GENERAL SYNOD

CARLISLE DIOCESAN SYNOD MOTION: STANDING IN SOLIDARITY FOR A JUST AND LASTING PEACE IN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

1. Introduction

This motion invites General Synod to respond prayerfully, theologically, and practically to the ongoing trauma in Israel and Palestine, and to stand in solidarity with Palestinian Christians and all who seek a just and lasting peace.

It does so by:

- Affirming the dignity of all peoples in the region
- Rejecting antisemitism, anti-Muslim hostility, and all forms of prejudice
- Receiving the testimony of Palestinian Christians
- Encouraging deeper understanding and engagement across the Church
- Calling for ethical consistency in church investment and public witness

The motion reflects a long-standing Anglican commitment to justice, peace, and reconciliation, and is rooted in the conviction that the Church of England must respond faithfully to the suffering and witness of the global Body of Christ:

"That this Synod responds to the call of Palestinian Christians to stand in solidarity with them and their fellow Palestinians in non-violent resistance to the ongoing occupation. We lament the loss of Israeli and Palestinian lives and the violations of human dignity and rights on both sides, as well as the displacement of population. We commit to a better understanding of the situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, seeking peace and security for all the peoples of those lands and pursuing that which leads to the establishment of a just and lasting peace.

In particular, we:

1) Reject antisemitism, anti-Muslim hostility and all forms of prejudice based on religious affiliation and ethnicity;
2) Pray for all victims of the current conflicts in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory and for a lasting peace;
3) Receive the Kairos Palestine Declaration (2009), the Cry for Hope (2020), the Call for Repentance (2023) and Kairos Palestine II (2025) as heartfelt expressions of the lived experience of Palestinian Christians and:
   a) encourage the Church of England at all levels to engage with those documents as part of a quest for greater understanding of the situation;
   b) Ask the Faith and Public Life Division to commend resources that enable Dioceses and local churches to promote a full understanding of the situation and to respond through prayer, theological study, advocacy and practical support for the work undertaken by the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and other Churches in the service of the people of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory;
4) Call on Church investors to implement and demonstrate a leading approach to responsible investment relating to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and:
   a) to review their investment policies in the light of the **International Court of Justice** Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024 on the illegality of the occupation of Palestinian territory;
   b) to request the Church Commissioners and Church of England Pensions Board to report back, on a triennium basis, on the progress and success of their approaches;

c) the bodies named above to support the EIAG to develop guidance for wider Church of England investors on how to manage human rights risks relating to occupied territories and conflict.

5) Ask His Majesty's Government to work urgently for a lasting peace in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, that will ensure safety and security for all parties and the upholding of the rights and inherent dignity of all people."

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2. Theological and Pastoral Foundations

Christian faith is grounded in the call to love neighbour, pursue justice, and seek peace. The Bible affirms the dignity of every human being and calls the Church to stand with those who suffer injustice.

The Anglican Communion has consistently affirmed:

- The importance of peace-making as a core Christian vocation
- The necessity of listening to the voices of local churches
- The interconnectedness of the global Church

The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, part of the global Anglican Communion, embodies this calling in a context of deep trauma. Its ministries span Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, offering education, healthcare, and peacebuilding initiatives to people of all backgrounds. In a region marked by political division and violence, the Diocese seeks to act as a "voice of moderation and reconciliation," promoting peace, respect, and cooperation. [j-diocese.org]

This motion recognises the responsibility of the Church of England to affirm this witness and to respond in solidarity with Anglicans and other Christians in the region.

3. Context: Israel and Palestine

The situation in Israel and Palestine is complex and deeply painful. It involves ongoing violence affecting both Palestinians and Israelis, loss of life among civilians, displacement of communities, persistent humanitarian challenges and deep insecurity and fear among populations. The motion recognises the suffering of all who have lost loved ones or been affected by violence and affirms the need for a peace that ensures safety and dignity for all peoples.

Recent developments have brought renewed attention to the situation. On 19 July 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an Advisory Opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The Court concluded that:

- Israel's continued presence in the occupied Palestinian territory is unlawful
- Israel is under an obligation to bring an end to its presence in the Palestinian territory as rapidly as possible
- Israel must cease all settlement activities, evacuate all settlements and make reparations for all those who have been damaged by settlement activities
- Other states are under an obligation not to recognise or render any aid or assistance to maintain the illegal occupation. [reliefweb.int]

The Court's opinion also addressed the impact of prolonged occupation on the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and raised questions about the obligations of the international community. [icj-cij.org] While the ICJ's findings are advisory in nature, they have significant moral and legal weight and contribute to the broader framework within

which churches and institutions consider their ethical responsibilities. This recent Advisory Opinion is also consistent with how international law has developed over the years regarding the situation in Israel and Palestine (see, for instance, UN Security Council resolutions 242 (1967); 237(1967); 446 (1979); 465 (1980); 478 (1980); 2334 (2016).)

