



World Council of Churches

Commission of the Churches on International Affairs

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Geneva, 17th November 2006

International Church Action for Peace in Palestine and Israel, June 3-9, 2007.

Dear Ecumenical Partners,

Greetings from the international affairs unit of the World Council of Churches. We are writing to invite interested WCC member churches, related organisations and church peace movements to consider joining a new ecumenical advocacy initiative for peace that will happen next year during the 40th anniversary of the 1967 war in Israel/Palestine.

The initiative is called **International Church Action for Peace in Palestine and Israel, June 3-9, 2007** (or 'ICAPPI').

The idea builds on a pilot project that took place in March of this year. You may well receive this letter from those who took part as they pass on the invitation in order to broaden the initiative for its second year.

The pilot project saw churches and related groups in 13 countries plus two international networks taking part in a week of advocacy and awareness-raising activities: lobbying governments and holding symposiums, symbolic acts and solidarity visits. On the ground in Jerusalem and the West Bank, a varied week-long program attracted some 40 people from eight countries. Also, there and elsewhere, Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox voices were raised for peace together.

The message was that churches are watching events in Israel/Palestine carefully, are increasingly concerned and are taking new action for peace. Ideally, policy-makers and the public would hear different church voices on this one theme at the same time. In some cases, this happened nationally. In some church circles, it happened internationally as well.

The pilot project was anchored by groups that support the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel and was then strengthened by broader participation, for example, of Pax Christi International. At least five sites reported Jewish participation; several included Muslims. One country reported that the event dealt with occupation-related issues their church had not raised before.

Participants generally felt that the initiative was worth doing again and worth improving. One suggestion, for example, is to have more synergy between countries and activities.

Participants were inspired by the fact that partners in the Occupied Palestinian Territories were active in the same, concurrent initiative with them. This feeling of solidarity will only increase because of the important anniversary in June 2007.

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Our intent next year is to send a clearer and stronger signal to policy-makers and interested publics about church engagement for peace in Israel and Palestine. The goal is to be *for* a just peace that serves all those suffering from the conflict and the occupation, not *against* one group or another. Thus, efforts should be guided by the long-standing, international law-based policies of churches and international church bodies like the WCC.

One thing to note is the flexibility in the concept. It can accommodate a variety of local approaches. Since various churches and related NGOs will be mounting actions around the 2007 anniversary, this initiative will enable creative linkages between national events and a common international church commitment. Exercising the global voice of the churches is the key.

So far, church groups in five countries—from Australia to ‘Zuit’ Africa—and the international Pax Christi network have signalled a willingness to take part in 2007. Five other groups are discussing ‘ICAPPI’ with national partners. Some are already exploring ways to combine it with other anniversary actions for peace in Israel/Palestine. More participation will be forthcoming. The WCC will convene a core group to bring the elements and opportunities together.

Forty years under occupation is far too long for anyone. People under this occupation often say they did not think it could get any worse, but have been saddened to see that it has. The same is certainly true again now. The sanctions imposed after Palestinian elections this year, violence across borders and disproportionate responses are dramatic examples. Meanwhile, settlement construction, settler infrastructure and the separation barrier advance silent by comparison. No wonder that, from many quarters, there is also a rising desire for peace. Churches that for decades have patiently lifted their separate voices for peace are also moving together in new ways. For their part, through the WCC, churches are putting a special emphasis on the region for the coming years and launching a Palestine/Israel Ecumenical Forum in 2007 to further catalyse actions for peace.

We want you to know about this International Church Action for Peace initiative. Please contact the WCC offices Beatrice.Merahi@wcc-coe.org for further information, or to say your group is willing to participate, or to volunteer to help with the core group.

You are invited to share your strength as part of a united witness. We pray that people tired of violence, suffering and injustice will see, hear and welcome what is done by churches and people of faith in the name of peace.

Please take action on this invitation and also share it with appropriate, interested parties in your church and related groups. Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Clement John
Acting Director
Commission of the Churches on International Affairs

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