

MKR-SAK 08/02: MKRS MIDTØSTEN-STRATEGI**Saksbehandler:** Hans Morten Haugen

- Dokumenter:**
- Midtøsten-strategi, vedtatt i september 1998
 - Mellomkirkelig råds Midtøsten-strategi 1998-2001 – erfaringer og utfordringer
 - Rapport fra KV delegasjonsbesøk til okkuperte palestinske områder og Israel juni 2001
 - Rapport fra KV konsultasjon i Genève 6.-7. august 2001
 - KV brev om opprettelse av Ecumenical Monitoring Programme in Palestine and Israel (EMPPI)
 - Prayers for Peace from the Churches of Jerusalem to End the Illegal Occupation of Palestine

Saksframstilling

Denne saken legges fram som en prosesssak. Det legges ikke opp til at rådet skal fatte vedtak om strategi i dette møtet, men ha en begynnende drøfting av hva som bør være Mellomkirkelig råds rolle og oppgave i den nåværende situasjon. Drøftingen skjer på bakgrunn av kunnskaper om hva som har vært gjort fra rådets side de siste 3-4 år, og på bakgrunn av kunnskaper om de aktuelle økumeniske initiativ som er tatt, blant annet av kirkene i regionen i samarbeid med Kirkenes Verdensråd.

Denne drøftingen vil videre hente impulser gjennom den økumeniske samtalen som finner sted den 13. februar gjennom det internseminaret som Mellomkirkelig råd arrangerer sammen med Kirkens Nødhjelp og Norges kristne råd. Tema for seminaret er: "De kristne i Midtøsten: Ofre, brobyggere og fredsskapere – Norske kirkers rolle".

Sekretariatet vil deretter bearbeide innspill og ideer fra samtalen i rådet og det økumeniske seminaret med henblikk på å legge fram et forslag til revisjon av rådets Midtøsten-strategi på MKR-møtet 6.-7. mai.

Den vedlagte rapporten om rådets involvering legger vekt på å gi informasjon om hvilke tiltak og initiativ rådet har tatt eller vært deltaker i som ledd i implementeringen av den strategiplan som ble vedtatt i september 1998. Det pekes i den forbindelse kort på hvordan enkelte trekk er blitt tydeliggjort og forsterket. Ett av rådets oppgaver blir å drøfte hvordan disse endringene i bildet utfordrer Mellomkirkelig råds strategi, og å starte identifiseringen av framtidig tyngdepunkt og prioriteringer. Drøftingen bør søke å tydeliggjøre hva rådet anser som sin særskilte oppgave, og hvilke engasjement og oppgaver vi kan delta i sammen med andre aktører - nasjonalt og internasjonalt.

Når saken legges fram for rådet på dette tidspunkt, er det naturlig nok ikke minst på bakgrunn av den dramatisk forverrede situasjonen som voldsutøvelsen, den fiendtlige retorikken mellom partene og mangel på forhandling- og fredsprosess representerer. Den lokale palestinske kirke roper til oss med tyngde at vi må arbeide for å fjerne årsaken til dagens situasjon; den israelske

okkupasjonen av palestinsk land. Som en følge av denne tydeliggjøring av politiske realiteter har det skjedd en skjerping av de ulike holdninger i opinionen både i Norge og internasjonalt, både blant kristne og utenfor kristenheten. Stadig flere omtaler den israelske politikken som en okkupasjonspolitikk, og kravet om en snarlig opprettelse av en palestinsk stat vokser raskt. Samtidig blir stadig flere klar over de meget store vanskelighetene som er forbundet med å stagge den blinde voldsutøvelsen fra grupper innen den palestinske befolkning.

Kontakten til de palestinske kirkene har vokst betydelig. Deres evne til å kommunisere med slike kirker som vår har endret seg drastisk. De er ikke lenger anonyme og glemte, men har delvis høy medieprofil og kompetanse. Den norske kirke har selv vært sentral i mye av det kontaktarbeidet som har foregått. Hva betyr denne situasjonen for norske kirkers engasjement og fokus? For Mellomkirkelig råds rolle?

Mellomkirkelig råd har hatt flere aktører i arbeid på ulike arenaer. Det har vært et tydelig fokus på de palestinske kirkenes situasjon i Betlehem gjennom Borg biskops Betlehem 2000-engasjement i samarbeid med Utenriksdepartementet. Et annet fokus er Trond Bakkevigs arbeid med religiøse ledere omkring det vanskelige Jerusalemsspørsmålet. Et tredje fokus er arbeidet gjennom Stiftelsen Oljeberget med å sikre eiendommen på Oljeberget i Øst-Jerusalem hvor Augusta Victoria Sykehuset ligger, fra uønsket salg på i første omgang og til beste for palestinske kristne interesser på lengre sikt.

KISP har i en offentlig uttalelse lagt et spesielt ansvar på den israelske regjering som den sterke part for å vise tilbakeholdenhet i bruk av voldelige midler, og for få i gang fredssamtaler. Mellomkirkelig råd har dessuten i en uttalelse insistert på at Jerusalem må være en åpen by for alle som søker tilbedelse og bønn der. Ingenting av dette er gått upåaktet hen, og rådet har fått både ris og ros for denne siden av sitt engasjement.

Den negative utviklingen av situasjonen i Midtøsten har selvsagt påvirket de internasjonale økumeniske organisasjonene og deres engasjement. LVF har en sterk lojalitet til de palestinske kirkene gjennom sin medlemskirke i regionen, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan og har engasjert seg meget aktivt diplomatisk i forbindelse med at denne kirkes personell og eiendom er blitt krenket. Kirkenes Verdensråd har gjennom sitt delegasjonsbesøk til Israel og de okkuperte palestinske områdene i juli 2002 og en internasjonal konsultasjon i Genève i august etablert en rekke initiativ for på knytte kirker tettere sammen i solidaritet med de palestinske kirkene. Ett av initiativet som vi har meldt interesse for fra norske side, er Ecumenical Monitoring Programme in Palestine and Israel (EMPPi). Rapporten om dette er vedlagt.

Et gledelig trekk er at Kirkens Nødhjelp har prioritert Midtøsten sterkere det siste året, bl.a. gjennom å opprette en egen Midtøsten-ansvarlig fra høsten 2001. Dette har skjedd også som følge av lang tids arbeid fra Mellomkirkelig råds side. Hos Norges Kristne Råd har engasjementet vært sterkt under Jubileum 2000-markeringen, men lite utover dette. NKR har valgt å ikke prioritere å holde liv i Norsk Økumenisk Komite for Midtøsten (NØKMØ).

Forslag til vedtak:

- 1) *MKR takker for rapporten som beskriver MKRs engasjement og initiativ i Midtøsten, med forankring i Midtøsten-strategien. Rådet vil understreke viktigheten av den formidling av palestinske kirkers stemmer inn i norsk offentlighet som KISP og sekretariatet har bidratt til.*
- 2) *MKR ber om at det arbeides med en revisjon og oppdatering av denne strategien til MKRs møte i mai.*

Mellomkirkelig Råd

Oslo

8. og 9. september 1998

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Sak MKR 33/98: MIDT-ØSTEN-STRATEGI FOR MELLOMKIRKELIG RÅD

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Saksdokumenter: Utkast til strategi

Saksframstilling:

Bakgrunn

Utdelingen av Nobels Fredspris i 1994 til de politiske lederne på israelsk og palestinsk side for gjennombruddet i og med Oslo-avtalen, markerte et tidskille i Den norske kirkes engasjement i Midt-Østen. Eksisterende kontakter og relasjoner fra norske kristne mot grupper og kirker i regionen fikk en ny dimensjon over seg: Hvordan kan de brukes til å hjelpe den skjøre fredsprosessen som Oslo-avtalen innebar starten på? Og nye perspektiver og problemstillinger kom opp. Ikke minst galt det spørsmålet om religionenes rolle. Etterhvert som implementeringen av fredsprosessen ble stående i stampe, ble det klart at jødedommen og islams rolle var undervurdert - ikke bare av drivkreftene bak selve Oslo-avtalen. Og samtidig kom spørsmålet: Har de kristne kirkene i regionen et særlig bidrag for fred og forsoning å komme med?

I tiden etter 1994 har interessen for regionen derfor vokst sterkt i Den norske kirke. Idag er det en rekke relasjoner mellom vår kirke og organisasjoner innen vår kirke og Midt-Østen. For å synliggjøre engasjementet, formidle informasjon og sikre en forpliktelse og varighet på samarbeidsrelasjonene har det vært ønskelig å utarbeide en Midt-Østen-strategi for Mellomkirkelig Råd. Denne skal også være til hjelp for bispedømmer, menigheter, organisasjoner og turoperatører når disse gjør sine overveielser og prioriteringer.

Mellomkirkelig Råd drøftet saken på sitt møte i mai 1998 under sak 22/98 og la vekt på at strategiplanen må være kortfattet, operasjonell og fleksibel. I den plan som nå presenteres for Rådet er det derfor lagt vekt på at den skal gi interesserte klar beskjed om hvilke fokus som er de viktigste. Samtidig skal planen kunne endres raskt ettersom behovet endrer seg.

Det kan være naturlig som en del av bakgrunnen kort å peke på noen av de ulike kontaktene og relasjonene som har vært og er mellom Den norske kirke og Midt-Østen. Den norske kontakten med de mange folkegruppene i Midt-Østen har vært mulig blant annet fordi vi ikke har noen kolonifortid, egeninteresse i regionen eller en politisk agenda som

oppleves uheldig av partene. Utvilsomt hadde Norge langt bedre forutsetninger enn for eksempel Sverige for å føre jøder og palestinere sammen, siden israelske myndigheter hadde en oppfatning om at Sverige var for «palestinavennlig» til at svenske myndigheter kunne være en seriøs dialogpartner.

Tradisjonelt er det Den norske Israelmisjon som har lengst tilstedeværelse i Det hellige land. Deres virksomhet har tradisjonelt rettet seg mot jøder, men har i noen grad også omfattet palestinere. Israelmisjonen har også en periode deltatt i COCOP-samarbeide mellom Den lutherske kirken (ELCJ) og samarbeidende misjoner i Europa og USA.

En rekke viktige begivenheter har bidratt til å styrke relasjonene mellom kristne i Norge og i Midt-Østen, samt mulighetene til å delta i dialog med representanter for de øvrige religiøse samfunnene. Særlig sentralt her er seminaret i Oslo i forbindelse med tildelingen av Nobels fredspris 1994. En rekke kontakter er også gjort i enkelte bispedømmer, i menighetene, i andre kristne organisasjoner og i regi av Bibelselskapet og Kirkens Nødhjelp. Til sammen gir dette et bredt nedslagsfelt i regionen, men der hovedfokus har vært situasjonen for palestinerne.

I årene etter Oslo-avtalen er det vokst fram flere menighet til menighet-relasjoner som f.eks mellom Sarpsborg og Bethlehem og Grefsen og Ramallah.

Norges KFUK/KFUM gjennom Delta Internasjonalt har i lang tid hatt et sterkt nærvær i regionen. Særlig sentrale har Delta vært i å bringe opp menneskerettighetsovergrep overfor myndighetene, også her hjemme. Kirkens Bymisjon har hatt en kontakt til de palestinske kristne, og har i det siste samarbeidet med Norges Kristelige Studentforbund om såkalte alternative pilgrimsturer, der en kan nyte godt av gjestfriheten i palestinske gjestehus. Også noen av prostiene våre, i hovedsak Hallingdal, har hatt en kontakt med palestinske kristne gjennom flere prestebesøk.

Feltprestkorpsets langvarige tilstedeværelse i regionen gjennom den norske FN-bataljonen som har vært utplassert i Gaza og senere i Libanon, har gitt mange prester i Den norske kirke førstehåndskjennskap til konflikten mellom Israel og palestinere og mellom Israel og deres naboland.

Bibelselskapet ivaretar relasjonene til Armenia, og har også en tilstedeværelse i de andre landene gjennom nasjonale bibelselskap. I noen land, som Tyrkia, er bibelselskapets virksomhet den eneste kristne bokproduksjon som tillates. Det er viktig at vi søker å opprettholde en regionforståelse av Midt-Østen som også inkluderer de områdene hvor lite norsk kontakt fra før er etablert.

Det er likevel ingen tvil om at når kontakten mellom norske kristne og Midt-Østen skal oppsummeres, er det et sterkt engasjement for Israels sak som vil dominere. Direkte støtte gjennom Israelmisjonen til Casparisenteret i Jerusalem og tiltak i andre byer, samt en omfattende turistvirksomhet i regi av mange reiseoperatører, har gjort Israel og jødernes situasjon i Israel kjent for mange nordmenn. Israelmisjonen har utvilsomt bidratt med mye informasjon tilbake til Norge, og viser idag også interesse for å styrke kontaktene med andre kristne enn de jødiske kristne.

Med dette litt brokede bildet som et bakteppe, foreslår sekretariatet følgende Midt-Østen - strategi for Mellomkirkelig Råd for Den norske kirke:

MIDT-ØSTEN STRATEGI FOR MELLOMKIRKELIG RÅD

Vedtatt på møtet 8-9 september 1998

Sentrale utfordringer

* I Midt-Østen er det en rekke utfordringer som aktualiserer at Mellomkirkelig Råds oppmerksomhet må være i denne regionen. Strategipalenen har 3 geografiske fokus :

- Israel, de palestinske selvstyreområdene og Jordan
- Libanon, Syria og Tyrkia
- Egypt

* De kristne i den østlige del av Middelhavet blir stadig færre. Utflytting er den viktigste forklaringen, men også ulike former for konvertering fra kristendom til islam er viktige forhold. I Betlehem arbeides det bevisst med utflytterproblematikken, med blant annet å gi relevante arbeidsmuligheter for de som vender tilbake.

* Det er mangelfullt samarbeid mellom kirkene. Forholdet til statsmakten er ett av de kinkige punkter, men også ønske om og behov for internasjonal oppmerksomhet og vektleggingen av *eget* nettverk og egne kontakter - i motsetning til *andres* nettverk - har til nå gjort det vanskelig å bygge tilstrekkelig samarbeid. Våre kirkepartnere i regionen er kjent med de avtalene om kirkefelleskap som Den norske kirke har inngått.

De etablerte kirkene i området opplever en aktiv misjonsvirksomhet fra vestlige kristne i sine nærmiljøer. Siden de fleste av de etablerte kirkene er bygd opp rundt nasjonal tilhørighet, har de ofte liten interesse av å drive aktiv evangelisering overfor andre. En slik måte å arbeide på oppleves ofte som alt for defensiv av de mer evangelikale og karismatiske kirkene. Dette kan skape konflikt.