4. Listening to Palestinian Christian Voices

At the heart of this motion is the decision to receive and engage with four significant statements from Palestinian Christians:

a) Kairos Palestine (2009)

This landmark document is a collective statement from Palestinian Christians describing life under occupation and calling for justice, peace, and reconciliation. It contains a critical call to the worldwide church “Are you able to help us get our freedom back, for this is the only way you can help the two peoples attain justice, peace, security and love?” It affirms non-violent resistance as both a right and a duty, rooted in faith and commitment to justice.

b) Cry for Hope (2020)

Issued by a global coalition linked to Kairos Palestine, this document was written on the eve of Israel’s formal plans to annex the West Bank. It describes the situation as a critical moment for the integrity of Christian witness. It calls for decisive action by churches and highlights systemic injustice affecting Palestinian life and future prospects, stating that the church cannot serve God while remaining silent about the oppression of the Palestinians.

c) Call for Repentance (2023)

This statement by a number of Christian institutions in Palestine calls on Western church leaders and theologians to reflect critically on their theological and political responses to the crisis in Gaza. It calls for repentance where Christian teaching or silence has legitimised Israel’s war, contributed to ongoing in justices, or distorted moral witness.

d) Kairos Palestine II (2025)

This is a stark update of the original 2009 Kairos document in response to the war in Gaza and de-facto annexation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. “We renew our message of faith, hope and love, offering a faith-inspired vision for the time after genocide”. However, it describes the situation in Palestine, both for the church and all indigenous people as “beyond urgent”, calling upon the global Christian community to move past sympathy into costly solidarity and action.

Together, these documents provide a theological interpretation of lived experience and call for global Christian solidarity. They emphasise non-violence, justice, and hope, and invite the Church to deeper reflection and action. The motion does not require agreement with every aspect of these texts but encourages engagement with them as authentic expressions of faith from a suffering church.

5. Core Principles Affirmed by the Motion

The motion explicitly states that antisemitism and anti-Muslim hostility must be rejected unequivocally, and that all forms of prejudice based on religion or ethnicity are incompatible with Christian faith.
In the UK, these commitments are essential to maintaining the integrity of Christian witness, respectful interfaith relationships and a responsible understanding of, and engagement with, issues of injustice. The motion therefore seeks to hold together a commitment to justice with a clear rejection of all forms of hatred and discrimination.

6. Practical Areas of Response

a) **Prayer and Worship**

The motion calls the Church to renewed prayer, for victims of violence on all sides, for peace and reconciliation and for wisdom among leaders. Prayer is not presented as an alternative to action, but as the foundation of faithful response.

b) **Learning and Theological Engagement**

The Faith and Public Life Division is asked to commend resources for dioceses and parishes and enable informed theological and contextual understanding. This reflects the recognition that many within the Church seek a better understanding of the situation and theological frameworks for engagement, as well as guidance on appropriate action.

c) **Advocacy, Public Witness and support for Churches in the Region**

The motion supports informed and responsible advocacy, rooted in prayer and theological reflection, grounded in international law and focused on peace, justice, and dignity for all. It encourages practical support for The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, as well as other churches and Christian organisations serving both Palestinians and Israelis. These churches provide critical ministries in education, healthcare, and social care, serving communities regardless of religious or ethnic identity. [j-diocese.org]

7. Investment and Ethical Responsibility

The motion calls for a review of investment policies by Church of England investors, and invites the Church Commissioners and the Pensions Board to report to Synod regularly.

a) Current Approach

At present, the National Church investment bodies (NIBs) approach Israel/Palestine through a general Human Rights Policy based on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, alongside investment policies developed for conflict-affected areas and occupations worldwide. The policy uses engagement as a first step, with possible exclusion/disinvestment where engagement fails.

b) Rationale for Review

We believe existing policies need to be reviewed in light of the ICJ Advisory Opinion of July 2024, and the rapidly deteriorating situation in Palestine. As the NIBs align their policy to the UN Guiding Principles, we believe they should also be using, as a minimum standard, the UN Human Rights Office Database of businesses involved in certain activities in illegal Israeli settlements in Palestine, to engage with the relevant Investment Funds in order to screen out any such listed companies.

8. Conclusion

This motion asks the Church of England to:

- Listen attentively to the voices of Palestinian Christians
- Respond faithfully to the demands of justice and peace
- Align its practices, including investments, with its values
- Seek a future in which all people in the region can live in dignity and security

At its heart is a simple profound hope, that the Church can contribute, in prayer, witness, and action, to establishing a **just and lasting peace for all who call the Holy Land home**.