

Dear Friends,

Apologies, but the usual e-bulletin was not produced at the weekend. Instead, we are looking at the dreadful situation in Israel, and asking you to get involved and add your voice and prayers to the atrocities that are happening now and reflect on what has happened in the past.

On Saturday the Palestinians marked Nakba Memorial Day. Pax Christi produced the following appeal. Admittedly it is too late to join in the gathering they had on Saturday, but we urge you to take part, in your own way, as soon as possible.

Circles of Silence - Nakba Memorial - May 15th 2021

With other Pax Christi International Sections, Pax Christi England and Wales is calling for

Circles of Silence *on or near* Saturday 15th May.

May 15th is Nakba Day, when we remember the forced displacement of 750,000 Palestinians after the Israeli Declaration of Independence on 14th May 1948. These families became refugees and have never been allowed the right of return to their own homes. Many still live in refugee camps within the West Bank or in surrounding countries. That time is known as the 'Nakba' or 'Catastrophe'.

Since 1967, and the Six Day War, Israel has maintained military control of what remained of Palestine, has colonised these Occupied Territories through Israeli settlements (declared illegal under international law), has taken more land, destroyed Palestinian homes and villages, has displaced Bedouin Communities and regularly uses excessive violence against the Palestinian population.

It is important that we recognise the injustices and violations of international law that took place in 1948, 1967 and in the on-going Nakba of today. We pray and work for justice for ALL in Palestine and Israel.

Pax Christi, England and Wales, invites you to be part of a global Circle of Silence in whatever way is possible for you by:

- ***lighting a candle and spending time in personal silence;***
- ***joining with others in your family, Community, School or Parish to spend time in silence;***
- ***holding a Circle of Silence (Silent Vigil) in your local community;***
- ***holding an online vigil;***

· taking a photo with you holding a peace message for Palestine – that we can put on social media.

Whatever you do: please let Pax Christi know, send photos and, if you wish, messages that Pax Christi will send to Palestine.

Lots more about the situation, including comments from other organisations, are available through [Pax Christi](#).

There are plenty of articles that we have collated here in regards to the developing situation over there. Read on for more information...

News from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (includes an Action)



Last Saturday 150,000 of you joined us marching through the streets of London. Thousands more took part in demonstrations across the country. THIS REALLY MATTERS.

Palestinians heard and saw the mass outpouring of support coming from the UK, and also the strength of our solidarity movement. Today, they are calling for a General Strike across historic Palestine. They are asking us to harness our strength and raise our voices even louder in solidarity with them. Israel can no longer hide its brutal, racist, apartheid policies... now is the time for the world to take action, but we need you!

We are asking you to take four actions for Palestine, the first of which is to [write to your MP](#).

The other actions, including spreading the word, are all to be found on the PSC

website [here](#).

A Christian in Jerusalem at the start of Another War

Stephanie Saldana has written a really good article for America Magazine, dated the 14th May, whereby she talks about the events that lead up to this war starting. She said '*None of this was unexpected. No, it was all like watching a slow-moving train.*'

Stephanie talks about the fact that you do not have to be for the Palestinians and against the Israelis. '*There is a third place, which is not “for” or “against,” and that is the place of love, a love rooted in justice, a love that understands that no one here will be free until the Palestinians have their freedom, and that until this happens, these cycles of violence will continue, over and over again, and that it will be the children who pay the highest price.*' Go to [America Magazine](#) to read the full article.

Up to the minute details on the Escalation in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Israel are available from [OCHA \(United Nations Office for the Co-Ordination of Humanitarian Affairs\)](#).

Their Key Asks:-

The fighting must stop immediately.

Until a ceasefire is reached, **all parties must agree to a ‘humanitarian pause’, while Israel should reopen the Kerem Shalom and Erez crossings.** These measures would allow humanitarian agencies to carry out relief operations, and people to purchase food and water and seek medical care. **Humanitarian Corridors** inside Gaza must be agreed to allow movement within Gaza for the delivery of assistance.

There is also a lot more information about the number of casualties, and about the number of displaced Palestinians.

[Medical Aid for Palestinians](#) also have updated news on the situation on the West Bank, Jerusalem and in Gaza. It also tells you more about the issues facing the Palestinians, and how you can help.

Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) writes ***'As the death toll in Gaza nears 200, demonstrators across the UK took to the streets this week to protest Israel's relentless bombing and the ongoing occupation.***

Following seven days of Israeli airstrikes that have bombed homes, the offices of media organisations and damaged health clinics, CAAT is calling for an immediate investigation into whether UK-made arms have been used in the ongoing bombardment of Gaza.

In the last five years alone Downing Street has licensed over £400 million worth of military equipment to Israeli forces, including many weapons & components that are likely to be used in this sort of bombing campaign. '

CAAT are asking us to call upon the UK Government to block all arms sales to Israel. Click [here](#) to sign the petition. They are also asking you to follow CAAT, Palestine Solidarity Campaign and War on Want for the latest news on further actions and upcoming demonstrations.

Christian Aid are asking us to stand with the Palestinians and Israelis, by emailing the UK Government to call for a ceasefire. By the 17th May, in Gaza alone, almost 200 people had been killed, including 58 children. Click [here](#) to add your name.

A Jew in Solidarity with Palestine (taken from www.patheos.com)

Robert A.H. Cohen was asked to speak at a Nakba 2021 Rally in solidarity with Palestine on the 14th May. He makes some really good points, and in particular says *'Balance is not missing from this moment, but the truth is.'*

[The full speech is available here.](#)

Middle East Children's Alliance

It seems important that we remember the most innocent of all victims of this violence - the children.

Their article ['Eid Al-Fitr this year in Gaza'](#) makes for sobering reading.

They also have a Facebook page, which is giving up to the minute information, as things happen, along with campaigns and fundraisers. Find it [here](#).

Finally, on 12th May an Open Letter was sent to Cardinal Nicholls on Jerusalem from NJPN and Pax Christi.

As part of that letter they wrote: -

We urge you and the Bishops of England and Wales to answer the call of the Heads of Churches in Palestine who say:

'We call upon the International Community, the Churches and all people of goodwill to intervene in order to put an end to these provocative actions, and to continue to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. We join in prayer with the intention of the Holy Father Pope Francis that "the multi-religious and multi-cultural identity of the Holy City might be respected and that fraternity might prevail."

Details of the letter can be read through [Independent Catholic News](#).

With grateful thanks to Anne O'Connor who has helped provide much of the information used in this e-bulletin. Thanks also to all of you who have already signed up to the campaigns mentioned above.

Most of all, please pray for the people of Palestine and Israel.

The next e-bulletin will be out in just over two weeks' time, so in the meantime if you want something included, please send it to ebulletin@justice-and-peace.org.uk

Kind regards

Sharon

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The items above are emails received from around the Network which may be of interest to those involved in working for justice and peace.

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