

Lifelines

A call to end the 40-year occupation of the Palestinian Territories

Life in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is consistently portrayed by the media as one of explosive and bloody violence. While this is often true, behind the headlines lies an everyday violence of a different sort – one of impoverishment that is putting the very existence of many ordinary Palestinians on the line.

After the Six Day War in 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including East Jerusalem.

2007 marks 40 years of that occupation – an occupation that has undermined Palestinian development and been a significant cause of extreme poverty for those living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The recent and drastic deterioration in living standards means that the need for a just solution to the conflict is more urgent than ever before. This can only come about when individuals, outraged by injustice, and inspired by belief in a better world, unite to see the rule of international law upheld.



Palestinian schoolgirls walk through a fence that cuts off their village of Sheikh Sa'ad from the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Jabal Mukabar. Soon the fence will be replaced by a concrete wall, completely severing the villagers' access to work, schools and hospitals in Jerusalem. A quarter of Sheikh Sa'ad's residents have already abandoned their homes

Providing a lifeline

Christian Aid has worked in the Middle East since the 1950s. During this time we and our partner organisations have witnessed the grinding impact of conflict and military occupation. Israel's discriminatory policies and unilateral actions – for example to confiscate land – have not only undermined Palestinian development and created poverty, they have also violated international law.

Restrictions placed on the movement of Palestinian people and goods, together with lack of access to land, education, medical care and employment, have created a patchwork of Palestinian communities that are dependent on international aid and isolated from both the outside world and each other.

In 2002 Israel began building the separation barrier throughout the West Bank and East Jerusalem, justifying its action as a response to Palestinian violence. But rather than following the internationally recognised armistice line between Israel and the West Bank, the barrier is being built throughout occupied Palestinian areas, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis facing the Palestinian people and symbolising the division between the two peoples at the heart of the Middle East crisis.

And things are no better in the Gaza Strip. Israel withdrew its troops and settlers from there in 2005 but continues to occupy its skies, borders and seas. Living conditions in this densely populated narrow strip of land continue to deteriorate.

Christian Aid advocates for peaceful co-existence in the Middle East, and security for both peoples. But Israel's control over resources, its military incursions and the impact of its occupation of the Palestinian territories is systematically stripping away the possibility of a solution that would recognise the human rights of both peoples.

An end to Israel's occupation would give Palestinians the economic, political and social rights that are imperative for stability and development. Christian Aid believes that a solution that upholds international human rights laws, is truly viable and includes an end to military occupation, offers the best hope for peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

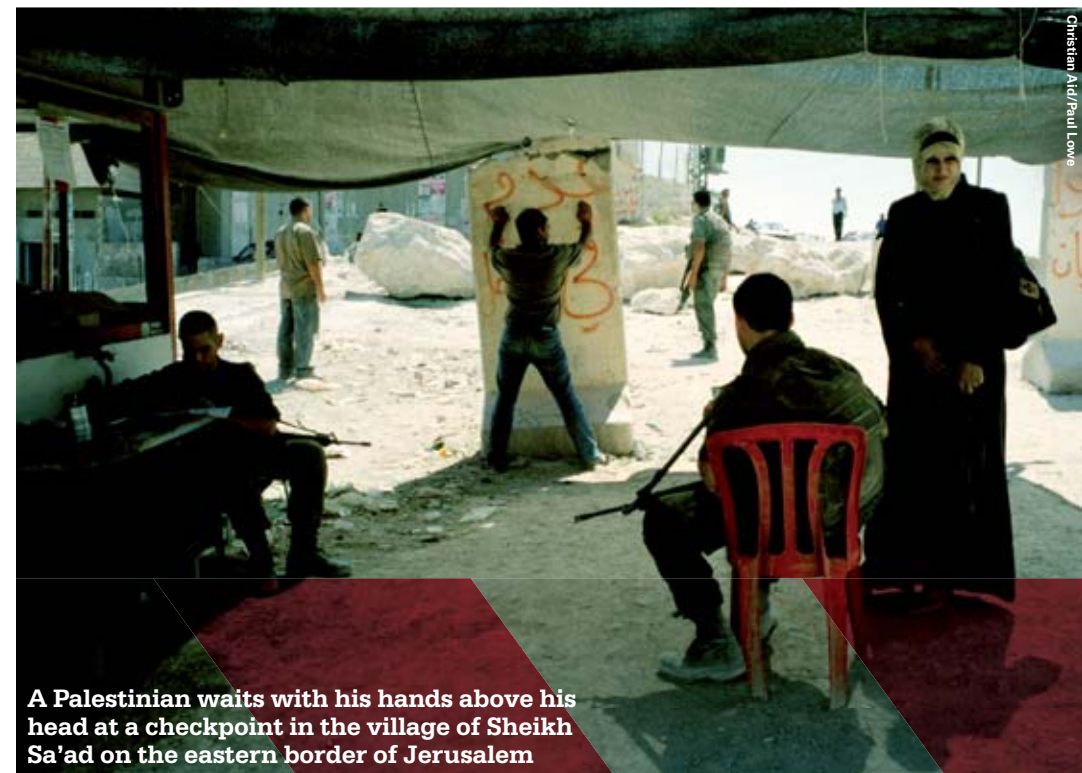
'Most Palestinians are ready for peace,' says Costa Dabbagh of the Near East Council of Churches, a Christian Aid partner based in the Gaza Strip. 'God has made us all in his image and we need to enjoy this, but we cannot do this alone. We are already in the depths of despair, but we are committed to preserving peace and being good neighbours.'