* Kontakten med de ulike grupper av kristne, i hovedsak kristne med jødisk bakgrunn og kristne med palestinsk bakgrunn, har vært ivaretatt av høyst ulike grupper i Norge. Samtidig er det ingen tvil om at samarbeidet og forståelsen mellom kristne i regionen - på tvers av etniske skiller - tradisjonelt har vært svært svak. Fordi både jøde-kristne og palestinske kristne er sårbare grupper, har de heller ikke tilstrekkelig overskudd til å søke slikt samarbeid.

* Den norske bistanden til området har i liten grad styrket situasjonen for kirkene. Bistanden til de palestinske områdene - i hundre millioner-klassen - har i stor grad vært formidlet gjennom de palestinske selvstyremyndighetene. Forvaltningen av disse midlene har vært utsatt for kritikk. Kirkens Nødhjelp har ingen planer om å øke sin innsats mot regionen utover hva de allerede har gått inn i.

* Den økte turiststrømmen som vil komme til området, blir i særlig grad nyttiggjort av israelske myndigheter, også fordi disse kan tilby flest og best fasiliteter. Blant norske kristne er kjennskapet til palestinske kristne noe økende, men fortsatt foregår svært mye av turistreisene til Det Hellige land uten kontakt med palestinske kristne og de tjenester som disse kan tilby. Dette er både et informasjonsspørsmål, men også et spørsmål om viljen til å tenke nytt ved å flytte fokus over mot "de levende stenene" i Det Hellige land.

* Menneskerettighetsovergrepene i Israel og i de palestinske områdene er omfattende og summariske og vilkårlighet eller ingen retterganger preger politi og påtalemakt. Den misnøyen dette avstedkommer, fortsetter å true den regionale stabiliteten. De menneskelige lidelsene som den stadige stengingen av grensen mellom Vestbredden og Jerusalem medfører, representerer også en trussel mot religionsfriheten i og med at adgangen til hellige steder i Jerusalem begrenses for både kristne og muslimer.

* Den gjensidige mistenksomheten som preger jøder og palestinere er dyp og ofte også religiøst motivert. Arbeidet med religionsdialog mellom de tre abrahamittiske religionene og spørsmål som berører religionsfriheten arbeides det med i flere miljøer, blant annet ved høy-profilerte institusjoner som f.eks Kronprins Hassan av Jordans institutt, men også av grasrot-grupper som f.eks Al-Liqa-senteret i Bethlehem som har mottatt støtte fra MKR.

* Den norske sjømannsmisjon / Norsk kirke i utlandet er svakt representert i det aktuelle området. I tillegg skal nå Norge trekke seg fra UNIFIL, slik at norske feltprester heller ikke er i området. Det er derfor nødvendig å bygge nye relasjoner, noe som må gjøres etter anbefaling fra kirkene i området, og i samarbeid med andre norske kristne organisasjoner. Dette er arbeid som vil ta tid, og det er viktig å la de lokale kirkene legge premissene for denne utviklingen.

* Det er alltid et vanskelig dilemma å samarbeide med en sårbar part i et område når dette kan konsolidere en privilegert posisjon, og mulige motsetninger til andre sårbare grupper. Hvilke relasjoner de kristne har til sine naboer vil variere, og det er helt vesentlig at et økt samarbeid ikke forpurrer eksisterende lokale relasjoner og forsøk på å bygge en felles identitet.

På denne bakgrunn formuleres en overordnet målsetting for Mellomkirkelig Råds Midt-Østen-arbeid:

Mellomkirkelig Råds engasjement i Midt-Østen skal først og fremst bidra til at et levende kristent nærvær i regionen opprettholdes og styrkes

I samarbeid med utvalgte kirker i regionen og med Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) skal Rådets arbeid primært være konsentrert om 3 områder:

- 1. Økumenisk samarbeid innen regionen*
- 2. Religionsdialog og religionsfrihet i regionen*
- 3. Jerusalem-spørsmålet*

Geografisk fokus 1 : Israel, de palestinske områdene og Jordan

Det er naturlig å trekke inn Jordan i kjerneområdet, siden Jordan har en betydelig palestinsk befolkning, har økende samarbeidsrelasjoner med både Israel og Palestina, og fordi den Evangelisk-lutherske kirken (ELCJ) også har en menighet i Amman. Likeledes fordi Jordan idag har et formelt del-ansvar for å ta vare på de hellige stedene i de områdene som ble okkupert etter 1967-krigen.

1.1 Økumenisk samarbeid

Omfanget av norsk reiseaktivitet til Israel og de palestinske områdene er høyt, og de inntrykkene som dannes her bestemmer både virkelighetsoppfatning og kontinuerlig engasjement. Mange som har hatt anledning til å bevege seg utenfor de kulturelle barer som legges opp har møtt levende kristne fellesskap. Denne -i norsk sammenheng ofte oversette realitet- må bety at det må være et sentralt anliggende for Mellomkirkelig Råd at norske kristne kan oppleve Det Hellige Land på en måte som yter respekt for våre palestinske kristne søstre og brødre.

Kontakten mellom norske og palestinske kristne har rettet seg nettopp mot den anglikanske og den lutherske kirken. Den lutherske kirken (ELCJ) er svært liten. Det bør arbeides for at et bispedømme tar hånd om kontakten med ELCJ. Mehigheter bør også oppfordres til å søke samarbeid med andre kirker, i første rekke den anglikanske.

Mellom disse to små kirkene er det idag en økende grad av samarbeid, ikke minst på lokalt plan og det må være et mål for Den norske kirke å støtte opp om de kirkefellesskapsinitiativ som de selv tar.

Kontakten mellom messianske og palestinske kristne må også søkes styrkes og her er det naturlig for mellomkirkelig Råd å søke samarbeid med Israelsmisjonen:

1.2 Religionsdialog

Det vanskeligste spørsmål mellom islam og jødedom er spørsmål som handler om land .løfter og adgangen til de hellige steder. Mellomkirkelig Råd vil fortsette å bringe representanter for de to religionene sammen til dialog.

Når det gjelder de palestinske kristne som vi ønsker å styrke kontakten med, er det nødvendig for oss å forstå at deres fredelige relasjoner med moderate muslimer er viktige for å befeste den palestinske identiteten. Trusselen disse opplever kommer både fra islamsk, jødisk og vestlig-kristen fundamentalisme. For å styrke kirkene, er det viktig at også samarbeidet dem imellom om religionsdialog oppmuntres.

De erfaringene vi gjør med religionsdialog i Norge, Samarbeidsrådet for tros-og livssynssamfunn og fra kontaktgruppene med Islamsk Råd og Mosaisk Trossamfund bør få anledning til å møte erfaringer fra religionsdialog i Midt-Østen. Fred mellom religionene er en forutsetning for politisk fred.

På dette feltet er de teologiske institusjonene i området viktige medspillere. I Jerusalem finnes Casparisenteret hvor Israelsmisjonen er sentrale og dette senteret ser i økende grad utover det tradisjonelle virkefeltet til Israelsmisjonen. Svenska Teologiska Institutet spesialiserer seg på religionsdialog og det katolske senteret Tantur likeså. I tillegg finnes tre sentra drevet av palestinere: International Centre of Bethlehem, Sabeel Liberation Theology Centre og Tantur Ecumnical Institute for Theological Studies.

Det er svært påkrevd å arbeide for at norske teologiske læresteder blir kjent med og tar i bruk muligheten for å etablere utvekslingsordninger med læresteder i Israel og de palestinske områdene.

1.3 Press mot palestinere i Øst-Jerusalem

De kirkene som aktivt arbeider for å motvirke fraflyttingen av palestinere fra området, og som søker å få folk til å komme tilbake, må en søke å støtte. Dette arbeidet foregår særlig i området rundt Jerusalem . Arbeidet er betydelig vanskeligere lengre nord, der en liten andel er kristne. Det kan være en oppgave for Mellomkirkelig Råd å gi informasjon til norske kristne om omfanget av fraflyttingen og om hvordan kristne palestinere forsøker å motarbeide fraflytting.

Sammen med internasjonale og regionale økumeniske organisasjoner, må Mellomkirkelig Råd påtale overgrep som rammer palestinske familier av både muslimsk og kristen opprinnelse på bakgrunn av den økende konflikten omkring retten til land og eiendom i Øst-Jerusalem.

Dialogen med norske myndigheter og med myndighetene i regionen om de menneskerettslige sidene ved en politikk som presser palestinere ut av Øst-Jerusalem må forsterkes.

Deltakelse i Stiftelsen Oljeberget må ses på på denne bakgrunn og bør være en prioritert oppgave som en del av en bredere strategi for å holde et høyere internasjonalt og økumenisk nærvær i Øst-Jerusalem. På kort sikt for å hindre at land må selges og på lengre sikt for å bidra til at eiendommen får en god utnyttelse nettopp for å styrke det moderate palestinske nærvær i Øst-Jerusalem.

Geografisk fokus 2: Syria, Libanon og Tyrkia

2.1 Økumenisk samarbeid

Mellomkirkelig Råd vil arbeide for at et bredere regionalt perspektiv hvor israels naboland bringes inn får mer gjennomslag i den fredsprosessen som norske myndigheter søker å stimulere. Det gjelder særlig Libanon og Syria. I disse landene har det tradisjonelt sett vært mindre kontakter, og det er en svakere tilstedeværelse av protestantiske kirker. Gjennom fellesskap i internasjonale økumeniske organer og ved ulike studieturer, har vi lagt grunnlaget for relasjoner også med kirkesamfunnene i disse landene. Det er særlig den armensk-apostoliske kirken i Libanon og den syrisk-ortodokse kirken i Tyrkia som det er aktuell å utbygge et nærmere samarbeid med. Også med de gresk-ortodokse patriarkatene i Damaskus (Antiokia og Østen) og i Konstantinopel (Det økumeniske patriarkatet) bør relasjonene kunne utvikles noe..

I Libanon og Syria kan Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) spille en viktig rolle og MKR må utbygge kontakten med MECC. Hvordan dette skal skje må avklares og avtales med Kirkens Nødhjelp.

Et mer aktivt samarbeid må initieres mellom internasjonale økumeniske organer og de orientalske kirkene. Kirkesamarbeidet mellom de orientalske kirkene er nå inne i en svært positiv utvikling, der tidligere fordømmelser knyttet til ulike

oppfatninger om Kristi to naturer, ikke lenger er gyldige. Dette gir et godt klima for økt samarbeid.

MECC er en enestående ressurs når det gjelder kunnskaper om kristendommens historie i regionen og til å forstå deres situasjon i dag. MKR vil derfor søke støtte til tiltak i MECC regi som handler om dette og selv bidra til at slik kunnskap spres i Norge.

Det bør arbeides for at norsk teologisk miljø kommer i nærkontakt med oriental-ortodoks teologi slik denne idag utfoldes i de "gamle" kirkene i Midt-Østen. Teologiske institusjoner som NLA, TF og MF må utfordres til å legge tilrette program for utveksling av ungdom og teologistudenter og lærere

Noen av kirkene er også interessert i å formidle sin historie og tilby pakker for turistreisende. Den gresk-ortodokse kirken i både Konstantinopel og i Damaskus kan legge til rette for besøk, og også den syrisk-ortodokse og armenske kirke har enormt rike kulturskatter som fortsatt opprettholdes av kristne i dag.

I samband med 2000års-feiringen for Kristi fødsel bør de kristnes situasjon i hele regionen, og ikke bare i Israel og de palestinske områdene løftes fram.

2.2 Religionsdialog

Et land som Libanon har bred erfaring med religionsdialog . Den nasjonale kristen-muslimske dialogkomiteen i Libanon og kontaktgruppen mellom MKR og Islamsk Råd ville f.eks utvilsomt hatt utbytte av å møtes.

Fordi relasjonene til våre muslimske naboer er så forskjellige i våre to land, har det utviklet seg svært ulike praksiser hos de ulike kirkene.

Et problem i Libanon, Syria og Tyrkia er at de offentlige kontorene som skal ta seg av religiøse spørsmål i all hovedsak har kompetanse på islam. Andre religioner kan i mindre grad gjøre seg nytte av disse kontorene, og det er en alminnelig oppfatning at disse kontorene ikke tjener interessene til f.eks de kristne fellesskapene. Dette bidrar ytterligere til å isolere de kristne.

Innenfor arbeidet med oppfølgingen av "Oslo-konferansen om religionsfrihet" bør Mellomkirkelig råd skaffe seg en oversikt over omfanget av formell diskriminering av kristne i lovverk og i praksis i landene i Midt-Østen.

2.3 Overgrep og press mot kristne

Noe eget menneskerettighetsarbeid drives ikke organisert av kirkene i Tyrkia, Syria og Libanon. Mye av den samfunnsmessige aktiviteten handler om å holde

stillingen som kirke. Imidlertid kan mye av det arbeidet som gjøres klart forstås som menneskerettighetsarbeid i vid forstand. Det vil derfor være viktig både å søke andre kanaler for menneskerettighetsengasjement enn det kirkelige og se at støtte til mer tradisjonelt kirkelig arbeid indirekte har en menneskerettighetskomponent som ikke må undervurderes.

Det norske menneskerettighetsfondet har lenge ønsket å bidra til styrking av organisasjoner i hele regionen. Mange organisasjoner i regionen sliter med betydelige restriksjoner på virksomheten. I Tyrkia er det blant annet forbudt å støtte organisasjoner, men ikke stiftelser og kirker økonomisk.

Mellomkirkelig Råd må derfor arbeide for at de kristnes situasjon i Midt-Østen må gis økt oppmerksomhet innenfor Menneskerettighetsfondets arbeid.

Geografisk fokus 3 : Egypt

Der den koptiske kirken er en majoritetskirke i land som Etiopia og Eritrea er norske misjonsorganisasjoner tilstede med en bred aktivitet . I Egypt derimot er de koptiske kristne mindre synlige i samfunnslivet ,trass i at det er grunn til å tro at omtrent 10 prosent av befolkningen er kristne.

3.1 Økumenisk samarbeid

Den kontakten som er etablert mellom Den norske kirke og Den koptiske kirke gjennom engasjementet til Tunsberg bispedømme , er oppmuntrende og forbilledlig.

Mellomkirkelig Råd har merket seg ideen om å etablere et permanent norsk kirkelig nærvær i Egypt i samarbeid med Den koptiske kirken . Modellen kan være liknende den som Svenske Kyrkan har valgt.

