



CHURCH OF NORWAY

Statement: Critical Developments in the West Bank

It is with deep concern and profound worry that we follow the critical developments in the West Bank. As church leaders in Norway, we wish to draw attention to the oppression and suffering affecting all Palestinians there. In this situation, we also want to express our solidarity, especially with our Christian sisters and brothers in the region.

Recently, it became known that the Israeli authorities have decided to require property deeds from Palestinians in Area C, which constitutes 60% of the occupied West Bank. If such documents cannot be produced—which is often impossible because they do not exist — the land is considered to be Israeli property. It is also being opened up for Israelis to purchase land in the West Bank. In practice, this amounts to an annexation of Palestinian property and signals that Israeli policy aims to drive Palestinians from their land.

This further intensifies discrimination. Daily life is hindered by an increasing number of Israeli checkpoints and restrictions on freedom of movement. In reality, Israeli authorities allow settlers to take liberties by demolishing Palestinian homes, destroying agricultural land, and committing acts of violence against the Palestinian population. In addition, Palestinians in the West Bank are, of course, also affected by the brutal war in Gaza and its consequences.

Everyday life under occupation is marked by unpredictability and fear. Now this fear is escalating, and a growing number of Palestinians wish to leave the West Bank. This happens with deep sorrow—people are forced to leave their land, family, and homes because life at home has become impossible to live. Many parents experience their children leaving for other countries, likely never to return. This also deeply affects the Christians who remain in the West Bank. It is now more critical than ever for the Christian presence in the Holy Land, church leaders there say.

Occupation policy is increasingly turning into a policy of annexation. In doing so, Israeli authorities contribute to the further erosion of the international legal order. If the world allows this to happen, the prospects for a lasting and just peace for all in the region will continue to diminish. Such peace is important for the whole world.

As a church, we pray and work for justice and peace, not least during the season of Lent. The prophet Isaiah reminds us that true fasting is “...to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free...” (Isaiah 58:6)

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