

Handout 1.5

Kairos Palestine, Kairos USA and the “Kairos Legacy”

The authors of the Kairos Palestine document, ‘A Moment of Truth: A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering’ write this opening statement to explain the purpose of their document, connecting their work to that of the South Africa Kairos document:

“This document is the Christian Palestinians’ word to the world about what is happening in Palestine. It is written at this time when we wanted to see the Glory of the grace of God in this land and in the sufferings of its people. In this spirit the document requests the international community to stand by the Palestinian people who have faced oppression, displacement, suffering and clear apartheid for more than six decades. The suffering continues while the international community silently looks on at the occupying State, Israel. Our word is a cry of hope, with love, prayer and faith in God. We address it first of all to ourselves and then to all the churches and Christians in their world, asking them to stand against injustice and apartheid, urging them to work for a just peace in our region, calling on them to revisit theologies that justify crimes perpetrated against our people and the dispossession of the land...

As Palestinian Christians we hope that this document will provide the turning point to focus the efforts of all peace-loving peoples in the world, especially our Christian sisters and brothers. We hope also that it will be welcomed positively and will receive strong support, as was the South Africa Kairos document launched in 1985, which, at that time proved to be a tool in the struggle against oppression and occupation...”

The background and purpose of the Kairos USA document, “Call to Action: U.S. Response to Kairos Palestine” is stated in its Preamble:

In June 2011, a group of U.S. clergy, theologians and laypersons, cognizant of our responsibility as Americans in the tragedy unfolding in Israel and Palestine, and mindful of the urgency of the situation, met to inaugurate a new movement for American Christians. We have been inspired by the prophetic church movements of southern Africa, Central and South America, Asia and Europe that have responded to the call of their Christian sisters and brothers in occupied Palestine. This is our statement of witness and confession—and our response as U.S. Christians to the Palestinian call.

The mission of Kairos USA is to mobilize the churches in the United States to respond faithfully and boldly to the situation in Israel and Palestine. In so doing, we heed the call of our Palestinian sisters and

brothers in Christ to bear witness to their nonviolent struggle for human rights. We also express our love for our brothers and sisters in Israel, who suffer from the social, psychological and spiritual costs of militarization and war. In this way, we stand with Kairos movements throughout the world, lifting up the ideal of nonviolent resistance to injustice in accordance with the teachings of our faith...

We recognize our responsibility as followers of Jesus to honor and protect the image of God in every person. We recall the central role of the church in the Civil Rights movement in our country, when the courage of African-American pastors and laypersons changed the political and social landscape of America. We lift up the example of the South African church when, declaring its Kairos moment in the 1985 Kairos document "Challenge to the Church," it summoned the church to speak and act against the evil of Apartheid. This action of the South African churches signaled the beginning of the end of the system that had so poisoned their society. Two decades ago, the church in our country, recognizing its Kairos on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Columbus, created "On the Way: From Kairos to Jubilee." This groundbreaking statement called on the power of the Gospel to acknowledge historic and current injustices to our own indigenous and marginalized peoples as well as our responsibility for injustice and suffering on a global scale. Even as we respond to the invitation to Kairos from our Palestinian Christian sisters and brothers, we recognize the ways in which we have failed to respond faithfully to injustice in our own country, and we recommit ourselves to that work in our own context. In our own day, Kairos groups in Europe, Asia and South America have issued their own statements of faith and calls to action in response to the Palestinian document and in witness to the injustices in their own national contexts.

The focus of this Kairos initiative is on Israel and Palestine, reflecting the growing recognition of this longstanding and worsening human rights situation as an urgent challenge to our churches and our world today. At the same time, we are aware that this is only one of many issues facing us as we strive to follow the prophet Micah's injunction to "do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God." It is our hope and prayer that the wisdom and courage we bring forth in answering the call for justice in Israel and Palestine will strengthen and deepen our awareness of other ways in which our nation's political, economic and ethical actions must be brought into harmony with Jesus' call for a world in which all share in God's peace.

Questions:

- 1) Why do the Palestinian Christians explicitly link their Kairos document to the one written in South Africa in 1985?

- 2) The KUSA document was written as a direct response to the Kairos Palestine document, yet it, too, draws on several different Kairos documents for inspiration. In thinking about our own context as US Christians, how does connecting to our Civil Rights history, our past responses to South Africa's struggle to end Apartheid, and to our past attempts at a KUSA document serve as a resource for responding to the call from Palestinian Christians?
- 3) What difference does it make that these two documents explicitly place themselves within a "Kairos Legacy" and "Kairos Movement"? What difference does it make for the Church that this type of theology, and theological movement, is taking place?