“Equality is the precondition for justice and peace will be the fruit.”

KAIROS Palestine and Israel Delegation Report
Introduction to the delegation

The KAIROS Church Leaders Delegation to Palestine and Israel took place between Nov 17-28, 2019, bringing together eight delegates - settlers, Indigenous persons and newcomers - representing seven members, and the Executive Director, of KAIROS. Brief bios of delegates can be found in Appendix A. The delegation was co-chaired by Bishop Susan Johnson from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) and Rev Rosalyn Kantlant’am Elm, from the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC), Diocese of Huron.

The delegation aimed to strengthen collective, ecumenical and denominational policy and partnership work in Palestine and Israel, highlighting support for grassroots women's organizations in peacebuilding and deepening the understanding of the impacts of conflict and occupation on women and girls. Delegates met with partners in Palestine and Israel, learning about their work and context with a focus on women’s empowerment and women’s role in building sustainable peace.

The delegation was hosted by KAIROS partner Wi’am: Palestinian Centre for Conflict Transformation.

During the ten days, delegates travelled to Bethlehem, Ramallah, Jerusalem, Jericho, Tel Aviv, Gaza, Nazareth and Tiberias. They met with women’s groups supported by Wi’am in four communities including Thabra, Beit Umar, Jericho and Bethlehem, visited community development and infrastructure projects, and met with civil society organizations, Canadian government representatives, human rights groups and religious and community leaders both in Palestine and Israel.

From the beginning, delegates committed to education and advocacy upon their return to Canada - sharing what they had heard, amplifying voices and making visible the work of partners. Delegates have written a daily blog series which has been posted on the KAIROS website. See Appendix B. The following messages and recommendations to the Canadian government are intended to complement this blog series.

NOTE: This delegation was supported financially by KAIROS with special contributions from member churches including: The Anglican Church of Canada (ACC), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC), The Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Canadian Religious Conference (CRC) and The United Church of Canada (UCC).
KAIROS’ work in Palestine and Israel is guided by Principles for Human Rights and Peace which inform KAIROS’ partnership work in all countries and with all partners. These principles include:

- Respect and assertion of human rights and dignity for all
- Commitment to International Law and International institutions
- Equality including gender justice and racial justice
- Peace and Justice
- Non-violence
- Ending political and religious extremism
- Self-determination
- Commitment to advocacy and action

These principles were reinforced during the delegation and inform all reports, recommendations, statements, advocacy and actions coming from the delegation.

**Key messages from delegation**

Water cistern in Qalqilya

Leader of Jericho women’s cooperative

Delegation and women’s group in Thabra
The delegation witnessed the impact of work with local women’s groups, particularly the work of our partner Wi’am. We met with women’s groups in Thabra, Beit Umar, Jericho as well as women from Bethlehem and the surrounding refugee camps. These groups provide a critical space for women to meet, share and learn about their rights, nationally and internationally, including learning about Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and UNSCR1325, the UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security. We observed Wi’am’s commitment to addressing issues of violence against women locally, including domestic violence and so called “honour crimes and killings”, as well as the impacts of the occupation and military violence.

In the village of Beit Umar one of the delegates asked where the women found hope in the face of the harsh reality and injustices of occupation. The group of largely Muslim women responded, “Our faith in God, of course.” One of the women added: “This place is what gives me hope. We come together as a group to heal, train, get legal advice, learn and have fun together. We come to this place to empower ourselves.” The women’s groups offer a critical vehicle for support, provide opportunities for learning and empowerment, and assist the women in addressing collective concerns, beginning at the local level.

Jennifer Henry, KAIROS Executive Director and a delegate, writes about the importance of these women’s groups in empowerment and in healing in her blog, *A conspiracy with the God of Hope.*

As much as these groups offer tangible support, they face serious limitations and challenges. The context of occupation is a relentless threat to these women and the work that they are doing to build peace in their communities. They are surrounded by settlements. There is a constant presence of Israeli soldiers. There are numerous check points contributing to a lack of access to Palestinian villages and agricultural land. In the villages of Thabra and Beit Umar there were single entrance roads that could be closed at any time. Children and family members (especially young boys and men) are being arrested, interrogated, tried and detained under Israeli military law, often under military detention without charges. In Beit Umar, most of the women testified that they had at least one relative in prison; one woman said that all five of her sons were in jail.
There are aggressive restrictions on access to land and agriculture. There are very few livelihood opportunities (i.e., the West Bank and Gaza have some of the highest unemployment rates in the world). With no economic alternatives, many Palestinian women, are forced to work in settlements to provide for their families. For Palestinian women work in Israeli settlements provides many challenges including having to travel in the early morning on overcrowded buses where they experience harassment, leaving their children alone in the morning to get up and get to school alone, and mistreatment in the workplace. In addition, they are participating in an economy that they view as an outcome of illegality with respect to international law.

