

PALESTINIAN CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE FOR PEACE

WASHINGTON, DC



10/31/2012

We write today as Palestinian American Christians in support of the October 5th letter by fifteen U.S. Christian leaders who called for an investigation of possible Israeli violations of the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act and the U.S. Arms Export Control Act, and, more broadly, whether our aid to Israel is undermining prospects for peace. The letter also urges Congress to hold hearings and regular evaluations to examine Israel's compliance with the two afore-mentioned Acts, and suggests the possibility of withholding military aid for non-compliance.

Many of us maintain strong connections to our families and churches in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza. When we travel to visit our loved ones and the Holy Places, we observe first hand the extreme hardships they face under Israeli occupation. We see American-made weapons wielded by Israeli soldiers at checkpoints that enforce the fragmentation of Palestinian communities and separate Palestinians – Muslims and Christians alike – from their places of work and worship, their farms, schools, and hospitals. We see the ruins of Palestinian homes demolished by weaponized, American-made Caterpillar bulldozers to make way for Jewish-only roads and settlements built on confiscated Palestinian land, in contravention of international law and numerous U.N. resolutions. These bulldozers are exported to Israel under the Foreign Military Sales Program.

Many of us emigrated because life under occupation was increasingly unbearable. Most of us know at least one Palestinian family that has suffered a loved one being imprisoned with no due process, land being confiscated, or business shut down because of the severe barriers on movement and commerce. We could not bear to see our children confronted by an Israeli military that too often uses deadly force against peaceful protests. Christian communities in the Holy Land reach back to the very beginnings of Christianity, but many of our Christian brothers and sisters continue to flee from the intolerable conditions of occupation. The result is that the very existence of indigenous Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land is threatened. Our churches, many of which are among the holiest sites for Christians around the world, used to be vibrant with worship ceremonies and celebrations; now they are in danger of becoming lifeless museums for foreign pilgrims and tourists to visit.

As American Palestinians, it pains us that our adopted country, which prides itself on respect for human rights, is the main arms supplier to an occupation army that uses force to oppress our people, steal their resources, pauperize them, and generally threaten every aspect of their lives.

We quote from the *Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth – A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering*, signed by Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem:

"After prayer and reflection, we cry out from within the suffering in our country, under the Israeli occupation... Today, we bear the strength of love rather than that of revenge, a culture of life rather than a culture of death... Our word to the international community is to ... insist on the [implementation of] international resolutions regarding the Palestinian problem."

We believe that the letter of the fifteen Christian leaders asking Congress to investigate all U.S. military aid to Israel is an appropriate response to the Kairos Palestine call for true peace and justice. It is in this spirit that we wholeheartedly support the clergy's letter.

Blessings and peace,

Tarek Abuata, Philip Farah, Paul Noursi, Grace Saïd, and Ghassan J. Tarazi
Steering Committee of **PALESTINIAN CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE FOR PEACE**