



WE CHOOSE ABUNDANT LIFE

نفتار الحياة

**WCAL-Group on Palestine:
Renewed Commitment to Justice, Peace, and Human Dignity
15 February 2024**

1. In the face of the ongoing indiscriminate, unbearable, and inhumane atrocities waged against the Palestinians in Gaza and other parts of Palestine by the Israeli army, resulting in a death toll surpassing 28,000 civilians, with over two-thirds of them being children and women, we, the members of the “We Choose Abundant Life” group vehemently assert our stance. This position is deeply rooted in the formulated contextual theological principles outlined in our document “We Choose Abundant Life”¹ (WCAL) as well as in the “Moment of Truth - Kairos Palestine”² document.

2. The immediate military response that started as an impulsive revenge to the atrocities of October 7, 2023, turned quickly into a devastating and planned war, finding justification and support from several countries in the free world, and met with silence from dictatorships in the region. **This war not only highlights the capacity for human violence, demonising and dehumanising the Other, but also underscores a profound moral crisis that challenges us, not just as Christians but as human beings.** The tragic events in Gaza and beyond demand a collective awakening to the ethical responsibilities we share in safeguarding human life and dignity. As we witness the disturbing realities unfold, it becomes increasingly clear that a moral collapse is gripping not only the region but also, more broadly, the conscience of the global community. This moral crisis urges us to reflect on the fundamental values that unite our shared humanity and demand a response that transcends religious and geopolitical boundaries.

3. **We continue to value life and condemn death on all sides. We continue to affirm our principles regarding the necessity of achieving justice as a way to reconciliation and securing a just and steadfast peace. Our resolute commitment to justice, equal human dignity, and human rights of the most vulnerable and the oppressed** echoes our expression in the WCAL document: “The prophetic role of the Christians of the Middle East requires us to be biased towards the causes of freedom, justice, human rights, the right to self-determination, democracy and the regular peaceful transfer of power in all the countries of the region. We must confront all forms of injustice and double standards, especially when it comes to the right of the Palestinian people to establish their independent state, with Al-Quds as its capital, and the return of the refugees as guaranteed by the international and Arab resolutions and conventions” (par. 97).

4. **We denounce any deviation from the true essence of faith and call for a collective recommitment to the core values that uphold the sanctity of human life and dignity.** The militarisation of religious ideologies, whether in established states or non-state movements and actors, serves as a glaring indicator of the serious conceptual dangers that religions face when they deviate from the core of their message. The essence of religious teachings revolves around the protection of human dignity, justice, and the rule of law in societies. Any engagement in political options that deny legitimate rights, contradict diversity, sow seeds of discord, generalise killing, spread racism, and invert facts is a departure from the fundamental principles that should guide religious conduct.

5. **We emphasise our theological stance that treasures and values the intrinsic dignity of every human being and vehemently reject any interpretation of religious texts or theology that justifies occupation, violence, and just war theories.** We firmly reject any alignment with oppressive forces that dehumanise others. We advocate for nonviolent resistance as a central tenet of our faith. This resistance, rooted in love and guided by the vision of the reign of God as a realm of justice and peace, serves as a beacon of hope in a region still dominated by imperial powers, dictatorships,

¹ Cf. <https://www.wechooseabundantlife.com/>

² Cf. <https://kairospalestine.ps/>



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and political corruption. Our commitment extends to the unequivocal rejection of any form of violence, regardless of its origin.

6. We express profound disappointment with how certain churches have aligned themselves with oppressive forces, dehumanising the oppressed, while others have chosen suspicious silence. Nevertheless, a significant number of churches and church leaders have shown unwavering courage in standing for justice and equity and advocating for the rights of the oppressed. These courageous voices within Christianity recognise the prophetic mission of the Church as a call to speak truth to power and to stand in solidarity with the marginalised.

7. We admire and support the emergence of massive waves, especially among the youth, raising their voices against war and war crimes, including genocide. We find inspiration in these courageous voices and initiatives worldwide, transcending religious boundaries, **including voices within the Jewish community.** These voices pose a particular challenge by dismantling the prevailing narrative that associates Judaism with Zionism or suggests that Judaism is synonymous with Zionism. Criticising Israel's practices that violate international law is not synonymous with anti-Semitism. These popular movements embody the forefront of resistance against war, challenging the actions of Israel's leaders and their impact on peace efforts.

8. We also wish to recognise and commend the courageous voices within the Muslim community, especially among the youth, who, together with others, have played a crucial role in popular protests across many countries. These voices advocate for an immediate ceasefire, emphasise the importance of respecting human lives and dignity, and affirm the rights of Palestinians to self-determination. Notably, they consistently speak out against the conflation of the Palestinian cause as a national one with militant and armed jihad or extremist Islamist claims. These voices challenge oversimplified narratives and contribute to a nuanced understanding of the diverse perspectives within the Muslim community.

9. We emphasise the imperative of adhering to nonviolent frameworks for conflict resolution, including international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and relevant international institutions. Drawing inspiration from the courageous South African efforts in front of the ICJ, we fervently encourage meaningful and creative utilisation of these tools to end the Israeli occupation and bring about a just peace.

10. We call on the international community to scrutinise its stand and take its responsibility to implement a just peace in the region. The evident obstruction of just and enduring peace by Israel's leaders, backed by segments of the international community, necessitates a re-evaluation. It is increasingly clear that Israel's pursuit lacks a genuine commitment to just and lasting peace, risking regional and international stability. Achieving peace rooted in justice requires a concerted effort to rebalance various dimensions within the public domain, guided by principles of contextual theology, good governance, human dignity, the common good, sustainable peace, and equality. **Churches must actively participate in fostering this just peace, refraining from "keeping silent or turning a blind eye to practices that infringe on human freedom and dignity" (par. 51 and 47-48), or echoing the policies of the governments in the countries where they operate.**

11. As we advocate for justice, equality, equity, and the rights of the oppressed, we emphatically assert that lasting security for all individuals in the region can only be achieved through a just and comprehensive peace. The interconnection between justice, peace, and security is undeniable, and any meaningful resolution must prioritise the well-being and safety of all societies involved. We call on the international community to recognise that security in the region is intrinsically linked to a just and lasting peace, and collective efforts should be directed towards addressing the root causes of conflict and fostering an environment where all can live free from fear, need, and violence.