing at the checkpoint wanting to go to get her medical treatment in the hospital; that Christ is the student who has to agonize every single day to cross the checkpoint to get his or her education. But, you know what? If we have Christ fully embodied in every single cell of our body, we'll also see Christ at a checkpoint in somebody else. We'll see Christ in the 18-year-old soldier who's carrying the gun and pointing at that working man. And we'll see Christ in that 20-year-old woman who just had a fight with her boyfriend and has

to do this job at the checkpoint because she might lose her college tuition that is paid for by the government.

Christ at the Checkpoint means Christ is standing for the dream, life and salvation of every person at the checkpoint, whether an Israeli or a Palestinian. Amen.

## BIOGRAPHIES

### *Alex Awad*

Rev. Alex Awad served as a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church in Israel/Palestine with his wife, Brenda, until their retirement in 2015. He taught courses at Bethlehem Bible College where he served as faculty member, Dean of Students and board member.

### *Bishara Awad*

Dr. Bishara Awad, with the encouragement and support of local Christian leaders, founded Bethlehem College in 1979 and served as President from 1979 to 2012. Since his retirement, he has served as President Emeritus and continues to work toward his vision of training and empowering Arab Christian leaders to serve in the Holy Land and throughout the Arab world.

### *Sami Awad*

Sami Awad is a Palestinian Christian, and the founder and Executive Director of Holy Land Trust, a Palestinian NGO in Bethlehem building peace through nonviolence. A Jesus-centered peacemaker in one of the most extreme conflict zones in the world, Sami Awad is a powerful force for peace both in the Holy Land and around the world.

### *Gary Burge*

Rev. Dr. Gary M. Burge is an American author and professor. He is presently a New Testament scholar at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is also an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church.

***Colin Chapman***

Rev. Dr. Colin Chapman was brought up in Scotland and was ordained in the Anglican Church. He has served in teaching and missions for his entire professional life, having worked for thirteen years with the Church Mission Society in Egypt and Lebanon where he was a lecturer on Islamic Studies at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut.

***Hendrik Hanegraaff***

Hendrik (Hank) Hanegraaff serves as president and chairman of the board of the North Carolina-based Christian Research Institute. He is also host of the nationally syndicated Bible Answer Man radio broadcast, which is heard daily across the United States and Canada—and around the world via the Internet at [www.equip.org](http://www.equip.org).

***Shireen Hilal***

Shireen Hilal began her career as a teacher at the Evangelical Lutheran School in Beit-Sahour, before becoming an administrative secretary at Life Agape-Jerusalem and then an administrator at Beit Al Liqa in Beit Jala before joining BBC. Shireen is the Dean of Students at Bethlehem Bible College, as well as a lecturer. She is a leader for women and is involved in a youth ministry that works for rights/reconciliation and leadership.

***Munther Isaac***

Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac is the academic dean and professor at Bethlehem Bible College and Director of “Christ at the Checkpoint” conferences. He was ordained in January 2016 in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and now serves as pastor of the Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem.

***Yohanna Katanacho***

Rev. Dr. Yohanna Katanacho is professor of Biblical Studies and academic dean at Nazareth Evangelical College. He is an Old Testament editor for Arabic Contemporary Commentary and Asia Bible Commentary. He is an author and he worked with the Palestinian Kairos Document.

***Manfred W. Kohl***

Rev. Dr. Manfred W. Kohl serves as Ambassador with Overseas Council International (OCI), an organization that promotes Christian leadership training in the non-western world. He previously served with World Vision International for seventeen years, first in West Africa and then as executive director of World Vision German-speaking Europe and vice-president of World Vision International. He is author of numerous publications.

***Rick Love***

Rev. Dr. Rick Love is a peacemaker, consultant on Christian-Muslim relations, professor, ordained pastor, and certified mediator. He currently serves as President of Peace Catalyst International. He convened Evangelicals for Peace: A Summit on Christian Moral Responsibility in 2012 and now chairs a network of evangelical organizations emerging from the summit.