In Jericho we shared a meal with a women’s group that has set up a successful cooperative and opened a local restaurant. These women expressed a desire for more economic development and more cooperatives where Palestinian women can find employment away from the settlements. One of the women, the leader of this group, said to us:

“You see us eating, laughing and having fun, but we are choking. The very air that we breathe is controlled by Israel. I am a peace-loving woman, but I am living under occupation. I want to enjoy justice, but I don’t know how to get this justice. I want to go to the sea and swim.”

We met empowered, resilient, courageous women who know their rights and are seeking to build conditions for peace at a local level and proposing economic alternatives. But, the equality, peace and security they seek is not possible under occupation. This is a message that we bring back to Canada. Canada needs to continue (and increase) financial support to local women organizations, peacebuilders and human rights defenders in Palestine and in Israel, but Canada also must support the human rights of Palestinian women and this is only possible by ending structures of occupation.

Recommendation
Canada has a strong policy base to take leadership and support local women’s peace building initiatives as reflected in the Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) and National Action Plan of Women, Peace and Security. We urge Canada to take leadership on these issues and to implement these policies in Palestine and Israel.

1 “Honour” crime is defined as a “crime that is, or has been, justified or explained (or mitigated) by the perpetrator of that crime on the grounds that it was committed as a consequence of the need to defend or protect the honour of the family.”
Palestine and Israel Delegation Report

The delegation met with human rights defenders in Palestine and in Israel. We heard repeatedly that the occupation itself is a human rights violation, that it is impossible to talk about women’s equality and empowerment or the fulfillment of any human rights in the context of the occupation. From Israeli human rights groups we heard about the shrinking democratic space for civil society. The very people who are speaking out on human rights issues and trying to hold the government accountable to international human rights standards are being targeted, threatened, and even criminalized. The delegation witnessed high levels of security at the offices of Israeli human rights and peace organizations including B’Tselem, the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. This was quite shocking in Israel, a country that emphasizes its image as a democracy.

Israeli human rights groups confirmed that the only non-violent path left to human rights defenders and peace activists is international pressure. Among the rights that are threatened and defended by B’Tselem and other rights groups in Israel are the right to free speech and freedom of expression, including the right to non-violent resistance. B’Tselem recognizes the right to support and advocate for non-violent economic measures within the right to freedom of speech, expression and association.

We met with courageous Palestinian and Israeli human rights defenders who are speaking out for human rights at considerable risk and personal cost. Many Israeli human rights defenders are ostracized and threatened within their own society and even families. In Palestine, human rights defenders face decreasing space to defend human rights as a result of occupation and are often criminalized and labelled terrorists by Israeli authorities for their legitimate, non-violent work in defense of human rights. Canada has expressed a commitment to the defense of human rights and human rights defenders internationally as well as a pledge to use a human rights-based approach to policy, cooperation and development. There is an urgent need for Canada to recognize and implement these policies in Israel and Palestine.
**Recommendation**

Canada has articulated a strengthened commitment to support and defend human rights defenders in the recent policy, *Voices at Risk: Canada’s Guidelines on Supporting Human Rights Defenders*. We welcome this new policy and call on the Canadian government and its Embassy to fully implement these guidelines in its relations with, and development in, Israel and Palestine.
The delegation met with Defense for Children International-Palestine Section (DCIPS) in Ramallah. During the meeting, we were walked through the experience of the detention of a Palestinian child (age 12-18) from arrest to incarceration under military law. We learned that 500-700 children are convicted in Israeli military court every year, at a 99 percent conviction rate. Seventy percent of children are charged with stone throwing. Sixty percent are arrested from their home at night while they are not posing any threat. We learned that solitary confinement is used as an added punishment once children are confined and children face solitary confinement for an average of 16 days. We heard about the impacts of trauma on the child and family, including the breakdown of parent-child relationships, depression and suicide. These concerns were reiterated by B’Tselem. For three years, B’Tselem has not cooperated with the Israeli military law enforcement in their pursuit of justice, arguing that these institutions are not a true justice system. They argue that the military courts are not courts, the judges and prosecutors are soldiers, and conviction is almost 100 percent. In contrast Israeli civilians and Israeli children are tried under a civilian system and children are not held in adult prisons, so there is a clear double standard in the application of human rights and the convention on the rights of children when it comes to Palestinian children.