Forutsetningen må være at dette tjener den koptiske kirkes framtid i landet.

Økumenisk Utvalg for Tunsberg bispedømme og bispedømmerådet bør oppfordres til å utvikle dette samarbeidet videre. Særlig bør kontakten med Shoubra el-Chema-bispedømmet og Luxor-bispedømmet følges opp på ulik måte, og MKR har særlige forventninger knyttet til ungdomsarbeidet.

MKR bør følge denne utviklingen, og gi støtte der dette er nødvendig..

Den koptiske kirken er til tross for sine 6-7 millioner medlemmer relativt usynlig i det egyptiske samfunnet. Kirken må ta stilling til hvordan en eventuell økt synliggjøring skal foregå. Frykten for negative konsekvenser ved for sterk eksponering er til stede hos mange av kirkene i Midt-Østen.

3.2 Religionsdialog

Det er dokumentert voldelige overgrep mot kristne i landet, både koptiske og protestantiske. Angrepene kommer særlig fra militante islamister, men det er også rapportert om at militære avdelinger har stått bak vandalisering av kirkelige bygg. Hovedproblemet ligger i begrensningene på utbedringer og renovasjoner som kristne tillates å gjøre på kirkebyggene sine. Det er bare etter tillatelse fra presidenten at slike utbedringer kan finne sted.

MKR vil arbeide for at den diskriminerende praksisen overfor de kristne i Egypt må opphøre.

MELLOMKIRKELIG RÅDS MIDTØSTEN-STRATEGI 1998-2001 - ERFARINGER OG UTFORDRINGER

A) ERFARINGER

Strategiplanen er bygd opp slik at den fastsetter
"å medvirke til de kristne kirkers fortsatte nærvær og tjeneste i Midtøsten"
som selve hovedmålet for Mellomkirkelig råds engasjement.

Hovedmålet søkes realisert gjennom tre strategiske satsingsområder. Disse er:

- 1) Økumenisk samarbeid
- 2) Religionsdialog og religionsfrihet i regionen
- 3) Jerusalem-spørsmålet

Derneft er planen bygd opp rundt tre geografiske foki:

- Israel, de palestinske selvstyreområdene og Jordan
- Syria, Libanon og Tyrkia
- Egypt

Rapporten vil følge den geografiske oppdeling i sin gjennomgang.

Israel, De palestinske selvstyreområdene og Jordan

Relasjoner er bygd opp mellom norske menigheter og hovedsakelig menigheter i ELCJ (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan), primært gjennom satsingen i Borg bispedømme, men også gjennom menigheter andre steder i landet. Formell samarbeidsavtale mellom ELCJ og Den norske kirke ved Borg bispedømme er undertegnet og feiret både i Fredrikstad og i Jerusalem/Amman. Borg Bispedømmeråd har arrangert seminarer to ganger (sept. -98 og jan. -01), begge ganger med sentral deltakelse fra regionen, og med MKR som både faglig og økonomisk støttespiller.

To store delegasjonsreiser fra Norge og en rekke små reiser ble arrangert knyttet til Jubileum 2000, og det var besøk både fra ELCJs prest i Betlehem og ELCJs biskop til Norge, de siste reisene under bønneuken i 2001 og i slutten av januar 2002.

Den Norske Israelsmisjon har fra gammelt av ivaretatt en norsk observatørrolle i ELCJs årlige samarbeidsorgan med europeiske kirker og organisasjoner (COCOP). Denne ordningen er ikke lenger naturlig, og MKR har - i forståelse med Israelsmisjonen og med bifall fra ELCJ - bedt Borg bispedømme forestå denne oppgaven. Det er et premiss fra vår side at vi ikke deltar i COCOP med økonomiske midler, men som et uttrykk for en pastoral relasjon. Det bør vurderes om vi skal utfordre Kirkens Nødhjelp til å delta også, ettersom KN bidrar med midler til ELCJs skolearbeid.

Samarbeidet med Israelsmisjonen har i hovedsak fungert gjennom SMM, og det er riktig å understreke den tilnærmingen som har skjedd mellom våre to organisasjoner de siste tre-fire år. Brosjyren om kristne gjestehus i Israel og De palestinske områdene, utgitt i august 99, er ett eksempel på dette.

Den norske kirke har ikke iverksatt særskilte tiltak for å bidra til økt økumenisk samarbeid mellom kirkene i regionen. Men det kontaktarbeidet som ble gjort av biskop Kvarme gjennom Jerusalem Inter-Church Committee (JICC) og de samtaler som Stiftelsen Oljeberget har ført om en strategisk bruk av eiendommen til beste for lokale kristne palestinske kirker, har bidratt noe til dette

Norge er også representert i styret for dialogsenteret Sabeel (lokalisert i det anglikanske senteret i Jerusalem), gjennom sogneprest i Nord-Fron, Kjartan Ruset.

På religionsfrihetsområdet er det gitt plass i et KISP-møte for en analyse av utkastet til palestinsk grunnlov, hvor islam er gitt en privilegert status. Bekymringen er brakt fram for norske myndigheter i forkant av reiser til De palestinske selvstyreområdene.

Menneskerettighetsarbeidet ellers er basert på innsatsen til Det norske menneskerettighetsfond. En evaluering gjennomført for Fondet sommeren 1999, bekreftet at det er de store organisasjonene som gjør det beste arbeidet, og disse organisasjonene vil for en stor del være for store til å få økonomisk støtte fra Fondet, slik retningslinjene i dag praktiseres. Det ble likevel bekreftet at støtten som var gitt, hadde hatt positiv effekt.

Når det gjelder spørsmålet om Jerusalem, er det vesentlig å peke på Mellomkirkelig råds uttalelse "Jerusalem – en åpen by for alle" fra september 1998. Tenkningen i denne føyer seg inn i de uttalelser som er kommet fra LVF og KV, og ikke minst fra kirkene i Jerusalem selv. KISP-uttalelsen "Vi må arbeide for fred mellom alle Abrahams barn" fra oktober 2000 har et bredere perspektiv og legger et særskilt ansvar for den forverrede situasjonen som har hersket det siste året på den sterkeste part - den israelske regjering. Uttalelsene er oversatt til engelsk og ble sirkulert under Sentralkomiteemøtet i KV i januar 2001.

Etablering av et Økumenisk observatørteam var av de tiltakene som ble foreslått under konsultasjonen om Israel-Palestina som fant sted i Genève i august 2001, og hvor Jorunn Kapstad fra KN og Trond Bakkevig deltok. MKR/AU har drøftet forslaget og stilt noen kritiske spørsmål til det, samtidig som man har ønsket å signalisere en positiv grunnholdning til å bidra med at det etableres et internasjonalt nærvær i området i mangelen på at politiske initiativ om en internasjonal observatørstyrke i FN-regi har ført fram. Saken har ikke fått noen avklaring. Vi legger vekt på at det eventuelt blir en økumenisk gruppe fra Norge og Norden som deltar. Erfaringene så langt viser at en skal være forsiktig med å belaste kirkene i området med vertskapsfunksjoner. Foreløpig er det ikke etablert en god nok vertskapskapasitet i annen regi, bl.a. som følge av at Middle East Council of Churches' (MECCs) Jerusalem-kontor har vært midlertidig ute av drift en periode.

De siste årene har rådet vært en sentral aktør innenfor Stiftelsen Oljeberget. Arbeidet har møtt mange utfordringer, noe som har toppet seg med israelske myndigheters skattekrav til Augusta Victoria-sykehuset. Partene er bedt om å finne en omforenet løsning innen mars. Vi arbeider tett sammen med Utenriksdepartementet om dette.

Til slutt kan det nevnes at MKR var medarrangør av seminaret "Oslo Talks on Peace and Human Rights – The State of the Palestinians after Oslo" den 12. desember. Her var Jerusalem et eget punkt på dagsordenen. Fra Stortinget var det deltakelse fra Utenrikskomiteen, og sentrale palestinske menneskerettighetsorganisasjoner deltok.

Syria, Libanon og Tyrkia

Denne regionen er i større grad preget av den armenske og den syriske kirke. Kontaktarbeidet har derfor i hovedsak rettet seg mot disse kirkene. Det har vært en særlig viktig oppgave å presentere disse kirkenes historie og aktuelle situasjon med vekt på besøk og økt kunnskap. Intensjonen om å trekke kirkene i disse landene inn i en større fredsprosess, har ikke vært mulig å følge opp. Kirkene, særlig den maronittiske kirken i spørsmålet om syrisk tilbaketrekning fra Libanon, har imidlertid selv lagt et betydelig press på politiske myndigheter i sine land.

MKR's delegasjonsreise i mai 1998 hadde en høy profil. Delegasjonen besøkte Libanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel og De palestinske selvstyreområdene. MECC hadde en sentral rolle i å

planlegge besøket. Mellomkirkelig råd har ikke arbeidet aktivt overfor norske myndigheter med å sikre økonomisk støtte til MECCs prosjekter. MECCs manglende kapasitet til å følge opp et mangfold av partnere er et problem.

De siste årene er det fra rådets side gjort et særlig arbeidet opp mot det syrisk-ortodokse samfunnet i Sørøst-Tyrkia. Arbeidet har handlet om to delegasjonsbesøk (1998 og 1999) i tillegg til den reisen som ble foretatt i 1995. Det har her vært en ambisjon å knytte kirken opp mot det internasjonale kirkefellesskapet, noe som er mulig for de kristne i Syria, men i langt mindre grad for de kristne i Tyrkia, som ikke er offisielt anerkjent av tyrkiske myndigheter som en etnisk minoritet.

Støtten har også vært av økonomisk art og har gått til to busser, en traktor og en brønn. Noe av støtten er formidlet fra Kirkens Nødhjelp, men det meste har kommet gjennom ofringer på Menneskerettighetssøndagen ved menigheter i Den norske kirke.

Ferdigstilling av brosjyren "Kristne gjestehus i Midtøsten" hvor gjestehus og klostre er presentert slik de kristne selv ønsker det, har skjedd i samarbeid med Kirkens Nødhjelp. Det har vært en viss oppfølging i ettertid, og mottakelsen har vært meget positiv, blant annet ved de norske ambassadene i regionen. Det er likevel ikke grunnlag for å rapportere om en betydelig økning i pilegrimsreiser til disse tre landene.

Mellomkirkelig råd var også medarrangør av høringen "A Silent Catastrophe - The Situation for Christian Communities and the Christian Heritage in the Middle East" under Bjørnsonfestivalen i Molde i august 2001. William Dalrymples bok "I skyggen av Bysants" utgjorde bakgrunnen for en panelsamtale, og det var en viss mediedekning.

Kontakten med Den armensk-apostoliske kirke inne i Armenia blir i hovedsak ivaretatt gjennom Bibelselskapet. Den norske kirkes preses, biskop Bondevik, var tilstede under feiringen av 1700års-jubileet for den armenske kirke som statskirke i mai 2001 i Beirut. Gjennom kontakten med den armenske catholicos i Beirut er det også en god forbindelse med denne kirken om flere internasjonale kirkelige initiativ.

Menneskerettighetsarbeid er av de sentrale elementene i dette samarbeidet. Tyrkias behandling av sine minoriteter er fremdeles under sterk kritikk, dog behandles de religiøse minoritetene jevnt over noe bedre enn de etniske minoritetene. Dette arbeidet utføres på basis av rapporten "Freedom of Religion in Turkey" utarbeidet av Den Norske Helsingforskomite og Mellomkirkelig råd. Anliggendet er brakt opp i OSSE, FNs Menneskerettighetskommisjon, samt direkte til president Ecevit under hans Norgesbesøk forsommeren 2000.

MKR var også av de som tok affære, gjennom brev til UD og den norske ambassaden i Ankara, da det ble reist rettssak mot den syrisk-ortodokse presten Yusuf Akbulut, etter at han hadde vist til at også syrisk-ortodokse kristne var drept i massakrene i 1915. I brevet til UD lå det omfattende dokumentasjon. Rettssaken ble avlyst, i all hovedsak som følge av internasjonalt press.

Det er også her viktig å nevne Menneskerettighetsfondet. Fondet har bl.a. støttet menneskerettighetsundervisning i Syria etter søknad fra Norges Kristelige Studenterforbund (NKSF), etter at lovendringer i Syria åpnet for dette i 1999. Fondet var også til stede under et seminar i Beirut i september 2001, hvor problemene som møter menneskerettighetsorganisasjoner i Midtøsten, ble diskutert.

En aktuell menneskerettighetsutfordring er de kristne libanesere som var med i SLA-militsen under borgerkrigen i Libanon, og som nå utsettes for hevnaksjoner fra sine muslimske naboer. Dette er ennå ikke fulgt opp, men problemet har også dukket opp i norsk asylpolitikk.

Oppsummering

Det har vært vanskelig å arbeide godt gjennom MECC. De andre relasjonene har også vært krevende å ivareta, men særlig relasjonen til Den syrisk-ortodokse kirke er viktig å ivareta. Samarbeidet med Helsingforskomiteen, Norske myndigheter og Kirkens Nødhjelp har her vært avgjørende, og arbeidet bør vitaliseres gjennom en delegasjonsreise til denne del av Midtøsten høsten 2002 eller våren 2003.

Egypt

Også her har Mellomkirkelig råd valgt å bygge ut relasjoner med den eldste kirken; Den koptiske kirke. Arbeidet har i hovedsak skjedd gjennom Tunsberg bispedømme på vegne av Den norske kirke. Det er menigheter sør i Bispedømmet som ivaretar relasjonen med det sørlige bispedømmet Nagada i Egypt, mens menigheter rundt Drammen ivaretar relasjoner med Shubra el-Khema bispedømmet i utkanten av Kairo. Det har også vært kontakt med biskop Thomas i el-Quessiya, som ligger midt i Egypt, hvor de kristne opplever sterkt press.

Mellomkirkelig råd har kanalisert midler fra UD til Tunsberg Bispedømmes arbeid. Derigjennom har det vært mulig å foreta delegasjonsreiser fra Norge til Egypt, ledet av biskopen, samt noen mindre reiser, der Hans Einar Hem og Jan-Otto Eek har hatt ansvaret.

Midlene fra UD har også vært brukt til å invitere to av kirkens biskoper - biskop Marcos og biskop Beemen - til Tunsberg. Besøk på bispedømmerådsdager, seminarer og annen form for opplysningsarbeid har vært en del av programmet under disse besøkene. I 2001 ble det også innvilget støtte til den første norske utstillingen av koptisk ikonkunst på Gulden utenfor Mjøndalen. Også denne utstillingen var mulig gjort ved hjelp av støtte fra Mellomkirkelig råd.

