



NEDERLANDSE JAARVERGADERING VAN
HET RELIGIEUS GENOOTSCHAP DER VRIENDEN

24 th May 2012.

To the Government of the Netherlands

Re: Netherlands-Israeli Cooperation Council.

Dear Ministers,

Last year the annual meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) decided to respond to the Kairos document of Palestinian Christians (see attachment). At our recently held annual meeting we have again spoken at length about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and what we might do to contribute to ending it.

Reputedly your outgoing Cabinet intends to agree upon a new cooperation agreement between Israel and the Netherlands soon (before the 7 th of June). This causes us serious concern.

The international community, including the European Union recognises that Israel consistently flouts international law and human rights standards. The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs has repeatedly stated that Israeli policies such as settlement expansion are contrary to international law. The European Union's position is clearly outlined in the Council Conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process, adopted at the Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Brussels on 14th May 2012 by all EU Member States including the Netherlands.

Despite this, Israel continues to violate international law. The International Court of Justice in The Hague, the Netherlands, declared in 2004 that the wall built by Israel is illegal. The Court also confirmed the illegality of the Israeli settlements and this verdict was affirmed by the UN General Assembly (A/RES/ES-10-15 of 20 July 2004). The Netherlands also voted in favour of this resolution.

Nevertheless, Israel continues to build the illegal wall in the West Bank and expand settlement construction in the West Bank. Recently the Israeli Government approved the three settlement outposts of Bruchin, Rechelim and Sansana, officially sanctioning the annexation of more Palestinian land. The illegal blockade of Gaza continues, while Israel's Supreme Court has recently ruled that Israeli companies can exploit West Bank resources, even though this is in contravention of international law and specifically Articles 43 and 55 of the Fourth Hague Convention.

The Dutch Government states that it is in favour of a comprehensive peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, with a two-state solution with the 1967 borders as starting point. The Government has called on both sides to refrain from steps that impede the resumption of negotiations and which prejudice the final outcome of the negotiations. Israel's

settlement expansion and construction of the wall – in several places on Palestinian territory- change the facts on the ground and attempt to influence the final outcome of negotiations.

The Netherlands brands itself as the legal capital of the world and Article 90 of the Dutch constitution states: “The government promotes the development of the international legal order.” The Netherlands’ decision to strengthen bilateral relations with Israel therefore runs contrary to the Dutch position on international law. The Dutch Government’s decision to intensify its relations with Israel, a state which consistently flouts international law and human rights standards, conflicts with its own stance on the peace process and the international legal order of the Netherlands.

As long as Israel does not respect the relevant international law and human rights we sincerely believe that our Government *instead of* entering into an additional cooperation agreement with Israel should take following policy measures:

- To call on Israel once again to respect international law and human rights and apply these in Israel as well as the occupied territories (future Palestine).
- To implement a total ban on the sale, export and transit of weapons by the Netherlands and companies in the Netherlands to Israel.
- To end the cooperation with the Government of Israel in terms of research and development in the field of security- and defence policy, also in a European Union context.
- To declare a ban on goods produced in the illegal settlements in the occupied territories, preferably together with all member states of the European Union.
- To call on Israel once more to reopen the negotiations on a comprehensive peace agreement resulting in a two state solution within the borders of 1967 so as to give both peoples a chance to develop in peace and security.

In this connection we would like to draw your attention to a passage in the concluding document of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation held in Kingston- Jamaica by the World council of Churches last year:

“Our love for the peoples of Israel and Palestine convinces us that the continued occupation damages both peoples.”

It is against the background of this conviction that our church makes the above protests and concerns known to our Government.

We are looking forward to your speedy response!

Yours sincerely,

Kees Nieuwerth
Clerk.

Attachment: Response of Netherlands Yearly Meeting to the Kairos document.