

Pax Christi International in favour of recognition of the state of Palestine and a ban on settlements

World Assembly in Bethlehem affirms its stand in favour of nonviolent struggle against occupation

The World Assembly of Pax Christi urges all UN-member states to recognize the state of Palestine and to ban Israeli settlements in occupied Palestine. The 160 participants in the Assembly of the international Catholic peace movement in Bethlehem/West Bank from 13th to 17th of May are deeply concerned about Israeli policies that deny the rights of the Palestinian people and preclude the possibility of a two state solution. Pax Christi International supports Palestinians in their nonviolent struggle to end occupation and Israelis who stand for human rights and international law, including as applied to Palestinians.

Pax Christi International welcomes the Vatican's recognition of Palestine as a sovereign state and believes that bilateral recognition is an important acknowledgement of the right of Palestinians to self-determination. With the new Israeli government's refusal to turn 22% of the land of the former Palestine Mandate into the new state of Palestine, the UN must implement UNSC Resolution 242, by which Israel is required to withdraw from the territories occupied since 1967.

Since the Israeli government continues to allow the building of new settlements and the enlargement of existing settlements, both of which are violations of international humanitarian law, all collaboration with occupation must end. Third parties, including the US, the Russian Federation and EU member states are responsible for ensuring respect for international law. In order to prevent settlements from becoming profitable, settlement products should be banned. With Palestine a member of the International Criminal Court, war crimes can be sentenced now.

Participants in the Assembly, who came from five continents, joined the Nakba commemoration in Bethlehem. They remembered the 750,000 Palestinians who were driven out or fled in 1947/1948, as well as the ongoing Nakba, which threatens Palestinians with expulsion from home and land at any time. They visited refugee camps and farmers in villages in the Jordan Valley and in the south of Hebron, where farmers expect the Israeli military to destroy their houses, water systems and stables if the international community does not act to prevent such violations of international law.

Pax Christi International encourages Palestinian and Israeli human rights and peace organizations to continue their work for a just peace in the Middle East based on human rights and international law and proclaims its solidarity with these groups. Pax Christi encourages all pilgrimages to the Holy Land to engage with the local people of Palestine. Without hope and vision and solidarity neither the oppressed nor the oppressor can find a way out of violence, war and a culture of death. To stand for life is Pax Christi's international responsibility.

Bethlehem, 17 May 2015

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