Mellomkirkelig råd har også vært formidler av NORAD-støtte til et arbeid som en koptisk stiftelse har drevet blant narkomane. I samband med dette arbeidet reiste Terje Bang og Leif Magne Helgesen fra Kirkens Bymisjon i Vestfold for å utveksle erfaringer fra arbeid mot narkotikamisbruk.

Til sist kan nevnes at Mellomkirkelig råd ved en anledning ga støtte til spredning av bildebibler til mange av bispedømmene. Dette ble gjort i tett kontakt med de biskopene vi hadde relasjon til, men støtten gikk til trykkeriet, som da kunne spre flere eksemplarer gratis. Vi har i ettertid - gjennom Bibelselskapet i Norge – forsøkt å få støtten til framtidig barnebibelproduksjon inn i den støtten som Bibelselskapet i Norge gir Bibelselskapet i Egypt.

På menneskerettighetsfeltet er det mange utfordringer. En av dem er striden rundt koptiske kirkebygg. Fra desember 1999 er det åpnet opp for at kirken uten tillatelse fra landets president kan foreta utbedringer av kirkebygg. Diskrimineringen av de kristne synes ikke å ha avtatt, og MKR følger situasjonen. Tunsberg biskop og MKRs Generalsekretær har overfor den egyptiske ambassadøren i Norge uttrykt dyp bekymring for situasjonen for de kristne etter en periode med omfattende angrep på de kristne i byen Kosheh.

Egypt ble besøkt av Menneskerettighetsfondet i desember 1999, og flere kristne organisasjoner har både mottatt støtte og mottok besøk. Også i Egypt er det et generelt problem at organisasjonene er for store til å kunne motta tildelinger fra Fondet.

Oppsummering: Ikke minst gjennom arbeidet til Tunsberg biskop, er det skjedd mye positivt. Det bør fram til påske være en samtale med de sentrale personene i arbeidet om hvordan arbeidet best kan videreføres. Mellomkirkelig råd har ikke levert fullstendig rapport til UD for tildelingen til for 2000 og 2001, noe som må gjøres før en ny søknad kan sendes UD.

B INTERNASJONALE ORGANISASJONERS INITIATIV OG APPELLER

LVF har lenge hatt et sterkt engasjement mot Midtøsten. Det har delvis vært en teologisk dialog mellom lutherske kirker og jødedom, delvis et diakonalt engasjement for palestinske flyktninger gjennom Augusta Victoria sykehuset på Oljeberget og delvis en sterk støtte til deres lille medlemskirke i regionen, ELCJ. Ettersom ELCJ har utviklet sin kritikk av israelsk okkupasjonspolitikk generelt og settlementpolitikken spesielt har LVF sett det som sin oppgave å gi rom for denne stemmen inn i det globale lutherske kirkefellesskap. Under siste års Rådsmøte var det blant annet et dagsseminar for alle Rådsmedlemmene om situasjonen. Mellomkirkelig råd har ønsket å fange opp ropene fra blant annet de kristne byene på Vestbredden hvor den lutherske kirke fremdeles har levende menigheter i Betlehem, Beit Jala og Beit Sahor, og formidle dem videre til bispedømmer og menigheter i Den norske kirke.

Kirkenes Verdensråd har også hatt et langvarig engasjement i regionen, blant annet gjennom et nært samarbeid med MECC hvor de ortodokse kirkene i regionen er viktige medlemmer. For øvrig er MECC et regional kirkeråd hvor også den romersk katolske kirke er medlemmer.

Det siste året er det tatt flere nye initiativ fra KVs side. Vedlagte rapporter fra delegasjonsbesøk i juli 2001 og internasjonal konsultasjon i august 2001 samt vedtakene fra møtet i Eksekutivkomiteen i september 2001 viser dette med all tydelighet: KV bruker nå sine krefter på en mobilisering blant medlemskirkene for å øke det politiske presset mot Israel til å oppheve okkupasjonen av palestinsk land.

I disse dager er det sendt ut en liten "bønnebok" fra kirkene i Jertusalem for fred (vedlagt). KV oppfordrer sine medlemskirker å ta den i bruk fra dags dato og fram til påske. Sekretariatet planlegger å gjøre den kjent blant kirkene i Norge.

**REPORT OF THE WCC DELEGATION
TO THE OCCUPIED
PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES & ISRAEL
JUNE 27 – JULY 1, 2001**

Released on
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International Relations
World Council of Churches



I. Introduction

1. On 5 February, the World Council of Churches (WCC) Central Committee adopted a statement, "On the Situation in the Holy Land after the Outbreak of the Second Palestinian Uprising", which urged WCC member churches "to increase their efforts to condemn injustice and all forms of discrimination, to end Israeli occupation, to pray for and promote a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East." To help inform and strengthen those efforts, the statement called the WCC General Secretary and staff of the Council to:

- *continue their support of efforts towards a negotiated peace in the Middle East, based on international law, paying special attention to the future status of Jerusalem, the right of return of Palestinian refugees, the increasing number of settlements and measures to enforce all relevant UN resolutions, including those regarding the withdrawal of all occupied Arab lands;*
- *continue to analyze and to keep the member churches regularly informed on the evolving situation;*
- *accompany the churches of the Holy Land and their members, and advocate their rights,*
- *support local Israeli and Palestinian grassroots peace-building efforts; and*
- *promote and/or cooperate with church, ecumenical and other initiatives, to strengthen broad international support for a comprehensive peace based on justice and security for all peoples of the region.*

2. In pursuance of this statement, the WCC General Secretary sent an ecumenical delegation ("the delegation") to Jerusalem and the West Bank from 27 June to 1 July to meet with the Patriarchs and Heads of Christian Communities in Jerusalem as well as key local clergy and laity, church-related and ecumenical organisations including Israeli and Palestinian human rights and peace activists. This was an exploratory and consultative mission as part of a preparatory process for an international ecumenical meeting to be convened in Geneva on 6-7 August 2001. The main purpose of the August consultation will be to provide a space for sharing, joint planning and strategizing, as well as attempt to facilitate better co-ordination and co-operation among all church and ecumenical actors. The delegation was not on a fact-finding mission. Rather, its key objectives were:

- To learn of local ecumenical strategies and plans of action(s) in the context of the Second Palestinian Uprising from the heads of churches and different groups of civil society (church related, ecumenical organisations, peace and human rights advocates) that go beyond statements and appeals;
- To share further with these local partners on WCC initiatives and the consultation process;
- To consider together an international ecumenical plan of action and response, including proposals for developing/supporting/accompanying initiatives of the churches of Jerusalem and the wider Palestinian and Israeli civil society such as:

- An ecumenical witness for peace programme, including providing an international ecumenical presence for protection/monitoring/reporting and awareness building;
- non-violent resistance and direct actions.

The delegation included:

Rev. Dr Maake Masango, Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa / WCC Executive and Central Committee member;

Rev. Dr Bernice Powell Jackson, United Church of Christ-USA / WCC Central Committee member;

Rev. Dr Emmanuel Clapsis, Ecumenical Patriarchate / WCC Decade to Overcome Violence Reference Group member;

Rev. Mark Brown, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs / Chairperson of Churches for Middle East Peace and Church World Service and Witness Middle East Forum;

Mr. Uffe Gjerding, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, Danchurchaid / APRODEV Middle East Working Group member;

Mr. Peter Weiderud, Church of Sweden, Church of Sweden Mission / Church of Sweden Aid - International Affairs; and

Ms Salpy Eskidjian, Armenian Apostolic Church, WCC International Relations programme executive for Middle East affairs.

3. The delegation held its first meeting in Geneva on 26 June 2001 with the WCC general secretary, director of WCC Cluster on Relations, co-ordinator of WCC International Relations and a member of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) in order to discuss its mandate, methodology and programme of action. It then visited Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Ramallah from 27 June to 1 July 2001 (*The full programme of the delegation is annexed*). On the evening of its arrival in Jerusalem, the delegation visited the Orient House to attend the memorial service of Mr Faissal Hussein, head of the Orient House and responsible for the Jerusalem portfolio of the Palestinian Authorities until his recent death. There they had the opportunity to meet informally with key members of Jerusalem's civil society. The delegation then met with the two staff members of the Ecumenical Outreach Programme of the Catholic Relief Services, who had facilitated appointments, meetings and all local arrangements to review the three-day programme. The delegation met with the Patriarchs, Metropolitans and Bishops of the Armenian, Latin, Greek, Episcopal and Lutheran families, respectively. The delegation also held meetings and discussions with local clergy, lay leaders of Christian communities in Ramallah and Bethlehem, representatives of church-related and ecumenical organisations, including international church representatives, Palestinian and Israeli human rights and peace groups, the UN Deputy Special Co-ordinator, the Director of UNRWA West Bank Field Office, the spokesperson of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron, and high-level diplomats from South Africa, Sweden and Denmark. The annexed programme includes the list of all those who were invited to the different meetings.

4. The delegation held an evening discussion with those temporarily responsible for the Middle East Council of Churches Jerusalem Liaison Office, including the MECC Executive Committee member from Jerusalem, in order to be updated on the present status of the office, its activities, plans and vision.

5. The delegation used as a basis for its work the full report of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Inquiry Commission, reports of international and local human rights and peace organisations, as well as letters and appeals of the heads of Churches in Jerusalem, recent observations and recommendations of North American and European church delegations to the Palestinian Occupied Territories and Israel, and other ecumenical statements and reports, e.g. YMCA and Pax Christi International. The mandate of the delegation was to assist the development of an international ecumenical response to the Palestinian–Israeli conflict by providing a report to the WCC General Secretary as he prepared for the convening of the WCC August consultation in Geneva. The delegation drafted its report in Jerusalem on Saturday, June 30, 2001 after extensive debriefing sessions and finalised the first draft on July 4. The General Secretary will make the report public immediately prior to the August consultation.

II. General observations

1. The delegation was welcomed by all those it met. Appreciation was expressed to all those Christians around the world that had visited, spoken out against all human rights violations and had been working for justice and peace for this land and its people. All local churches and partners underscored the need for the ecumenical movement to focus on an action-oriented response to the plight of the Palestinians. Statements and resolutions were appreciated but all those the delegation met repeated that the Palestinians were tired of words without action and active solidarity.

2. The delegation was told that the offensive and defensive measures taken by Palestinians are due to the international community's failure to respond to the impunity Israel continues to enjoy, and the present total siege imposed on the Palestinian territories. While the international community may choose only non-violent actions, it is important that it recognises that the loss of the right to resist is the last step before complete submission or expulsion. The cycle of violence continues to grow. The instigation of violence by settlers, and the protection of settlers by the Israeli army, is a worrying trend. Local partners fear that Palestinians are moving towards a large-scale massacre. Some believe that at this stage activities with Israelis must halt unless those activities are aimed at ending the occupation. During the meetings, the territorial compromise by the Palestinians was reiterated and Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized borders was acknowledged. The call was to struggle against occupation, not Israel's existence.

3. The delegation affirmed the full report of the UN Human Rights Inquiry Commission whose elements are still very valid and applicable to the realities on the ground. It was disappointed to note that despite the WCC advocacy efforts, the findings or the report itself were not known widely among local NGOs, churches and the church-related organisations with whom it had meetings.

4. **Church leaders:** The Jerusalem church leaders regretted that the existing realities, especially the absence of a Greek Orthodox Patriarch, had made it difficult for them to meet to develop a joint strategy of action in the context of the present Intifadah – the Palestinian uprising to end military occupation. They had met, however, to develop statements to "cry our pain" and to state the position of the churches. The church leaders welcomed the WCC challenge and invitation to the August meeting, which they strongly supported. Several church leaders indicated a willingness and intention to meet soon to discuss the issues raised in the context of the meetings with the WCC delegation. The delegation was convinced that it is

important to develop a strategy that Jerusalem church leaders can support or at least accept. Leaders stated that together the Jerusalem churches and the WCC should go beyond words to concrete actions.

5. International church representatives: The majority of the international representatives in Jerusalem and the West Bank are seconded by WCC member churches from North America and Western Europe, where they work in different types of ministries. They reacted enthusiastically to the WCC's call for a meeting, indicating that they met jointly for the first time in response to the WCC's request. The delegation's initiative affirming their role and ministry as well as the WCC General Secretary's call for an ecumenical meeting in August was welcomed. Strengthening cooperation and communication links with the WCC International Relations department as well as other partners in Europe and USA, e.g. Churches for Middle East Peace and Church World Service Middle East Forum in the USA and the APRODEV family in Europe, was a priority for them. The delegation found the encounter very useful indeed, one that needs to be further nurtured in any ecumenical follow-up activities.

6. Local clergy/Lay leaders/Human Rights & Peace Organisations: The delegation was grateful to all those who made time to meet with them, as well as to the Ecumenical Outreach Programme for organising the delegation's visit so efficiently in a short period of time. The insights, analysis and partnership of all were invaluable. However, the delegation was disappointed with the small number of participants at its meetings specifically with the Palestinian Human Rights organisations, Israeli peace and human rights groups as well as at its meetings with clergy and lay leaders in local communities, where the absence of Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican clergy was specially felt. Generally the delegation noted the lack of a joint strategy of planning and action among the respective groups it met with, but it welcomed the beginnings of joint initiatives among different groups in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Ramallah that focussed on active non-violent resistance. It especially noted the energy among the few women and most of the non-governmental organisations it met, especially those that included young people and women. Even though most of the Palestinian NGO's were either run by Christians or had Christians as active members, a gap was observed between them and the church structures at most levels.

7. Church-related and Ecumenical Organisations: The delegation welcomed the level of organisation and vision among some of those it met, especially those related to grassroots movements and groups. It noted a gap between some of the ecumenical grassroots organisations and the church hierarchy and even an absence of joint communication, coordination and strategizing among one another. As for the structures related to the Middle East Council of Churches, the delegation noted weak capacity, lack of strong creative vision and leadership. The present Jerusalem Liaison office caretakers repeated the need to move slowly and very carefully in fostering ecumenical relations in Jerusalem and saw no immediate role for itself in accompanying the local churches in joint action that could be the core for an ecumenical accompaniment/solidarity agenda.

III. Priorities for an International Ecumenical Response Suggested to the WCC Delegation

The WCC delegation was welcomed by all partners, especially its mandate and the commitment of the ecumenical movement "to accompany the churches in the Holy Land and their members".