In her blog, No way to treat a child, delegate, Helen Smith, wrote: *We heard the tragic stories of family homes invaded in the middle of the night, of children from 12-18 taken into custody, blindfolded, cuffed with plastic ties, of many violations of their rights, from not having a family member present for their interrogation, to being asked under threat of harm to family members to sign documents in Hebrew which they didn't understand and which amounted to a confession of guilt. Most alleged crimes are stone throwing and the conviction rate is 99 percent. Defense for Children International in being proactive holds workshops with Palestinian children to demonstrate to them what happens if/when they are arrested and what their rights are. It is a tragedy that these workshops are needed instead of workshops Canadian children might have on bicycle safety or orienteering.*

Executive Director Jennifer Henry joins girls from Gaza in a program to alleviate trauma organized by the Near East Council of Churches.
Lori Ransom, also a delegate, noted that Canada has the recent experience of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and has developed knowledge on the intergenerational impacts of trauma on children as a result of Indian Residential Schools. This experience could inform and strengthen Canada’s leadership on this issue.

**Recommendation**

Canada’s policy indicates a priority and a commitment to the rights of children and youth. We urge Canada to closely monitor and report on the treatment of Palestinian children arrested by Israeli forces and prosecuted in the Israeli military court system.
The delegation had the opportunity to see local initiatives and projects in which Palestinian communities are demonstrating independence and proposing alternatives, creating conditions for, and trying to assert, the right for self-determination. We travelled with Ramzi Zananiri, executive director of the International Christian Committee and founding area committee of the Department of Services to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) to Qalqilya to visit an agricultural access road and a water cistern and irrigation pipeline. Both were small but tremendously important projects and expressions of self-determination where the access to land and water for Palestinians farmers is severely limited. We learned that Palestinians have no rights to the ground water and are not able to drill wells.

We visited women’s groups in Thabra, Beit Umar and Jericho and heard about initiatives in economic empowerment and self-determination that are being proposed and carried out including basket making, embroidery, baking and a women’s cooperative restaurant in Jericho.

We had the opportunity to visit Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH), a specialized hospital run by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) financed by the Palestinian Authority and also supported by LWF and international donors, including Global Affairs Canada. The hospital provides most of the specialized care for Palestinians including pediatric and adult cancer treatment, kidney dialysis and palliative care. It is the only hospital that provides chemotherapy to Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza.

Delegate Susan Johnson writes about some of these initiatives in her blog - Three stories of resilience and self-determination. These are concrete expressions of self-determination at a local level.

We also saw how the system and structures of occupation thwart the right to self-determination. We witnessed the impacts including the separation wall, check points, control of infrastructure and resources, terror and incarceration, especially of young people. We heard of children having to go to hospital and undergo treatment alone because their parents are not given permits to accompany them.
Rev. Rosalyn Elm shared that, from her experience, sovereignty and statehood are about building relationships. In her blog, *Not your grandmother’s pilgrimage*, Rev Elm writes: For me as an Indigenous person, these complicated issues bring to light many problems that we in North America are also dealing with—structural implications of colonialism, nationalistic understandings of land and identity, and the interplay of religion and politics—yet, walking on the soil of Moses, Jesus and Mohammad (PBUH), connecting with the land they lived in, brings what we could possibly see as a way forward. The transforming power of promise of relationship of umma (community) and recognition of other; the radical ethic of self-emptying, of power.

From the experiences in Canada, we have learned that self-determination needs to be grounded in political rights, equality and access to resources and land.

**Recommendation**

We urge Canada to take a lead in supporting the right to self-determination on the ground in Palestine as we recognize and continue to address these issues in Canada.

Palestinians and Israelis with whom we met shared a vision of self-determination and statehood that includes political rights, equality and access to resources and land. Yusef Daher from the Jerusalem InterChurch Centre of the World Council of Churches articulated this vision in the following statement: “Equality is the pre-condition for justice and peace is the fruit.”

Delegate Lori Ransom with women’s group in Thabra

At the water cistern in Qalqilya

Young men engaged in vocational training in Gaza, run by the Near East Council of Churches
As part of the delegation, four members travelled to Gaza at the invitation of the Near East Council of Churches and Al-Ahli Hospital. We visited a community medical clinic, programs for children experiencing trauma because of the protracted violence, vocational training programs for young adults, and the hospital itself. We were deeply impressed by the work of the Near East Council of Churches conducted in unimaginable conditions of deprivation and insecurity. We were privileged to have exchanges not just with staff and leaders of these programs and services, but with the participants and patients as well. Each of the interactions confirmed that the 13-year blockade has created a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. We share the concerns reflected in UN studies that the living conditions in Gaza have so deteriorated that it will become unlivable within a year. Gaza is the most extreme manifestation of the restrictions on mobility and humiliations of the occupation, with the complete disconnection of Gaza confirming the frequent characterization of it as an “open air prison.”