***Chawkat Moucarry***

Dr. Chawkat Moucarry was born in Aleppo (Syria) and grew up in a Catholic home. In 1994 he moved to England where he taught Islamic and Middle-Eastern Studies at All Nations Christian College. In 2006 he joined World Vision International, a Christian Development and Relief organization, as the director of interfaith relations. He has

written several articles and books including *Two Prayers for Today*, *The Lord's Prayer* and *The Fatiha*.

### ***Jack Munayer***

Jack Munayer was born in Jerusalem to an English mother and a Palestinian Israeli father. He is currently studying for his Masters in Human Rights and Transitional Justice through the Law Faculty of Hebrew University in Jerusalem. His main areas of focus are International Law, Human Rights Law, Humanitarian Law and Justice. Jack has also been part of the young adults' committee that organized the Kuffiyeh and Saleeb conference.

### ***Salim Munayer***

Dr. Salim J. Munayer is director and founder of Musalaha Ministry of Reconciliation, which has been bringing Israelis and Palestinian together since 1990, and has published several books on Reconciliation, the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, and Christians in Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Salim served as academic dean of the Bethlehem Bible College from 1989 to 2008 and is a professor at the college.

### ***David Neuhaus***

Rev. Dr. David Mark Neuhaus SJ is Latin Patriarchal Vicar for Hebrew Speaking Catholics in Israel and Coordinator of the Pastoral among Migrants and Asylum Seekers in Israel. He teaches Scripture in various institutions in Israel and Palestine. In addition to his PhD, he has completed pontifical degrees in theology and Scripture.

***Ron Sider***

Dr. Ron Sider is the founder of Evangelicals for Social Action, a think-tank which seeks to develop biblical solutions to social and economic problems through incubating programs that operate at the intersection of faith and social justice. He is a founding board member of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment. He is also the Distinguished Professor of Theology, Holistic Ministry and Public Policy at Palmer Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

***Bishop Efraim Tendero***

Bishop Efraim Tendero is the Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) and has served as National Director of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC), representing some 30,000 evangelical churches in the Philippines, for more than 20 years. He is also President of the Philippine Relief and Development Services which works hand in hand with local churches in holistic ministries to serve the poor and needy.

***Geoff Tunnicliffe***

Geoff Tunnicliffe is a global strategist, advisor, peace activist and author, born in Canada. He was the Secretary-General for the World Evangelical Alliance from 2005 – 2014. He frequently speaks at churches, conventions, and universities on major global issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, human rights, interfaith dialogue and spirituality.



## Endnotes:

### *Part 1: Voices of Palestinian Christians*

#### **1. A Testimony to God's Faithfulness**

1. From the opening of the second Christ at the Checkpoint in 2012.
2. Awad, Alex. *Palestinian Memories, the Story of a Palestinian Woman and Her People*. Bethlehem: Bethlehem Bible College, 2012.

#### **2. The Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Palestinian Perspective**

1. From the Fourth Christ at the Checkpoint Conference in 2016.
2. Said, E., *Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims*, in *The Edward Said Reader*, New York: Vintage Books, 2000, p. 128.
3. Chomsky, Noam. *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1999, p. 161.
4. Cockburn, A. and L., *Dangerous Liaisons: The Inside Story of the Covert U.S.-Israeli Relationship*, Oxford: Lion Publishing, pp. 153-143.

#### **3. The Delegitimization of Palestinian Christians**

1. From the Fourth Christ at the Checkpoint in 2016.

#### **4. A Testimony of Palestinian Women in the Midst of the Conflict**

1. From the second Christ at the Checkpoint in 2012.

#### **5. Transforming Hearts through Non-Violence**

1. From the second Christ at the Checkpoint in 2012
2. For more, visit: [www.holylandtrust.org](http://www.holylandtrust.org)