



NEDERLANDSE JAARVERGADERING VAN
HET RELIGIEUS GENOOTSCHAP DER VRIENDEN

ANSWER FROM THE NETHERLANDS QUAKERS TO THE 'KAIROS DOCUMENT' BY PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS

July 5, 2011

Dear Friends, for thus Jesus called his disciples, those who do as he taught them,

As Dutch Quakers, members of the Religious Society of Friends in the Netherlands, we have respectfully received your Kairos document, your cry for justice. Your attitude of love signals hope to us, notwithstanding your suffering in consequence of the occupation. As you write, your call to us arises from a historic moment of unity among Palestinian Christians. It is heartening to see that this unity among Palestinians appears to have increased in the meantime.

We too want to see 'the face of God in every human being'. Our faith-based principle is, also, equal rights to a dignified existence for all and the right to protection of the oppressed. It is in line with our tradition to break down images of animosity, to seek connectivity and constructive dialogues and to work for justice, peace and security for all.

Your document has touched us deeply and we feel called to respond.

You are asking us to speak a word of truth, by taking a stance against the Israeli occupation of the land that you have inhabited for generations. Moreover you suggest us to add deeds to words and adjust our behaviour as consumers and as investors, so we no longer support that occupation.

We have taken longer to answer you than we should. We have once again during this annual gathering pondered what Christ asks of us in our situation, knowing yours. Many of us for a long time already resist buying produce from the illegal Jewish settlements and prefer to buy Palestinian products, in as far as these can be distinguished in our shops. Your story and your appeal prompt us to continue doing so in a more consistent manner. We will gather information about further possibilities. We support our representatives in the Quaker Council for European Affairs in their efforts to improve product origin information. We will stay in contact with Quakers in Ramallah to further support them in their peace work where we can.

Our truth, which is not necessarily *the* Truth, is that neither Israel nor any other nation can call a country their own if they control it with violence. We note a painful parallel with the politics of our European governments that make "the other" into an enemy in the areas that we call "our own" and where we live in relative prosperity. The notion that Palestine/Israel is one nation between the river Jordan and the Mediterranean now sounds further removed from reality than ever before. In the Netherlands too, support is dwindling for the notion of a unity of peoples rooted in a shared culture in which the same God is worshipped.

In addition to a word of truth we are searching for a word of love we would like to speak. As Netherlands Quakers and as Netherlands churches we have so far been trying in vain to engage in conversation with the representatives of Israel in our country. We are prepared to listen to them too, to allow them the chance to express to us their suffering – historical, alleged and real – hoping that this will help them to move on and leave it behind them. We would want to ask them whether developments in their region, the appeal for justice and democracy of neighbouring peoples is a Kairos moment for them too, *the* Moment to put their ideals into practice and to follow their Calling to be an example to other nations.

We hold on to the awareness and the resulting hope that beyond words and deeds that divide, beyond the suffering that people inflict on each other, there is a reality in which God connects everyone and can touch every heart.

Together with you we express our confidence that God's goodness will prevail.

With Friendly greetings,

Netherlands Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers),
gathered Barchem from 13-15 May 2011.

On behalf of Friends,

Kees Nieuwerth, clerk