**Recommendation**

We urge Canada to take leadership in the international community to end the blockade on Gaza and ensure residents have immediate access to humanitarian assistance and freedom of movement, while putting in place the necessary conditions to address Israel’s legitimate security concerns.

**Recommendation**

We call on Canada to increase funding to UNRWA which provides essential services to millions of refugees, including those in Gaza where 70 percentage are refugees of 1948. The UN has asked member states to increase funding to fill in the gap left when the US ended its support that had historically accounted for about a third of the UNRWA budget. In 2018 the Canadian government announced $50 million over two years for UNRWA, but this funding is not increasing rapidly enough to fill this critical gap. We urge Canada to give $50 million annually to UNRWA, matching Norway’s contribution based on GDP.
The delegation joins churches and civil society organizations in Canada and internationally in applauding Canada on its vote at the United Nations General Assembly recognizing the right of the Palestinians to self-determination (UNGA resolution A/C.3/74/L.58) and the reaffirmation of this vote on December 18, 2019 during the second and final reading. We remain hopeful that this represents a welcome shift in Canadian policy.

Canada could play a leadership role at the UN. For partners in Israel and Palestine as well as internationally, Canada has been viewed as an example of pluralism. We urge Canada to claim this identity and take leadership on these issues on the international stage.

Recommendation
We call on the Canadian government to continue to take a just, constructive, and human rights-based approach on Palestine-Israel issues, taking into account the extreme imbalance of power between Palestine and Israel and in line with international law and official Canadian foreign policy.
Our ecumenical delegation met with Christian, Muslim and Jewish religious leaders and visited Holy sites of all three faiths. We were pilgrims, but quite different from the millions of pilgrims that visit Israel and Palestine every year.

In the blog, Not your grandmother’s pilgrimage, Rev. Rosalyn Elm writes: There were ten of us. Varying in Christian background and coming from various socio-political contexts and geographical environments, we were traveling together; pilgrims not to the Holy Sites, per se, but to the very locations of Israeli-Palestinian tension and conflict. Giving ourselves to this experience that would wholly transform us.

The experience did in fact transform us, individually and collectively. We set out to hear from the people living in the Holy Land – the living stones – and to learn about the trauma of conflict, the impacts of occupation, and the challenging human rights context. We also listened for the impact on faith, including the difficult place for Palestinian Christian identity. Sadly, many Christian pilgrimages to the region never have this opportunity which severely compromises the possibilities for understanding, for interfaith dialogue, and for conversations towards just peace and ending the occupation.

We learned that Palestinian Christians represent two percent of the population in Palestine and Israel and play a critical role in the work for justice, peace and reconciliation; yet, their voices are often overlooked. It was distressing to hear from the church leaders and partners with whom we met that Palestinian Christians feel increasingly marginalized and that their existence is an inconvenience to Christians around the world. We were told by one church leader: “There has been an increase in isolation of Palestinian Christians, by Christians all over the world. We are seen as a thorn. It would be easier for them if we didn’t exist.”

We observed that this negation of Palestinian Christian existence by many Christian pilgrims is due to the significant presence of Christian Zionism within world-wide Christianity. Christian Zionism serves to further sideline Palestinian history and people, including the existence of Palestinian Christians. Christian Zionism reflects a strong anti-Jewish bias in its theology and practice as it instrumentalizes Judaism and Israel for Christian ends.
Recommendation

KAIROS supports its member churches as they endeavor to decrease the presence and impact of Christian Zionism within their denominations while discerning ecumenical possibilities for greater interaction with Palestinian Christians and those of the Muslim and Jewish faith who seek a just peace in the region.
The Rev. Andreas Thiel
Ordained in 2010, the Rev. Andreas Thiel currently serves as Rector of St. Matthew’s Anglican Church in Windsor, Ontario. In 2018 Andreas oversaw the creation of an ESL program at St. Matthew’s for newcomers to Canada from China. In addition to Parish responsibilities, Rev. Andreas offers pastoral care in his role as Chaplain to residents and staff at Windsor’s Huron Lodge (Long Term Care facility). A past member of the Diocese of Huron Anglican Fellowship of Prayer, Andreas has been a retreat leader and facilitator for post-ordination training. He currently serves on the PWRDF-Huron Committee.

