

VOICES FROM THE SOUTH



THE
KARIBU
FOUNDATION

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Kairos Palestine after 5 Years Interview with Rifat Kassis, Coordinator of Kairos Palestine

The Karibu Foundation is an independent foundation that supports voices from the Global South that provide alternatives to the dominant paradigms of power, distribution, and development.

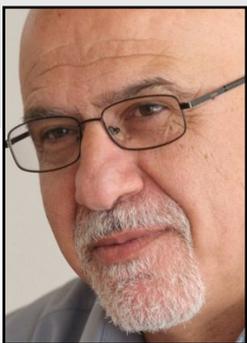
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In December 2009, the “Kairos Palestine” document was launched by a broad coalition of Christian leaders in the Holy Land. Described as the “Christian Palestinians’ word to the world about what is happening in Palestine,” the document has since developed into a global movement of ecumenical networks, organizations, and people of good will who are struggling to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and for a just peace for both peoples.

In this month’s “Voices from the South,” Karibu speaks with the General Coordinator of Kairos Palestine, Rifat Odeh Kassis, about the document’s 5th anniversary, its contribution to bringing to situation in Palestine and Israel closer to a just peace, and the network’s strategy moving into the future.

The article is part of the World Council of Churches’ (WCC) World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel, 21.-28. September 2014 (worldweekforpeace.org).



Karibu: *The 5th anniversary of the Kairos Palestine Document is quickly approaching. In what ways has the document contributed to bringing the situation in Palestine and Israel closer to a just peace?*

a just peace for both peoples that was stimulated from launching the Kairos Palestine document in 2009.

We cannot claim that the growing solidarity movement for human rights has happened only after Kairos, or was due to it, but the document itself has given Palestinian Christians another life. It gave us another justification for the work for justice that we are doing, and the work that we will continue to do. And the document itself paved the ground for connections to new solidarity movements and audiences that did not exist before the Kairos.

The launch of Kairos has also managed to grow into a national and international solidarity movement; it has helped people to connect to and understanding the Palestinian cause and plight. This document has been a golden opportunity for Palestine, for Palestinians, for Christian Palestinians – for their voice to be heard, and to reach new audiences we have not reached before. ↵

Rifat Kassis: When we launched the Kairos Palestine document five years ago, we recognized that we (Palestinians and Israelis) will either all live in peace together, or we will all suffer due to the lack of a just peace for both populations. It will never be that only one population will strive and have peace, while the other lives in oppression. Our future and their future are one. Either the cycle of violence will destroy both of us, or peace will benefit both of us.

So the past 5 years have been important to build on the positive momentum for



Kairos Palestine is a network of Palestinian Christians who authored “Kairos Palestine: a moment of truth” – a Christian Palestinian’s word to the world about the occupation of Palestine, an expression “of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering”, and a call for solidarity in ending over six decades of oppression. The document is available in over 20 languages.

Visit www.kairospalestine.ps for more information.

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Karibu: *As you mention, the document has developed into something more than just words on a page. What can we expect ahead in terms of strategic direction for the Kairos Palestine movement?*

Rifat: We as Kairos Palestine have three main strategies ahead: to continue building the movement, to remain anchored in theological and biblical reflections, and to continue our advocacy work for the rights of our people.

Our primary focus will continue to be our own people locally. We need them to continue adopting the Kairos; as a document, spirit, vision, and as part of their contribution and their life. The document represents the voice of Christian Palestinians in particular, so it needs to remain anchored in this. But this call for justice goes across borders. It needs to reach out to the entire world. We need to build solidarity, alliances, and bridges with communities and churches worldwide.

In addition, we recognize that we need to continue lifting up a Palestinian theological reflection and reading of the bible. This means a focus on

peacebuilding and justice, and countering the harmful theologies that exist today that isolate people. “Never again” is not just for the Jewish people; it is for every people in the world who suffer.

Finally, we will continue to work on our political advocacy. This is partially related to the BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement. While the BDS may be hard for some foreign audiences to understand or adopt, it is the only methodology we see right now to bring about a just peace in a non-violent way. Our advocacy work is also related to our call to “Come and See,” so that people can understand what is happening here. One really needs to come, see, and *encounter* the stories of both sides. We have never been exclusive in this or our strategies. Only through inclusiveness will peace with justice be implemented in our region.

Karibu: *In what ways does the Palestinian struggle for equal rights relate to other struggles worldwide?*

Rifat: Global justice means that every community deserves to have justice. Today,

no country or community in the world can isolate itself by saying I have nothing to do with others outside of our borders. Everything is connected, and the world really has become a village. Our liberation is tied to your liberation. So when we talk about a global Kairos for Justice, this means that every society needs to reflect on their own challenges and opportunities. It is not correct to say that countries like Norway do not have their own problems, and that the role of such places is just to offer solidarity. On the contrary, all of our struggles for justice are linked.

Karibu: *What can we expect from the 5th anniversary conference that will be held in Bethlehem this 2.-4. December?*

Rifat: I hope this 5th anniversary will mark the move from being a solidarity movement, to one movement struggling together for the sake of humanity. For the sake of global peace. Palestine is just one case that urgently needs peace. My hope is that our gathering in December will recommit us to the belief that a just, peaceful solution can be achieved. We cannot just *wish* for peace to come; we need to work hard to create an environment where peace can flourish - and that includes ending the Occupation ■

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