

Minutes of Netherlands Yearly Meeting 2012 on the Israel-Palestine conflict.

AV 12/14 Kairos-document Palestinian Christians – how to proceed?(1)

Last year we formulated a response to the Kairos document of Palestinian Christians which calls for non-violent protests in view of the continuing occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel (see minute AV 11/20). To assist us in reflecting further on the meaning of the theme of Just Peace in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict four speakers shared their insights and experiences with us, after which there was an opportunity to raise questions. After these plenary presentations we continued sharing our thoughts in our small base groups.

Jaap Hamburger of a “Different Jewish View” criticised the often one-sided and coloured presentation by organisations which pretend to speak on behalf of the entire Jewish community, such as the Centre for Information and Documentation on Israel (CIDI) and the Centralized Jewish Dialogue (CJO), whilst within the Jewish community this conflict is characterized in many different ways. He emphasized that The Israeli-Palestinian conflict in essence is a territorial conflict and not a religious one, although several parties in the conflict are using religious motives to legitimate their position in the conflict. A Different Jewish View attempts to provide honest and objective information about the conflict and is a proponent of a two-state solution to the conflict.

Liz Scurfield (Quaker Council for European Affairs) explained why QCEA occupies itself with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: this is because the European Union may play an important role in contributing to a lasting peace in Palestine and Israel. Moreover European Quakers have a special link with Palestine since there is the Monthly meeting in Ramallah. The QCEA asks Quakers in the Netherlands to: first of all recognize the fact that although Jewish people have in extreme ways been treated unjustly in Europe throughout centuries, this can be no excuse to remain silent about the injustice the Palestinian people are subjected to; secondly to call jointly on our governments to take action to end the occupation of the Palestinian territories in a non-violent and efficient way – including enforcing a number of targeted sanctions amongst which a total ban of imports of goods from settlements in

the occupied territories, settlements that are after all illegal according to international law; and thirdly for Netherlands Yearly Meeting to take action so as to make the voice of QCEA stronger.

Sytse Tjallingii told us about the experiences of Marlies Tjallingii and himself whilst giving courses communication and non-violent communication to Palestinians in Ramallah, which was very much appreciated by the participants and may help them in dealing with the daily reality of the occupation.

Ineke Steen told us of her meetings with Palestinians in the occupied territories (whilst she was there with Christian Peacemaker Teams). Palestinians need to feel we are concerned in our part of the world about their problems. This is why they gladly involve us in their daily lives. In spite of the misery of the occupation Palestinians keep the hope for a just and lasting peace alive. To illustrate this she told us about Daoed Nasser, a Palestinian Christian, who in spite of constant opposition refuses to give in or surrender to embitterment or hate.

AV 12/15 Kairos-document Palestinian Christians – how to proceed? (2)

Several ideas were suggested to make a positive contribution to achieving just peace, such as planting olive trees, organizing a Quaker trip to Israel and Palestine and supporting Sabeel. We wish to support and encourage one another in our attempts to make an personal contribution by answering the call of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands to buy Palestinian agricultural produce (e.g. of Canaan Fair Trade). Next to this we are calling on one another to boycott the products of the (illegal) settlements on the West Bank wherever possible.

Netherlands Yearly Meeting supports the call of QCEA . We are asking the Clerk of our Yearly Meeting to send a letter as soon as possible protesting the intensification of the bilateral cooperation with Israel by way of the founding of an Netherlands-Israel Cooperation Council. Furthermore we are encouraging individual Friends to send letters on this subject to members of the Dutch Parliament.