

Eglise Protestante  
Unie de Belgique



Verenigde Protestantse  
Kerk in België



Kairos Palestine  
Ms Hind Khoury, General Secretary  
Dar Annadwa, International Center of  
Bethlehem  
P.O. Box 162  
Bethlehem  
Palestine

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Brussels, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2018

Dear Ms Khoury,  
Dear sisters and brothers,

Much has been written this year, also in the Belgian press, about the fact that it is 70 years ago that the State of Israel was established. Welcome as the foundation of State of Israel may have been, it also led to the *nakba* for the Palestinian people. The year 1948 meant the beginning of the uprooting of many Palestinians who were made strangers in their own land or had to flee their country, so that today some five million Palestinians are considered refugees.

In the eyes of many Palestinians, the *nakba* was not a one-off event but is a continuing process of dispossession of land and houses, disregard of Palestinian rights, and suffering without end, especially in Gaza. The two-state solution hangs on a thread and prospects for peace between Palestine and Israel seem dimmer than ever before. The opening of the United States embassy in Jerusalem did not bring peace any closer. On the contrary, it went against United Nations resolutions and diminished even further the potential of the United States to be a broker in negotiations concerning the 'peace process'. Furthermore, it led to protests in Gaza and the killing by the Israeli army of more than a hundred Palestinians, including children, and the injuring of more than 13,000 others. We fully agree with the World Council of Churches Central Committee when it stated (at its session in Geneva in June) that the use of live ammunition on unarmed civilians cannot be defended legally or morally as an expression of the right to self-defence of a state. The disproportionate use of armed force against unarmed civilians is indeed a clear violation of international humanitarian and human rights law which requires an international inquiry.

With the WCC, it is our firm conviction that all actors in the region should refrain from violence, from incitement to violence, from exposing children to violence and confrontation, from oppression, occupation and injustice, and to invest instead in dialogue and negotiations as the only path to a just and sustainable peace for all people in the region.