The following suggestions were offered to the WCC as priorities for consideration by the international ecumenical family, as it develops an international ecumenical response to the Palestinian – Israeli conflict.

1. Human Rights and Humanitarian crisis

- Provide humanitarian support, particularly food and medicine, for those Palestinians having difficulty making it from one day to the next due to the faltering economy.
- Develop economic emergency plans.
- Support programs to curtail unemployment as part of the emergency response and support trauma counselling programs for Palestinian victims of violence, especially the youth.
- Address all violations of internationally recognized human rights norms and international humanitarian law and condemn all such violations including those of the Fourth Geneva Convention.
- Address the deprivations caused by the denial of social and cultural rights through closures, curfews, restrictions on movement and destruction of property.
- Ensure that any emergency needs are coupled with long-term strategies that address a variety of economic, political, social, development, and justice issues.

2. Israeli military occupation and a Sustainable Palestinian State

- Address and condemn the Israeli military occupation and affirm the legitimacy of Palestinian resistance to injustice and foreign occupation.
- Condemn violence against civilians and support non-violent resistance.
- Insist on the application of international law as it applies to the Israeli occupation, the Palestinian right to resist that occupation, and all efforts for a negotiated peace settlement.
- Address the right of Palestinians to self-determination on a sustainable sovereign state, side by side with Israel.
- Bring international pressure to bear on Israel to end the occupation and on other governments, particularly the United States, to compel Israel to end the occupation. There should be a focus on international pressure as the way to achieve a just peace. This could include economic steps against the occupation and the boycotting of settlement goods.
- Empower the local churches to define their vision of a Palestinian State while struggling to overthrow occupation.

3. Accompaniment/International Presence and Protection

The United Nations Security Council has so far rejected a plan for a protection mechanism for Palestinians. The Temporary International Protection of Hebron (TIPH) program is seen to be inadequate because all its reporting must be kept confidential among the governments of the six nations participating in the program. Christian Peacemaker Teams are often questioned about their effectiveness, but also encouraged not to leave; their presence is a point of hope. An accompaniment program would help to: pull people away from the edge of despair and the slide

toward extremism; provide a sense of solidarity and protection to the Palestinians; give timely alternative information including an active non-violent option to internationals as well as Palestinians and Israelis – particularly youth –as a powerful tool in the struggle against occupation.

An accompaniment programme should:

- Serve as a powerful way of informing congregations abroad about opportunities for non-violent, negotiated solutions to Palestinian-Israeli grievances and motivate them to be in active solidarity with Palestinian and Israeli non-violent efforts for peace.
- Enable the churches in Jerusalem and other local congregations to develop and actively support non-violent efforts with other Palestinians and Israelis as well as internationals.
- Enable the local churches and congregations abroad to be in dialogue with and work with Jews and Muslims locally and internationally who support a non-violent movement for peace in the Middle East and promote a proactive, non-violent vision for the resolution of the conflict and reconciliation.
- Promote international presence/protection and use the concept of accompaniment in a holistic way, including the following activities: observing, recording, photographing, videotaping, and reporting publicly occupation-related events in the West Bank and Gaza; exposing human rights violations; deterring violence/promoting restraint; reducing fear and anxiety, instilling confidence, alleviating sense of desperation and isolation; promoting human contact between Palestinians and international community; accompanying people in daily activities, such as harvesting and going to the market; supporting the local economy; and preparing communicators/advocates. The reports of this program must be public immediately and widely distributed. There is a need for a more complete and systematic spread of international personnel throughout the West Bank and Gaza. International presence should help to promote religious freedom.
- Include strategies to: maintain a continual flow of visitors and participation in an ongoing non-violent presence to resist/defy occupation; coordinate and promote events (such as conferences, candlelight marches, rallies, and demonstrations) in Palestine and Israel that would draw large crowds and media attention; and organize high-level, high-profile delegations that would be involved in non-violent direct actions and that would be engaged in an intensive media strategy. The period between November 25 and December 10 may be a special emphasis for international presence because of the International Day to Combat Violence Against Women (Nov. 25), the International Day of Solidarity with the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (Nov. 29), and International Human Rights Day (Dec. 10). May 15, the commemoration of the Nakba, could be an opportunity for the international community to specifically focus on the right of return.
- Promote and provide training for non-violent resistance to the military occupation of Palestine through various activities, including: removing dirt roadblocks; demonstrating at checkpoints; resisting house demolitions, the building or expansion of settlements, the building of settlement roads, and the uprooting of trees. Assist in recovery activities, including rebuilding homes and replanting trees. A diverse response to the occupation is needed. Non-violence training and briefings should be mandatory for all participants in non-violent resistance. Training should take place in the country of origin and in Palestine/Israel.
- Utilize and work with existing international Christian presence in the Occupied Territories and Israel.

4. Advocacy/Campaigns and Prayer Vigils within the Decade to Overcome Violence framework

- Develop a common, coordinated campaign, including a clearinghouse for information, to foster a strong ecumenical solidarity movement. The Churches of Jerusalem to consider calling the first Decade to Overcome Violence Campaign to “END THE VIOLENCE OF OCCUPATION” and ask the WCC to identify 2002 as a year to focus everyone’s attention on ending the occupation of Palestine.
- Develop a multi-faceted advocacy program at the local, national, regional and international levels. Such a program should advocate for governmental policies which support:
 - the end to Israeli occupation;
 - a shared Jerusalem by the three monotheistic religions and the two peoples; the promotion and protection of human rights, including the recommendations of the Human Rights Inquiry Commission and especially a freeze on Israeli settlement building and expansion;
 - the lifting of the closures;
 - investigations into the use of U.S. weapons, including attack helicopters and F-16s, and a halt in the use of such weapons;
 - a higher level of discipline and accountability by Israeli police and soldiers; investigations into police and military human rights violations and use of appropriate, non-lethal crowd control measures; and
 - the right of Palestinian self-determination.
- As a methodology, the ecumenical movement should be informed from its own strategies and tactics struggling against injustice. The regional and international ecumenical structures should be empowered and encouraged to participate in every way possible. Local priests/pastors as well as international journalists must be briefed in order to build awareness, mobilize or simply be the voice of those in the struggle. A possible approach is to use the language and images of apartheid and develop strategies of solidarity based on movements like the anti-apartheid or civil rights movements. Any campaign or advocacy programme should have practical and achievable goals. It should encourage all to work ecumenically and inter-religiously, including work with appropriate Israeli peace groups as well as with Jewish and Islamic peace groups internationally.
- Maintain and broaden the USA churches-initiated prayer vigil for peace in the Middle East as part of this international campaign.

5. Communication and Alternative Information

Any ecumenical programme should include a clear emphasis on communication including different media strategies.

- Communicate effectively the realities of occupation: publish stories of everyday life, promote editorials, combat distortions of the image of Palestinians, utilize paid ads and hold press conferences.
- Invite journalists and Christian communicators to visit the region and be part of every ecumenical activity.

- Hold seminars for communicators in the region.

Additional considerations

In addition to the above the WCC and the wider ecumenical fellowship should bear in mind the following:

6. Christian Presence: Even though Palestinian Christians are a diminishing minority, their contribution to the Palestinian society surmounts their numbers. Christians serve the community through a variety of ways, including hospitals, schools, community service centers, youth and women's centers, etc. The efforts of the churches to provide humanitarian assistance and pastoral care are threatened and undermined due to policies of the government of Israel, including the imposition of inappropriate taxes, extensive permit requirements and long delays at checkpoints. The ecumenical family should consider:

- Urgently helping the local Christian community to maintain a presence in Palestine:
- Assisting the international community to learn about the Palestinian Christian communities and encourage them to be in active solidarity. This could be done by providing Palestinian presence at international meetings, providing funding for Christian projects and humanitarian support, encouraging congregation to congregation linkages, convening international meetings in the Holy Land.

7. Coordination and Cooperation: The coordination role of the WCC was welcomed and needed, especially in providing an ecumenical witness for peace program that would include churches and ecumenical organizations from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, as well as North America and Europe. A need for more cooperation was underlined by all. It was clear that coordination is not only needed at the international level, it is also needed with and on the local level; between and among church leaders, clergy and lay leaders, church-related organizations, non-governmental organizations, particularly women, youth, and human rights organizations, peace groups and international personnel.

IV. Conclusions

1. This may be a kairos moment for the churches and church community in Palestine, as well as for the world-wide church community. Fifty years of successive conflict and wars, thirty years of prolonged occupation and seven years of a protracted peace process have left a legacy of distrust, humiliation and frustration. Glimpses of hope have ended in despair. The recent escalation of violence has resulted in the loss of too many lives—mostly among the youth—injuries and heartbreak to thousands, and destruction of property and livelihoods. Both sides distrust each other more than ever, and think the worst of one another. We heard over and over again that hearts have hardened on both sides in the past few months and for many, despair is deepening. At the same time, we experienced that both the Palestinian people and the people of Israel are yearning for peace and security and that some do recognize that a precondition for a just and durable peace is for everyone to work together for an alternative vision to violence, to develop mutual confidence, to build a common future based on rights and respect for one another, international law and a process of negotiations that would lead to sharing the land, the truth and the peace.

2. The delegation was asked constantly, "If the church is not the voice of the voiceless, who will be – the extremists?" We must, however, be aware that the churches also live under occupation and that, for historical reasons, different parts of the ecumenical family will need to address the problems of occupation in different ways. At the same time as the WCC has launched the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace (2001-2010), calling on its member churches to be involved in overcoming violence in its many forms in the world, violence in many forms continues in the land of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is a clear humanitarian crisis that needs to be addressed immediately coupled with long-term strategies that address the root causes of this crisis. The suffering of the people is very real right now, with the borders closed. The shelling of Christian communities in places such as Beit Jala, Beit Sahour and Ramallah has intensified. Many people have no food, and many have lost their jobs. Children are traumatized. There is a real crisis in the church-related institutions, as schools cannot charge their students tuition when families have no income, and therefore have no money for teachers. Some institutions, such as hospitals, are also being squeezed by the Israeli government around tax concerns. There is also a desperate need for a Christian voice to be heard other than that of the fundamentalist Christian community which gives unquestioning support to the government of Israel. Finally, the difficult question of what would it mean for the world if there were no Christian Palestinians left in the Holy Land needs to be quickly addressed. The rapidly increasing emigration of Palestinian Christians is a signal that the situation has become intolerable for them. The fear that the holy sites of Christianity become museums is a very real one, as two to three Palestinian Christian families leave every week.

3. Statements by the worldwide church community have been important, but the time for statements seems to be over. There is a clear need for implementation of all UN and other relevant resolutions. An action-oriented and organized response of accompaniment and solidarity is required of the ecumenical movement. Over and over again we heard a call for advocacy on behalf of the Palestinian community, particularly in the US and Europe, as well as a call to Christians in Africa, Latin America and Asia to join these advocacy efforts. There is a need for both Israeli and Palestinian peoples to hear first-hand of other non-violent movements struggling against injustice. To understand that easing tensions, calming passions and getting back to the negotiating table does not mean submission and that there are alternative ways where the international community as well as Palestinians and Israelis can set the terms of the negotiations and ensure a just outcome.

4. In the absence of a UN international presence, most believe that an ecumenical international presence would help protect the people, deter violence, and most of all, provide hope to Palestinians and Israelis struggling together for a just peace in their land. It would help people from other countries to understand the occupation in a very real way. The Palestinian community feels that they have not been seen as a part of the Christian family by many in the ecumenical family who do not even know there are Christians in Palestine. There seems to be an affirmation of the presence of international observers and activists that would participate in non-violent resistance. The Christian Peacemaker Teams have some experience that can be built upon. In addition, the churches already have international presence through those assigned to work in Palestine and this must be used and further developed.

5. At the same time, there was concern voiced by some that we must be cautious that churches do not impose political solutions. Pastoral concerns that arise from occupation must not be ignored either. Families in crisis, psychological and spiritual concerns must all be attended to by the churches. Ways must be found to help address the sense of hopelessness felt by many. Short-term and long-term strategies

are both needed to end the occupation and prepare the people for life afterwards in a sustainable, democratic, just Palestinian state. It is important to the Palestinian community that the world sees them as fully human, not as terrorists. There is a desperate need for people around the world to put a human face on a people struggling against occupation.

6. The WCC needs to consider a much more organized coordination and facilitation role in any international ecumenical response. Its call to convene a consultation in August was reaffirmed. There was no doubt that there is a need for an international ecumenical consultation on this question. However there should be recognition that not all churches have full-fledged solidarity action plans.

V. Recommendations

1. International Ecumenical Consultation, August 6-7, 2001: The August International Ecumenical Consultation convened by the WCC General Secretary needs to encourage member churches and ecumenical partners to consider a comprehensive, multi-faceted accompaniment/solidarity program. It should provide the space to reflect and begin an action-oriented response to the Palestinian struggle for justice and may need to focus on the immediate needs as a start. The consultation should consider and discuss the reports of the UN Human Rights Inquiry Commission and the WCC delegation. It should also hear of local and international ecumenical and peace initiatives. To be a functional meeting, there should be no more than 30 to 40 participants who are actively engaged in advocacy work for peace in the Middle East, including the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem as well as a selected number of Palestinian and Israeli peace activists. WCC General Secretary and International Relations staff should be in touch with the church leaders the delegation met with, to discuss the purpose of this initiative and ensure that the churches present a local strategy for the international ecumenical community to respond to and build upon. Throughout this process the delegation should act as a core, advisory group to the WCC and will work directly with the WCC International Relations team. All recommendations should be considered by the WCC General Secretary and Officers for presentation to the WCC Executive Committee in September 11-14, 2001.
2. The WCC should designate 2002 as the year to focus attention of all member churches on Ending the Violence of Occupation in Palestine, under the Decade to Overcome Violence. This would offer churches world-wide a wide range of possibilities and multi-layered ways of participating e.g. advocacy and accompaniment programs, delegations, speaking tours, visits to government leaders, media campaigns, prayer vigils, humanitarian and development support etc. Initially the ecumenical family should focus on the human and humanitarian crisis. The WCC International Relations team should convene a meeting of the delegation members in the fall to consider all recommendations of the August consultation and further design an international ecumenical plan of action.
3. The WCC General Secretary should convene ecumenical gatherings such as the one planned for August on a yearly basis to ensure continued cooperation and effective coordination among its member churches, ecumenical partners and local churches.
4. The WCC and its churches worldwide need to ensure that international law and in particular UN resolutions are the basis for any peace negotiations. To

address the present situation, all parties should implement the recommendations of the Human Rights Inquiry Commission, whose report is still valid and needs to be lifted up, addressed and implemented.