The Rev. Mary Helen Smith
Rev. Helen Smith is a graduate of Knox College, Toronto. She has served congregations in Alberta (Edmonton and Calgary), and Ontario (Chatham and Thornhill). She served at Evangel Hall, an inner-city mission of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in downtown Toronto and as the minister on staff at Calgary Urban Projects Society. For the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Helen has served on the Justice Ministries Advisory Committee, and the Life and Mission Agency Committee. Ecumenically she has served on the Caribbean and North American Area Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and on the Working Group for Affordable Housing, and KAIROS.

Father Paul E. Hansen
Paul Hansen is an ordained Roman Catholic priest of the Redemptorist Congregation, with a life-long commitment to faith for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Paul directs his Order’s justice commitment in Canada and serves as the Director of the Redemptorist Biblical Justice Consultancy. He is a member of the Social Affairs Commission of the Ontario Bishops as well as President of the Canadian Alternative Investment Foundation (CAIF). Paul has a long history with the Canadian ecumenical justice coalitions and has served as a past member and Chair of the Board of KAIROS.

The Rev. Susan Johnson
The Rev. Susan C. Johnson is the National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), a role she has held since 2007. Bishop Johnson is actively engaged on behalf of her church in many justice issues as well as in pursuing ecumenical and interfaith relations. The ELCIC is a partner of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.
Lori Ransom
Lori Ransom is Reconciliation and Indigenous Justice Animator, Indigenous Ministries and Justice, United Church of Canada. She is a member of the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation. She was appointed as the first Healing and Reconciliation Program Animator for The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) and later as Senior Advisor, Church and Interfaith Relations, for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Lori has also had a number of leadership positions at the federal government department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. She currently serves on the Trustee Board of the PCC, as an ecumenical member of the Canadian Indigenous Ministries Advisory Committee of the Christian Reformed Church of North America, and on the Aboriginal Education Council of Centennial College, Scarborough.

The Rev. Rosalyn Kantlaht’an Elm
The Rev. Rosalyn Kantlaht’an Elm is the first Indigenous woman ordained in the Anglican church’s Diocese of Huron, which covers most of Southwestern Ontario. She is priest for the Parish of the Six Nations, as well as chaplain to Her Majesty’s Royal Chapel of the Mohawks, in addition to being Assistant Chaplain at Renison University College and the Diocese of Huron Reconciliation Animator.

Rosalyn is from the Oneida First Nation and has deep roots in both Aboriginal and Anglican life. Her mother Olive is a hereditary clan mother, an elected band official and a teacher of the Oneida language and has served on various committees as well as the Synod of the dioce. Elm’s late father Leslie was an elected band official and also served as Synod delegate. They are descended from the Elm Williams family that donated land for the Anglican church on the Oneida settlement in the 1800s. Ros helped facilitate qtopc (queer and trans people of colour) on campus, along with speaking on numerous occasions about Indigenous history, theology culture from a Haundensauene perspective.

Lana Robinson
Lana Robinson serves as the Clerk of the Canadian Friends Service Committee of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). She has served as an intern for the Quakers, both at the UN in Geneva, and with the Quaker International Affairs Program in Ottawa. Lana was born and raised on Vancouver Island; lived in the Peace River region of Northern Alberta, Saskatchewan, Norman Wells in NWT as well as Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver before returning to Vancouver Island, and the Cowichan Valley. Currently, she manages a storage facility in Duncan BC. Lana also has history with the ecumenical social justice coalitions, serving as a regional representative on the Board of Ten Days for Global Justice.

Jennifer Henry
Jennifer Henry currently serves as the Executive Director of KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives. She has worked in ecumenical social justice for over 25 years, beginning in 1993 when she joined the Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice (ECEJ). Raised in Treaty 1 territory in Winnipeg, Jennifer’s settler ancestors include those arriving on Turtle Island in the early 1600’s. She had the honour of being an ecumenical witness at six of the seven national events of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and served on the Primate’s Commission on the Doctrine of Discovery, Reconciliation and Justice from 2013-2019. Jennifer has a Masters of Social Work and a Masters in Theological Studies from the University of Toronto.
“Come and See…and Act”
KAIROS solidarity delegation visits Palestine and Israel

Blog 1:  Not your Grandmothers Pilgrimage!!!  
By Rosalyn Elm

Blog 2:  A conspiracy with the God of Hope. 
By Jennifer Henry

Blog 3:  You are the light of the world… let your light shine before others…
By Andreas Thiel

By Susan Johnson

Blog 5:  Learning from historical trauma at Yad Vashem. 
By Lori Ransom

Blog 6:  No way to treat a child. 
By Helen Smith

Blog 7:  A terrible beauty. 
By Paul Hansen

Blog 8:  Lost Harvest, Seeds of Hope. 
By Lana Robinson

Full delegation at Wi’am with director, Zoughbi Zoughbi