



“Every war stems from injustice, always.” - Pope Francis

Pax Christi International Marks Nakba Day with an Urgent Plea: Stop the Ongoing Nakba Now

For 74 years on this fateful day, Palestinians, from the river to the sea and in the diaspora, have marked the somber anniversary of their *Nakba* (the catastrophe). They remember the 750,000 people who fled the violence upon which the State of Israel was founded and whose return is forbidden. They honor the parents and grandparents who still clutch the keys to family homes beloved by generations but lost to them forever. They mourn the destruction of over 450 Palestinian villages and every treasured olive tree that was uprooted.

Yet, it is not just the past that causes heartache, it is the present – the recurring nightmare of an ongoing Nakba from which the Palestinians cannot awake.

Today, Palestinians in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza relive the Nakba every day. As Palestinian homes continue to be demolished or seized and their land confiscated to enable the expansion of illegal settlements, Palestinians face a never-ending cycle of displacement, direct and structural violence and erasure from their homeland which is a violation of their inalienable human rights to freedom.

Just last week, in addition to proceeding with plans to expand settlements with over 4000 new housing units approved, some deep within the West Bank, Israel announced that it would continue its policy of population transfer by evicting over 1300 people, including 500 children, from their homes to create more space for a military firing zone. As an organization which strives to promote nonviolence, recognizing that true security can never be assured through violence, Pax Christi International condemns this action.

Families who sought temporary refuge in Gaza seven decades ago now find themselves captives in an open-air prison cut off from the world. Their lives, just like their environment, have been shattered by numerous Israeli military incursions and the 15-year brutal siege imposed on them by Israel and Egypt.

For the millions of Palestinians relegated to refugee camps, some just a stone’s throw from their homes, or those in the diaspora, the Nakba is like a cleaver that severs them from their ancestral land. Banned from returning to their rightful homes – many never even allowed to visit – the ongoing reality of the Nakba remains an open wound.

And, for Palestinian citizens of Israel (those who after the Nakba found themselves living within the Green Line) the Nakba hides in a wide range of harsh discriminatory laws designed to limit their freedom. These sixty-five plus laws impact nearly every aspect of Palestinian life – from whom they can marry to where they can live. One need not look any further than the passage of the 2018 Jewish Nation-State Basic Law and the 2022 Family Reunification Law to recognize that unequivocally and most intentionally, a two-tiered system of citizenship has been created within the state.

The Nakba is a historical fact. It is the narrative and the reality that has become the touchstone of Palestinian life. With every violation of the inalienable human rights of Palestinians, this daily Nakba creates a very bleak future for peace.

Pax Christi International stands with its Palestinian brothers and sisters in remembering the Nakba. We honor the truth of what occurred, and we ask how much longer? How much longer must the Palestinian people be oppressed by living and reliving the Nakba? How much longer will the international community, that has acted promptly in other situations of injustice and human suffering, turn a blind eye, and sanctify the sins of the past and present that are perpetrated with impunity?

Pax Christi International calls on the international community to:

- Recognise the Nakba and the right of return and/or compensation for Palestinian refugees, as guaranteed in international law, specifically UN Resolution 194,¹ as a prerequisite for a just and fair Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement;
- Acknowledge that Palestinians have the right to nonviolent, peaceful protest and find practical ways to support them;
- Insist that all Palestinians are afforded their human rights as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, international and humanitarian law, the Geneva Convention and Rome Statute, and so on, and demand that all violations of these rights are condemned and independently investigated.

Reaching a fair and just political solution is the only path to peace.

Therefore, we call for the parties to return to the negotiating table to establish a peace agreement that recognises and protects the human dignity and rights of the Palestinian and Israeli people as equals. We believe that the revival of a peace process must be based on a steadfast commitment to abide by international law and UN resolutions.

¹ UN Resolution 194 adopted by the General Assembly on 11 December 1948 and subsequent UN resolutions have yet to be implemented, nor has the State of Israel been held to account for denying Palestinians the right of return that is enshrined in them.