5. Advocacy at national, regional and international forums must be a priority. The same message should be used to lobby governmental, intergovernmental and international bodies, including the UN. The specific role of the WCC through its International Relations team should focus on political advocacy at the international level and coordinating its member churches and ecumenical actors pursuing the same objectives at the national and regional levels. High-level church visits with government officials in US and EU nations should be facilitated. Cooperation needs to be established between staff of regional and national councils, ecumenical partners and churches in different capitals with WCC offices in Geneva and New York, and others like APRODEV headquarters in Brussels and Churches for Middle East Peace in Washington DC. In addition efforts should be made to increase the humanitarian assistance as well as address the longer-term reconstruction and development needs of the local Christians. ACT and WCC Regional Relations should be empowered to be more active and supportive to the needs of the churches.
6. WCC should place special emphasis on reaching out to its member churches in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Information leaflets need to be developed in appropriate languages for awareness building. As a first step WCC should consider a South African church delegation to visit the Occupied Territories.
7. For such efforts to succeed, funding partners and WCC member churches need to provide the WCC with the necessary funds and support to carry out these objectives.

In addition to these recommendations:

8. The WCC needs to find ways to facilitate the space for the local churches and church-related organizations to work together and build their own short-term and long-term strategies. The local churches need to be empowered to recognize that their power lies not only in numbers, but in the significant contributions they make to the whole Palestinian society through their presence, institutions and leadership they provide to the Palestinian civil society at large. The Israeli society needs to be helped to acknowledge and support this as well. The challenge is how to accomplish this without a viable ecumenical structure in Jerusalem. The WCC General Secretary is encouraged to have open discussions with the MECC leadership with regards to the local MECC Jerusalem Liaison Office and try to develop a common agenda and strengthen its witness in order to serve all in the ecumenical movement, including the WCC.
9. The WCC needs to identify, listen to and lift up the alternative and moderate voices on both sides of the civil society who are struggling to find a common vision and future and seek ways to bring them together with church leaders and church-related organisations. Local human rights and peace organisations should be sustained to continue their ministry. A special emphasis should be placed on Palestinian and Israeli women and youth.

**World Council of Churches Delegation
To Occupied Palestinian Territories/Israel
27 June – 1 July 2001**

ANNEX I - PROGRAMME OF VISIT

Wednesday, 27 June 2001

- 20:00 Arrival Jerusalem
- 20.15 Orient House - Unofficial visit to memorial service of Mr Faissal Hussein
- 21:00 Dinner meeting/briefing with Jerusalem Coordination Team

Thursday, 28 June 2001

- 08:00 Breakfast Meeting - St. George's with **Archmandrite Attallah Hanna**
- 09:00 Depart for Old City
- 09:30 Greek Orthodox Patriarchate Meetings – **Archbishop Cornelius Archbishop Timothy**
- 11:00 Depart for Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate
- 11:15 Meeting with **HB Patriarch Torkom Manoogian & Rt. Rev. Bishop Aris Shirvanian**, Director of the Ecumenical & Foreign Relations of the Armenian Patriarchate
- 12:00 Depart for New Gate & transfer to Bethlehem
- 11:30 Meeting with **HG Bishop Munib Younan** (Peter Weiderud only)
- 12:45 Lunch Roundtable/Discussion with Palestinian NGOs:
Applied Research Institute Jerusalem ARIJ– *NaderHrimat, Badil – Ingrid Jadarat, Palestinian Center for Rapprochement – Ghassan Andoni, George Rishmawi, George Rishmawi (II) Wi'am – Zoughbi Zoughbi, Teddy Crum* (United Methodist Mission Intern)
- 14:30 Depart for Lutheran Christmas Church (Bethlehem)
- 15:00 Ecumenical Gathering of Local Clergy/Lay Leaders
Armenian Orthodox – *Fr. Razmig Boghossian*
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Palestine and Jordan – *Dr. Charlie Haddad*, Principal of Dal Al-Kalima School, *Ms. Viola Raheb*, Director of Schools for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan - ELCJ
Apologies: Rev. Dr Mitri Raheb
EMW, Hamburg– *Martin Bloecher*, Secretary (guest)
- 16:30 Depart for Jerusalem
- 17:00 Meeting with **HB Patriarch Michel Sabbah**, *Latin Patriarchate & Fr. Frans Bouwen*, *President - Justice and Peace Commission*
- 18:00 Depart for St. George's
- 18:15 Break
- 18:45 Walk to American Colony
- 19:00 Meetings with **HE Mr Hanlie Booyesen**, *South African Chargé d' Affaires Representative Office to the PNA*
HE Ms Catharina Kipp, *Swedish Consul General* (Peter Weiderud only)
- 20:30 Dinner Meeting with **Mr. Francis Okelo**, *UN Deputy Special Co-Ordinator*
Apologies: Mr Terje Rod-Larsen, UN Special Coordinator
- 22:30 Group Debriefing, St. George's Guest House

Friday, 29 June 2001

- 07:30 Breakfast Meeting with **Mr. Richard Cook**, *Director, UNRWA West Bank Field Office* & **Lars Tore Kjerland**, *Senior Press & Information Officer – TIPH*
- 09:00 Roundtable Discussion with Israeli Human Rights/Activists Groups
Bat Shalom – *Judy Blanc*, **Rabbis for Human Rights** – *Rabbi Jeremy Milgram*, **Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions ICAHD** – *Dr. Jeff Halper*
Apologies: Ms Gila Svirsky, Women's Coalition for a Just Peace, Ms Jessica Montell, B'tselem, Mr Yuri Averni, Gush Shalom
- 10:30 Break
- 11:00 Depart for Beit Hanina
- 11:30 Roundtable Discussion with Palestinian NGOs (hosted by LAW)
LAW – *Khader Shqeirat*, *Director*, & *Dianne Luping*, *International Law Legal Officer*, **Land Defense Committee** – *Issa Samandar*, *Executive Director*, **Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees-UPMRC/Palestinian NGO Network-PNGO** – *Ahlam Jarrad*
Apologies: Arab Association for Human Rights, Al Haq, Defence for Children International - DCI, Jerusalem Centre for Women, Legal Defense Centre for Women
- 13:30 Depart for Ramallah
- 14:15 Lunch – Orthodox Club, Ramallah
- 15:30 Ecumenical Gathering of Local Parish Clergy/Lay Leaders
Greek Orthodox
Adv. Yaser Jaber, Council Member
Dr. Fahed Khalaf, Medical Doctor
Mr. Marwan Toubassi, General Director for Christian Affairs in PNA, Chairman of Orthodox Club - Ramallah
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan ELCJ
Rev. Ramez Ansara, Hope Church, Ramallah
Jack Bahbah, Finance Manager
David Tannous, Hope Church Ramallah
- 17:00 Depart for Jerusalem
- 18:00 Renewal Break
- 19:00 Depart for Dinner
- 19:30 Dinner meeting hosted with **Bishop Munib Younan** and **Mrs. Suad Younan**
Mr. & Mrs. Jack Khazmo – Syrian Orthodox and member of ICC Board
Mr & Mrs. Ramzi Zananiri – Greek Orthodox, Director - ICC
- 23:00 Delegation Departs for St. George's Guest House

Saturday, 30 June 2001

- 08:00 Breakfast Meeting with **HG Bishop Riah Abu Al-Assal**
- 09:30 Roundtable Gathering with **International Church Representatives & Partners**
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)/United Church of Christ, Church of Scotland, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Episcopal Church – USA, EKD - Propst German Speaking Congregation, Presbyterian Church USA, Mennonite Central Committee, Christian Peacemaker Team CPT (Catholic, Lutheran and Mennonite members), United Methodist Church, Lutheran World Federation LWF, Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, St George's Cathedral.
- 11:00 Break
- 11:30 Roundtable Discussion with Church Related Organisations
Caritas – Mrs. Claudette Habesch, Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees DSPR – Dr. Bernard Sabella, International Christian Committee – Mr. Ramzi Zananiri, Justice and Peace Commission – Fr. Frans Bouwen & Ms. Doris Saleh, Sabeel – Mrs. Jean Zaru & Ms. Hillary Rantisi, YMCA – Mr. Judeh Majaj, YWCA – Mrs. Abla Nasir
Apologies: Rev. Naim Ateek
- 13:30 Lunch – HG Bishop Riah Abu Al-Assal, Christmas Hotel
- 15:30 Meeting with **HE Mr Adin Talbar**, *Danish Consul General*
(Uffe Gjerding only)
- 16.30 Delegation Debriefing and Report Writing

Sunday, 1 June 2001

Departures

**Report of the
International Ecumenical Consultation on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict
convened by the WCC**

August 6-7, 2001 – Geneva, Switzerland

*International Relations
World Council of Churches
Geneva, Switzerland
August 2001*

Report

International Ecumenical Consultation on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

Background

In pursuance of the WCC Central Committee statement of February 2001 “*On the situation in the Holy Land after the Outbreak of the Second Palestinian Uprising*”, which urged the WCC General Secretary to “*accompany the churches of the Holy Land and their members, and advocate their rights; (to) support local Israeli and Palestinian grassroots peace-building efforts and (to) promote and /or cooperate with church, ecumenical and other initiatives, to strengthen broad ecumenical international support for a comprehensive peace based on justice and security for all peoples of the region*”, Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser sent an ecumenical delegation to Jerusalem and the West Bank from 27 June to 1 July and convened an International Ecumenical Consultation on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, on August 6-7, the first ever of its nature. (*Ref. Framework Paper for an International Ecumenical Response to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict- 22 June 2001*).

During its visit, the WCC delegation met with the Patriarchs and Heads of Christian Communities in Jerusalem as well as key local clergy and laity, church-related and ecumenical organisations, including Israeli and Palestinian human rights and peace activists. Apart from bringing back an eye-witness account of the situation on the ground, as well as expressing solidarity with the churches of Jerusalem, the delegation was on an exploratory and consultative mission as part of a preparatory process for the international ecumenical meeting. (*Ref. Report of the WCC Delegation to the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel - released on August 6, 2001*)

Summary Report

In response to the calls of member churches and to the recommendations of the WCC delegation to the region, the International Ecumenical Consultation on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict addressed the core issues of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict. Urgently convened by the WCC General Secretary and organised by the WCC International Relations team at the Ecumenical Center in Geneva, it brought together heads of churches, WCC Executive and Central committee members, including its moderator, His Holiness Catholicos Aram I, the moderator and members of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (WCC/CCIA), high-level representatives of WCC member churches and ecumenical partners from Europe, North and South America, Asia, Africa and Jerusalem, including all members of the WCC delegation. Also invited to the consultation were the permanent observer of the Holy See to the UN in Geneva, the General Secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) and the Chairperson of the MECC - Department of Services to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR), a select number of Palestinian and Israeli peace activists as well as a number of Palestinian church related and ecumenical institutions.

The consultation began after an ecumenical prayer service for peace in Israel and Palestine, led by the Coordinator of the WCC International Relations team, Rev. Dwain Epps, where the

Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem and the Middle East, the Rt Rev. Bishop Riah Abu El Assal preached. The sessions were co-chaired by the WCC General Secretary and Moderator of the WCC Executive/Central Committees (*Annex I: consultation agenda*). Unfortunately, several Palestinian participants were unable to attend due to travel restrictions imposed by the Israeli government (*Annex II: participants list*).

Building on long-standing WCC attention to the Palestinian question, the consultation, which included fifty participants, provided an ecumenical space, facilitated by the WCC to develop a platform for common reflection and action. Apart from initiating sharing, joint planning and strategizing, the consultation aimed to facilitate better coordination and cooperation of the ecumenical fellowship. Its key objectives were to:

- respond to the requests of WCC member churches to facilitate an international presence and non-violent resistance, advocacy/campaigns/ vigils to end the occupation;
- consider practical ways of following up on the recommendations of the Human Rights Inquiry Commission;
- develop an international ecumenical Plan of Action and Strategy, which operates on all levels, including international, regional and national;
- consider the creation of an International Ecumenical Platform to end violence, occupation and all forms of discrimination in Palestine, coordinated by the WCC in the context of the Decade to Overcome Violence;

Keynote speakers invited to address the consultation included Prof. Richard Falk, a member of the Human Rights Inquiry Commission, Prof. John Dugard, chairperson of the Human Rights Commission and newly-appointed Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Occupied Territories since 1967 and a representative of Mrs. Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Prof. Falk summarized the background, findings and recommendations of the Human Rights Inquiry Commission, which he stated were still relevant and gave a powerful account of the facts on the ground. He highlighted that there are moral and legal issues at stake in this whole conflict. He called on all to recognise that the present Israeli practices are calculated and clear policies of military occupation and oppression and that there is no time for moral ambivalence. Churches like others in the international community, should have the courage to be uncompromising in their statements and develop their responses to counter the policies of occupation and oppression. With regard to the breakdown of the Oslo peace process, he reiterated that respect for existing human rights and humanitarian legal norms need to be part of and not an outcome of the peace process. As for the question of an international presence, he stressed that the international community should ensure that it not simply provides a cosmetic response but is independent in its reporting capacity. Other key issues he highlighted were the existence of settlements, extra-judicial political assassinations, denial of fundamental economic and social rights and the terrible suffering of the most vulnerable group from a legal perspective: the Palestinian refugees. He urged the participants to appreciate the refugee issue as a matter of urgency that needs to be addressed in a genuine and substantive way. He welcomed the WCC initiative and the response by the different WCC member churches and partners, calling the ecumenical movement to

recognize that it has the responsibility to summon a religious and spiritual response to fill the vacuum of the secular world.

Prof. J. Dugard, in his turn, reiterated that when dealing with human rights it is imperative that we do not do so in isolation, but in the context of military occupation and denial of all rights. In addition, he reviewed his mandate, which covers civilians under occupation, hence falling in the realm of humanitarian law and the IV Geneva Convention. Among others he highlighted the issue of settlements and the destruction of Palestinian houses and trees near settlements, which have also been emphasized by the Mitchell Commission. He also reiterated the need for an international presence as a matter of urgency and the importance to remain in the realm of human rights discourse and use uncompromising language always within the context of military occupation. He stressed the importance of the European Union to be actively involved and called the civil society and the churches in Europe to encourage their governments in this regard.

Ms. Darka Topali, Senior Human Rights Officer representing the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, elaborated on the resolutions adopted during the 5th Special Session and the 57th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission. She highlighted the salient points of the High Commissioner's report after her urgent visit to the region which was presented at the 57th Session of the Commission in March. She welcomed the role of the WCC and its member churches in this conflict and affirmed the continuing cooperation of the High Commissioner's Office.

Participants shared their different views, ideas, experiences and planned activities (*Ref. Church and Ecumenical Statements, Letters and Appeals since the Outbreak of the Second Palestinian Uprising - June 2000*). The consultation was not able to spend quality time for joint strategizing. Therefore suggestions of the churches of Jerusalem and those of Israeli and Palestinian peace activists that were shared with the consultation in writing are attached (*Annex III*).

Conclusions

The consultation participants concluded their deliberations by affirming their commitment to work with the WCC to address all human rights violations and all forms of discrimination against the Palestinian people as a result of the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territories. The consultation participants reiterated the WCC delegation report's suggestion that this is a "*kairos* moment" for the church community in Palestine and world-wide: deep despair resulting from the recent escalation of violence has also deepened the desire of both Palestinians and Israelis for a "just and durable peace". All agreed that statements by churches world-wide have been important but the "time for statements seems to be over".

The full delegation report and its recommendations, which support those of the Human Rights Inquiry commission, were endorsed by the participants of the consultation. Among them are the call for the WCC to "designate 2002 as the year to focus attention of all member churches on Ending the Violence of Occupation in Palestine under the Decade to Overcome Violence", the development of a comprehensive accompaniment programme, a cooperative response to the humanitarian crisis, coordinated advocacy at all levels and support for international law and particularly UN resolutions as the basis for peace negotiations, assistance to local churches, and

lifting up “alternatives and moderate voices on both sides of civil society who are struggling to find common vision and future.”

In particular the consultation identified seven potential areas for coordinated action as the beginning of a joint process of ecumenical planning and strategizing for a concerted international response. These were:

- coordinating advocacy with governments
- boycotting goods produced in Israeli settlements in the occupied territories
- strengthening the “chain of solidarity” through prayer vigils
- resisting the destruction of property and uprooting of people from their homes and land
- encouraging and enabling the presence of ecumenical monitoring teams
- improving communication, interpretation and media reporting on the conflict and its causes
- increasing church, ecumenical, and interreligious delegations to and from Israel and the OPT.

The WCC General Secretary has requested the International Relations team, in consultation with other relevant teams of the WCC, to continue the lead in ensuring the implementation of all recommendations and facilitate cooperation and coordination. With the MECC General Secretary and the heads and representatives of the churches of Jerusalem present, Rev. Raiser agreed to consider the development of a coordination point for ecumenical action in Jerusalem and explore the possibility of linking it with an international coordination point. It was decided that the WCC Director of the Relations Cluster and MECC General Secretary and a representative of the churches in Jerusalem would be part of a tripartite committee to explore these possibilities and present different proposals to the WCC, MECC and local churches for their consideration and further action in the next six months. Bishop Abu El-Assal agreed to share this with all heads of churches in Jerusalem and asked them to decide on a third member of the committee to represent the local churches and inform the WCC and MECC by September.

In his concluding remarks, His Holiness Catholicos Aram I, moderator of the WCC Executive and Central Committee, reiterated that this consultation was only a step in the process of strengthened ecumenical action. In his turn, Rev. Raiser summarized the WCC’s role as one of coordination and facilitation of an ecumenical space for sharing, joint planning and action, in addition providing conceptual clarity and coherence in policy and terminology for the churches’ use. Rev. Raiser emphasized the need to focus on the ethical, moral and legal discourse rather than the language of power. The specific contribution to peace and reconciliation of churches and religious communities was emphasized throughout the consultation; “Being members and representatives of faith communities entails a commitment to a basic moral, ethical stance, to an integrity of the rights approach that we hope will rescue the conflict from becoming totally embroiled in a pure power struggle,” Rev. Raiser added. He assured participants that all recommendations of the WCC delegation as well as the consultation would be presented to the WCC Executive Committee meeting in the beginning of September for its consideration and appropriate action. ■



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October 23, 2001

Ref: WCC creates the Ecumenical Monitoring Programme in Palestine & Israel (EMPPI)

Dear sisters and brothers,

Following my previous correspondence after the WCC Executive Committee meeting of 11-14 September, informing you of the Committee's 14.9.01 resolution on *the Ecumenical Response to the Palestinian – Israeli Conflict*, and based on its recommendation 7.1, I am happy to inform you that yesterday the WCC Acting General Secretary and the Staff Leadership Group (SLG) approved a proposal presented by the WCC International Relations team for the creation of the **Ecumenical Monitoring Programme in Palestine & Israel (EMPPI)**.

An official announcement with further details will be sent to all WCC member churches, partners and all government missions in Geneva and the UN next week. On this occasion and on behalf of the WCC International Relations team, I would like to express our sincerest appreciation to the members of the Middle East Working Group of APRODEV (Association of World Council of Churches related Development Organisations in Europe) for their wonderful cooperation and immediate response to the WCC Executive Committee's call "*to respond as a matter of urgency to this appeal, and to make available the necessary resources for the WCC to be able to fulfill its tasks and responsibilities in relationship to the proposed coordinated ecumenical action plan*". Colleagues of the working group played an instrumental role in developing this proposal and we are grateful to each and everyone of them.

WCC in consultation and cooperation with its members and partners will be developing the detailed framework and terms of reference of the EMPPI within the next two months for further discussion and action by January 2002, when WCC International Relations plans to convene the first meeting of the **EMPPI Working Group**. We would be grateful to know at your earliest convenience if your church / organisation would be interested to participate or contribute to the development of the EMPPI.

In addition, WCC International Relations team is planning to convene, by early 2002, the **Ecumenical Advocacy Working Group to End the Illegal Occupation of Palestine**. At the recent MECC partners meeting in Cyprus it was decided to focus our joint advocacy attention on Jewish Settlements in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza, which are in violation

of article 49 (6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention and place a major obstacle to durable peace. Please let us know if your church / organisation has been working on this question and if you would be interested to join the Ecumenical Advocacy Working Group. We would also be grateful to know of other advocacy issues you are working on or planning to address eg. Refugees.

The situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is still very alarming. The conflict keeps escalating and we hardly see any hope to bring the two parties back to the negotiating table. Violence in all its forms continues unabated. The local churches call us to accompany them in their daily struggle for survival. We need your active support and cooperation in order to ensure a concerted ecumenical effort that will make a difference. The WCC Executive Committee has called on all WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to focus their attention for the year 2002 of the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) to end the illegal occupation of Palestine. In its turn, WCC is committed to do its utmost *“to promote an active, coordinated ecumenical response to end the illegal occupation of Palestine; expressing solidarity with the Churches and Christian Communities most directly affected; and providing auspices for member churches to develop a plan of concerted non-violent ecumenical action to protect vulnerable communities in Palestine and to promote an end to the hostilities.”* (September 2001, WCC Executive Committee resolution).

Let us respond to the call of our Lord to be peacemakers. Let us work for justice and peace in the land where He was born, crucified and resurrected ! Let hear from you !

With best wishes, I remain,

Yours truly,

Salpy Eskidjian
Programme Executive
International Relations
World Council of Churches

Prayers For Peace from the Churches of Jerusalem To End the Illegal Occupation of Palestine

In the context of the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace (2001-2010) the World Council of Churches' Executive Committee, meeting in September 2001, called upon member churches and ecumenical partners *'to focus attention in 2002 on intensive efforts to End the Illegal Occupation of Palestine'*. In order to launch this campaign the Churches of Jerusalem were invited to share with the ecumenical fellowship their prayers and messages for peace.

The World Council of Churches invites you to join your voices with those of the Churches in the Holy Land to pray for an end of the Israeli occupation and all the killing and bloodshed, to restore broken relationships and to be the instruments of peace. **We encourage you to use this resource pack in your worship services starting January 1, 2002 up to Easter Sunday, to mark the beginning of the year 2002 and our collective efforts to end the violence of the illegal occupation of Palestine.**

With the holy blessings of all the Church leaders of Jerusalem, let us renew and intensify our efforts in the year 2002 to end the suffering of our brothers and sisters living under occupation and work towards a comprehensive peace based on justice and security for all the peoples of the region.

WCC International Relations
December 2001



This resource pack contains messages and prayers from:

- ❖ His Beatitude Patriarch Irineos the First, Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem
- ❖ His Beatitude Patriarch Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem
- ❖ His Beatitude Patriarch Torkom Manoogian, Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem
- ❖ Father Giovanni Battistelli, Custos of the Holy Land
- ❖ His Eminence Archbishop Dr. Anba Abraham, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate - The Holy See of Jerusalem and the Near East
- ❖ His Eminence Archbishop Mar Swerios Malki Mourad, Syrian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem and Jordan and the Holy Land
- ❖ His Eminence Archbishop Abba Kewestos, Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem
- ❖ His Eminence Monseigneur Paul Nabil Sayyah, Maronite Archbishop of Haifa and the Holy Land
- ❖ His Grace Bishop Riah Abu El-Assal, Episcopal Church in Jerusalem & the Middle East
- ❖ His Grace Bishop Munib Younan, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and Palestine
- ❖ Archimandrite Mtanios Haddad, Greek Catholic (Melkite) Patriarchate, Jerusalem

The above resources are also available electronically on the WCC webpage on Jerusalem and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, where one can also find more information on other initiatives related to the ecumenical response to the conflict such as the Ecumenical Monitoring Programme in Palestine and Israel (EMPPPI) and the ecumenical prayer vigil for peace in the Middle East initiated in the USA. The address is:

<http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/jerusalem.html>

Member churches and partners are kindly asked to keep the WCC informed of the ways in which these resources will be used. Any planned activity shared with WCC International Relations will be included in the overall ecumenical effort and added on the WCC webpage to be redesigned in January 2002. For more information you are welcome to contact the WCC International Relations team: Tel. + 41 22 791 6720, Email. ask@wcc-coe.org

**Message from His Beatitude Patriarch Irineos the First
Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem**

We, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of the Mother of Churches, living together with our congregation in the Holy Land, and awaiting the approaching feast of Christmas, experience deeply the mystery of love and mercifulness of God for our salvation through His incarnate Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem of Judea.

At the same time, we experience the phenomena of violence, intolerance, lack of peace and security, and consequently the absence of pilgrims from the Holy Land.

Under such circumstances, we strengthen our prayers to God for peace, and appeal to the two conflicting sides in our area to restart peace negotiations, and in this way to arrive at a final resolution and, as well, the status of the Holy Shrines and the rights of the Christian communities living around them.

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**Message from His Beatitude Patriarch Michel Sabbah
Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem**

Greetings of peace from Jerusalem!

Praying for peace is, next to study and action, a major task of the WCC. I am very glad to hear that you are launching the year 2002 to End the Illegal Occupation of Palestine. Therefore, I send you a "Prayer for Peace", which could be used not only to pray for Palestine, but also for the whole world, because the time we are living is very significant and historical. We live in a time of profound distress. The terrorist attacks in the USA on the 11th of September, followed by ant-terrorist campaigns, and since 7 October, the war in Afghanistan, are just a few examples of the dramatic and tragic events worldwide. The conflict in the Holy Land is one hundred years old, and it is time to put an end to the suffering of the peoples of this region of the world. The current situation since September 28, 2000 is the worst period in this conflict, and should be the last. Hopefully, this campaign will help both peoples and three religions to find out that peace cannot be but the fruit of justice.

Let us pray for all the victims of this violence, for their families, for the people who still live in shock and fear. Let us hope and pray that people can express their fear and that their anger will not result in hate or revenge. Anger and fear amongst the people has mainly to do with the feelings of insecurity. More than ever, the globalisation of insecurity has become a reality. No weapons system, no military strategy can stop such types of terrorist attacks. The only solution lies in social justice. Though poverty is not by itself the cause of terrorism, we cannot successfully combat terrorism if we do not address the worsening disparities between the rich and poor. We must recognize that global disparity is fundamentally incompatible with global security.

I know this is the experience of my own region, where escalation and further bloodshed goes on. Shootings and killings from both sides in the conflict will only deepen further the hatred and acts of revenge. When will the international community, and we ourselves as well, be ready to remove the most obvious elements that spawn the

conditions for hatred and violence? Poverty along with other situations of marginalisation that engulf the lives of so many people, including the denial of human dignity, the lack of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, social exclusion, intolerable refugee situations, internal and external displacement and physical and psychological oppression are breeding grounds waiting to be exploited.

I also invite you to pray with us the prayer of the Pope in Bethlehem: *O Child of Bethlehem, Son of Mary and Son of God, Lord of all time and Prince of Peace, "the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8), heal all our wounds, strengthen our steps, open our hearts and minds to "the loving kindness of the heart of our God who visits us like the dawn from on high" (Luke 1:78). Amen.*

I hope that your "prayer for peace" will bring together many people from the three Monotheistic Religions, which should co-exist peacefully together in the Holy Land. Let us pray for a better and just peace in our world of today.

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**Message from His Beatitude Patriarch Torkom Manoogian
Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem**

We, as one of the heads of the oldest traditional Christian Churches in the Holy Land, appeal to the World Council of Churches to do its utmost to contribute to the cessation of violence and the restoration of peace with justice and the restarting of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, who have been in armed conflict over a year, causing devastation of towns, the bloodshed of hundreds of innocent lives of citizens of both sides, men, women and infants. It distresses us to see how this Holy Land, which is the home of the three monotheistic religions, Christianity, Judaism and Islam, is being torn into pieces and, instead of love, hatred is being sown among its peoples, and instead of peace, the seeds of perpetual war.

We, as the faithful followers of the Prince of Peace, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was born in this Holy Land, in Bethlehem, and who brought His divine message of salvation first to the Jews and then through them to the rest of the nations, have an obligation to see the implementation of His message of love to our neighbors, by taking care of the bereaved and the needy, and advocating justice for the ones that suffer injustice.

As leaders of the Mother Church in Jerusalem and the Holy Land, we have adopted the motto since 1994, that this Holy Land should be shared by two nations and the three religions, and shall live side by side as good neighbors, in love and in peace, by respecting the human rights, freedom of worship and movement of all citizens and by safeguarding the Holy Places of all three religions. Without these basic principles, there can be no real peace, but constant turmoil, not only here, but throughout the Middle East and consequently the rest of the world.

Therefore, we ask our Christian Churches throughout the world, to look very seriously and conscientiously into the plight of the suffering peoples of this Holy Land, whether Palestinians or Israelis, or whether Christians, Jews or Moslems, and lend their hearty support in the search of a permanent solution to this decades-long question.

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**A Prayer for peace from the Franciscan tradition
from Father Giovanni Battistelli, Custos of the Holy Land**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love,
Where there is injury, pardon,
Where there is doubt, faith,
Where there is despair, hope,
Where there is darkness, light,
Where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master, grant that I may seek
not so much to be consoled as to console
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love,
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen

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**A prayer from His Eminence Archbishop Dr. Anba Abraham
Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate - The Holy See of Jerusalem and the Near East**

O Lord God Almighty, we raise our hearts to you asking for Your mercy. Please God, look upon us, Your children, in the turmoil of this troubled world, full of suffering, pain, depression, persecution, violence, bitterness, hatred, and, above all, injustice. O Lord, have mercy upon us.

Grant Your peace to our city, the city of peace, that has long suffered and is still suffering from the grief of wars.

O Lord, remember all those who are persecuted and tortured - defend them. Remember the bereaved – give them condolence. Homes for the homeless, quick recovery for the sick, and repentance to sinners. Guide the world leaders to be just and understanding.

We pray for justice and peace to prevail everywhere. O Lord God our Father, grant us peace – not that of the world – but your heavenly everlasting peace that you promised us deep in our hearts. Give us the power to forgive and forget and fill our hearts with love towards all for the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

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**A prayer from His Eminence Archbishop Mar Swerios Malki Mourad
Syrian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem and Jordan and the Holy Land**

From the Spiritual Treasure on Canonical Prayer Book
12 - Supplication to the Holy Spirit

O You Divine Comforter, Spirit of Truth; O treasure-house of goodness, and fountain of life; You Who do apportion gifts and give divine favors, come dwell in us, and cleanse us thoroughly from all defilement. O Lord, create in us a clean heart, and renew within us a right spirit, even the spirit of temperance and purity, the spirit of piety and holiness, the spirit of deliberation and strength, and the spirit of knowledge and the fear of You, O God. Be with us and among us, guiding, aiding, strengthening and comforting us. O Holy, Merciful and Good Spirit, grant me a fountain of tears that, with them, I may wash my heart clean of its defilement, so that it pleases You to dwell in it. Ignite in it the fire of Your divine love, and refresh and revive in me the spirit of good work, that I may live in You forever and ever.

Amen.

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**A prayer from His Eminence Archbishop Abba Kewestos
Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem**

In the name of the Father and of the Son
And of the Holy Spirit one God, Amen.

For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his
tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and
ensue it.

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open
unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do
evil.

And who is he that will harm you if you will be followers of that
which is good?

But if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and
be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always
to an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that
is in you, with meakness and fear;

Amen.

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**A prayer from His Eminence Monseigneur Paul Nabil Sayyah
Maronite Archbishop of Haifa and the Holy Land**

God Father of all, we give you praise for your creation and with your creation. Out of love you brought everything into existence and continue to watch over the whole universe and sustain it with love. We come to you in all confidence seeking your forgiveness for the harm we have done and are doing to each other and to your creation, especially during the present times and in various parts of the world.

Lord Jesus Christ, you came to bring us peace, that all peoples may have life and have it in abundance. As we prepare to relive the events of your incarnation help us keep in mind vividly that you have called us to be peace makers and to help each other reach the fullness of life to which you have called each and every human being. Look upon all the people who are suffering from hunger, displacement, injustice, violence, discrimination and all those who are marginalized in our societies. For Jerusalem and all the land of your birth we ask a special blessing and we pray that all those who have the privilege of living there may remember that they are children of the one Father who wants each and everyone of them equally to be enabled to live life to the full. Grant the decision makers, in the Holy Land and everywhere in the world, the wisdom and courage to do their utmost to bring about just peace and lasting reconciliation. Do not allow them to use different standards in their caring for your people and your creation and to justify excessive violence when it serves their objectives.

Holy Spirit, God of Light, enlighten each and every human being, especially those entrusted with the huge responsibility of making decisions that affect the lives of millions of people all over the world, that they may remember that seeking power, domination and material gain will never bring them lasting bliss. Love and only love can lead to true and lasting happiness and peace and bring all humanity and the whole of creation to the fullness of life and thus give glory to the Creator and Father of all. Amen.

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**Prayers for the Holy Land from His Grace Bishop Riah Abu El-Assal
Episcopal Church in Jerusalem & the Middle East**

Heavenly Father,

In the life and ministry of your Son, Jesus Christ, you showed us how to live together; give this sense of unity to the peoples of the Holy Land today.

In the death of your Son on the Cross, you showed how great was your love for us as well as your readiness to forgive; you brought new hope to your people and a desire to work for peace and justice; renew that hope in your people today and give them a burning desire to find your peace in this time.

In the resurrection of Jesus and in the outpouring of your Holy Spirit you showed the disciples they had power and authority to conquer in your name; convince your people today of the gifts you have entrusted to them and so help them to transform their Land to your greater glory.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Spirit of the Living God,

Come afresh on your Holy Land.

Help your people to restore broken relationships.

Give them patience to break down barriers of suspicion and mistrust; ability to discern personal prejudice and the courage to overcome fear.

Encourage them to respect each other's integrity and rights so that your kingdom may be established on earth for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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**A prayer and a Palestinian Litany from His Grace Bishop Munib Younan
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and Palestine**

"Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid." (Isaiah 12:2)

Heavenly Father, we praise you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to be born in Bethlehem to become one of us. As we this Christmas again thank and praise you for the birth of your Son, we find ourselves in the midst of violence, bloodshed, and hatred that seem to have no end. We feel helpless in front of the political and military might of this world. We look around us and find no salvation in human beings, but only in our incarnated Lord.

As we join the shepherds of Beit Sahour and the Magi of the East in finding your salvation in the Holy Child in the manger, we pray that your presence will be seen and felt among us in these days of destruction and death.

We ask you to cleanse our hearts from bitterness and hatred, and from frustration and fear. Make us all turn to you with repentance and fill us with trust and confidence in you, who is our salvation. We pray that all our suffering will bring us closer to you, and make us grow in faith and trust in you, and in love towards all our neighbours.

Send your Holy Spirit to comfort the bereaved families, to bring recovery to the injured and disabled, and to change the hearts of all of us to make us see that your will in the Holy Land is that Palestinians and Israelis live justly and equally together. Change the minds of the politicians so that they may turn the swords into ploughshares.

Bless your Church to be your instrument for peace, bringing comfort to the afflicted, promoting justice for the weak and dispossessed, and witnessing your love to all people.

In Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Almighty and Eternal God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we glorify and praise you. You are our only refuge in this troubled world.

We glorify and praise you, our God.

Merciful God, in the birth of your Son Jesus Christ in Bethlehem, you became one of us, sharing and understanding our humanity, our suffering and our problems.

We glorify and praise you, our God.

We thank you that you took refuge in Egypt, identifying yourself with all who are refugees and victims of political power.

We thank you, our God.

We thank you that you grew up in Nazareth and ministered to the people in Galilee, and spread your kingdom in a new way.

We thank you, our God.

We thank you that you were crucified in Jerusalem, identifying yourself with every person who suffers and lives under occupation and injustice. On the cross you carried

the sin and the suffering of all human beings and reconciled us with you and with our fellow human beings.

We thank you, our God.

Our heavenly Father, we come before you with all the troubles and pains we are experiencing here in the Middle East.

Lord, have mercy on us.

We pray for all victims of injustice and violence in the present situation. We pray also for those who are responsible for injustice and all the forms of violence.

Lord, have mercy on us.

We pray for our laborers who cannot enter to their places of work. We pray for our youth who are losing their hope for the future.

Lord, have mercy on us.

We pray for our mothers who are fed up with bloodshed, killing and the use of arms. We pray for bereaved families who lost their dear ones. We pray for the quick recovery of the injured. We especially pray for those who have to live with permanent disability.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Jesus, our Savior, our eyes look to you, our only help in these troubled times.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray that you open the eyes of the world, and of Israelis and Palestinians, for justice and reconciliation. Help us to see that the security and freedom of the one people is dependent on the security and freedom of the other.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for politicians that they may realize that the security and peace we all long for will not come by the use of arms and force, but by doing justice so that the two peoples can reconcile and together work out an equitable co-existence for the future.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, you have called us to be your followers. Give us your love for our fellow human beings. Free us, and our children, from hatred, bitterness, and the denying of the rights of others; and fill us with love, truth, and justice, so that we can recognize and respect the dignity and the rights of one another.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, you have shown us that forgiveness is not forgetting one's rights but asserting them. We know that forgiving is to see Christ in our enemies and to love them as our neighbors. Help us who are Palestinian to see you in Israelis, and Israelis to see you in us. Lead us all to affirm and respect that our humanity is a gift from you, as we are all created in your image. Give us courage to mutually recognize each other's human, religious, civil and political rights.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Holy Spirit, giver of life and new beginnings, help us to faithfully respond to God's call to be ministers of reconciliation.

Come, Holy Spirit, renew us all.

Help us to find ways of encouraging people to open their hearts and confess their part in the past injustices and find ways to build a just and secure future for our children. Give us wisdom and courage in this difficult task. When the pressures of the situation make us despair, come with your Holy Spirit and renew our strength and hope.

Come, Holy Spirit, renew us all.

Sustain with your power those, who in the midst of all difficulties, are building quietly the culture of reconciliation, justice and peace. They may not be many right now, but we remember that the work for God's kingdom among us, started with only a handful of faithful and committed people.

Come, Holy Spirit, renew us all.

Come, Healing Spirit, and change us and open ways for us to change others. Remove all injustice and fill our land with a just peace. Remove all hatred and fill us all with true love.

Come, Holy Spirit, renew us all.

Remove all insecurity and bring in real security. Remove all oppression and bring in freedom for all.

Come, Holy Spirit, renew us all.

Merciful God, accept our prayer and yearning. You are the only strength we have. No one can take the power of prayer away from us. In the name of Jesus – our Liberator and Redeemer – we pray.

Amen.

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**Ecumenical Prayers for Peace from Archimandrite Mtanios Haddad
Greek Catholic (Melkite) Patriarchate, Jerusalem**

The Litany of the Peace

P. In peace let us pray to the Lord.

C. God have mercy (*Kyrie-eleison* - repeated after each verse).

P. For peace from on high and the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the lord.

- For peace in the whole world, the well-being of the holy Churches of God and the union of all, let us pray to the Lord.
- For all victims of bloodshed and violence, as well as for the perpetrators of these evils.
- For all the children and the young people that you may give them hope for the future, let us pray to the Lord.
- For all bereaved families, the unemployed and all who seek to help them.
- For all the guidance of your Holy Spirit for all the leaders of this land, especially President Arafat and Prime Minister Sharon, that they may be inspired to work for your peace with your justice.

So we pray together

Gracious Father, your love knows no limits. Fill our hearts with your compassion, open our eyes to your presence in the world, enlarge our minds to understand your will. Take our hands and minister through them. Speak through our words and direct our feet in the path of peace, that Christ may be revealed in us and that the world may believe. Amen.

- Have in remembrance, also O Lord, we beseech thee. Thy Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, which is from end to end of the Universe; and give peace unto Her whom thou hast purchased with the precious blood of Christ: and establish thou firmly this holy Temple, even unto the end of the world.
- Have in remembrance, O Lord, our most God-fearing and Christ-loving Ruler _____, to whom thou hast given the right to reign the earth. Crown him with the armour of truth, with the panoply of contentment.
- Grant unto him peace profound and inviolate; inspire his heart with good deeds towards thy Church, and toward all thy people; that through his serenity we may lead a quite and tranquil life, in all godliness and soberness.
- Visit us thy loving-Kindness, O Lord; manifest thyself unto us in thy rich bounties. Vouch safe unto us temperate and healthful season. Give gentle showers upon the earth, unto fruitlessness. Bless the crown of the year of thy beneficence. Make schisms to cease in the Church. Quench the rage of the nations; speedily destroy, by the might of the Holy Spirit, all uprising of heresies. Receive us all into thy kingdom, making us children of the light and of the day; and grant unto us thy peace, and thy love, O Lord our God; for all things hast thou given unto us.
- Having made our petition for the unity of the faith, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, let us commend ourselves, and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God. Choir. To Thee, O Lord.

- O Lord, who blesses those who bless thee, and sanctifies those who put their trust in thee: Save thy people and bless their inheritance. Preserve the fullness of thy Church; sanctify those who love the beauty of thy house; glorify them in recompense with thy divine might, and do not abandon us who set our hope on thee. Give peace to thy world, and to thy Churches and to thy Priests: and to our most God-fearing Ruler _____, to the Army and Navy, and to all thy people. For every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh from thee, the Father of Lights and unto thee we ascribe glory, and thanksgiving, and worship, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now, and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Choir. Amen. -- Blessed be the Name of the Lord henceforth and forever(thrice).

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MKR-sak 08/02

**The First Alexandria Declaration
of the Religious Leaders of the Holy Land**

In the Name of God who is Almighty, Merciful and Compassionate, we, who have gathered as religious leaders from the Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities, pray for true peace in Jerusalem and the Holy Land, and declare our commitment to ending the violence and bloodshed that denies the right to life and dignity.

According to our faith traditions, killing innocents in the name of God is a desecration of his Holy Name, and defames religion in the world. The violence in the Holy Land is an evil which must be opposed by all people of good faith. We seek to live together as neighbours, respecting the integrity of each other's historical and religious inheritance. We call upon all to oppose incitement, hatred and the misrepresentation of the other.

1. *The Holy Land is Holy to all three of our faiths. Therefore, followers of the divine religions must respect its sanctity, and bloodshed must not be allowed to pollute it. The sanctity and integrity of the Holy Places must be preserved, and freedom of religious worship must be ensured for all.*
2. *Palestinians and Israelis must respect the divinely ordained purposes of the Creator by whose grace they live in the same land that is called Holy.*
3. *We call on the political leaders of both peoples to work for a just, secure and durable solution in the spirit of the words of the Almighty and the Prophets.*
4. *As a first step now, we call for a religiously sanctioned cease-fire, respected and observed on all sides, and for the implementation of the Mitchell and Tenet recommendations, including the lifting of restrictions and a return to negotiations.*
5. *We seek to help create an atmosphere where present and future generations will co-exist with mutual respect and trust in the other. We call on all to refrain from incitement and demonization, and to educate our future generations accordingly.*
6. *As religious leaders, we pledge ourselves to continue a joint quest for a just peace that leads to reconciliation in Jerusalem and the Holy Land, for the common good of all our peoples.*
7. *We announce the establishment of a permanent joint committee to carry out the recommendations of this declaration, and to engage with our respective political leadership accordingly.*