Any resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must respect the need for security for all, based on the human, economic and social rights of all people. It also requires an equitable sharing of resources to allow people to develop their potential and influence decisions that affect their lives. While the occupation has been an underlying cause of poverty, we also criticise the Palestinian Authority for not doing enough to prevent violence, stop the proliferation of armed factional groups and promote Palestinian development.

Without a just political solution to the conflict in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, poverty and unemployment levels will continue to rise, alongside civilian deaths.

Israel's occupation has continued for 40 years. In order to bring about the security they so desperately need, both Israelis and Palestinians must show full commitment to a just and enduring political solution to this long-running conflict.

We can play a key part in supporting them by taking action to bring about peace with justice.



A Palestinian waits with his hands above his head at a checkpoint in the village of Sheikh Sa'ad on the eastern border of Jerusalem

'Most Palestinians are ready for peace,' says Costa Dabbagh of the Near East Council of Churches, a Christian Aid partner based in the Gaza Strip. 'God has made us all in his image and we need to enjoy this, but we cannot do this alone. We are already in the depths of despair, but we are committed to preserving peace and being good neighbours.'

Jerusalem:

Drawing lines through the eternal city

Jerusalem: the very name hangs heavy with history, battle, stone. But beyond the symbolism, the poetry and the past lies the reality of Jerusalem today – bitterly divided, fought over and at the forefront of the struggle between Israelis and Palestinians.

Central to Judaism, Islam and Christianity, this eternal city has become a key bargaining chip in a conflict that threatens to consume both peoples.

Many believe in Jerusalem as a city of justice and inclusion rather than one of dispossession and demolition. But the future of this city hangs in the balance.

Palestinians and Israeli soldiers at Damascus Gate, one of the gates to the Old City of Jerusalem, built in the 16th century. It is the entrance to a bustling Palestinian marketplace



Christian Aid/Paul Lowe

An Israeli soldier prevents a young Palestinian getting through a checkpoint outside his village of Sheikh Sa'ad, which is adjacent to Jerusalem. Only those with special permits can get through to the hospitals, schools and workplaces of Jerusalem. Men – in particular those aged between 18-35 – are considered a high security risk



Christian Aid/Paul Lowe

Background

At the end of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war an armistice line divided Jerusalem into two, with Israel controlling the western half and Jordan annexing the east, including the Old City. Palestinians could move freely between Jerusalem and its surroundings, and their social, economic and cultural bonds extended throughout the entire West Bank, with East Jerusalem serving as a central hub.

After the Six Day War in 1967, Israel annexed East Jerusalem, placing both East and West Jerusalem under its own sovereignty and civil law. The rest of the West Bank came under Israeli military law.

After 1967 Israel began building settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories of East Jerusalem and parts of the West Bank – a practice which continues to this day, in violation of international law that states an occupying power must not transfer its citizens onto the land it occupies.

Israeli human rights organisation and Christian Aid partner B'Tselem says the settlements are designed to divide East Jerusalem from the West Bank and create an Israeli majority throughout the city.

Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem is illegal under international law, as is its construction of settlements in the West Bank, yet the state is determined that the whole city should one day be its undivided capital. Meanwhile, Palestinians also hope to establish their future capital in East Jerusalem.

The situation today

The pace and extent of Israel's construction of settlements in East Jerusalem underline its political intentions and jeopardise any future political negotiations over the fate of the city. Settlements such as Ma'ale Adumim now surround the eastern half of the city, and effectively cut the West Bank in half.

As well as settlement construction, Israel has introduced a number of permit policies and legislative

measures aimed at reducing the number of Palestinians allowed to live in Jerusalem. These measures are severely marginalising the Palestinian population and seal off the city from surrounding Palestinian areas, disrupting social, economic and cultural activities.

Children cannot get to their schools, employees are cut off from their places of work and Palestinians cannot reach the mosques and ancient churches of Jerusalem to pray.

Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and the rest of the West Bank can no longer enter the city without permits, which are difficult to obtain.

The separation barrier that Israel is building divides Palestinian communities from Jerusalem, dominates the eastern half of the city and serves as a physical manifestation of Israel's long-term aims. In many places it cuts straight through Palestinian areas, down main streets, dividing the extended families and neighbourhoods that find themselves on opposite

sides. As the demography of Jerusalem changes, Palestinian communities surrounding the city – who once relied on it for employment and trade – are being forced to move elsewhere.

Humanitarian cost of separation

The viability of a future Palestinian state that would address the poverty blighting the Palestinian people would be fatally undermined if Palestinian society were permanently cut off from Jerusalem. Access to the city is not only vital for the Palestinian economy but is also directly related to issues of security, self-determination, spirituality, cultural heritage, family ties, refugee repatriation and access to resources.

Corrosion of international law

No state formally recognises the legitimacy of Israel's presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, but nor has any state held it to account. Indeed, Israel's main benefactor, the United States, provides more financial and military assistance to Israel than to any other country. The European Union continues to reward Israel with favourable trading agreements but Israel consistently abuses human rights clauses within those agreements.

The result has been a corrosive impact on international law, and an undermining of the possibility for a viable solution that is agreed by both parties and upholds human rights as a minimum standard.

The future of Jerusalem should be decided as part of a peaceful negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – not by the unilateral actions of one party (Israel) or by the creation of seemingly irreversible 'facts on the ground'.

For the sake of all parties involved, the international community must do more to address the issue of Jerusalem's future.

Use the actions included in this pack to raise your concerns with the UK foreign secretary or the Irish minister for foreign affairs. Express your concern about the humanitarian impact of Israel's unilateral annexation of East Jerusalem and unlawful settlement construction.

'I've come back to this city where names are given to distances as if to human beings and the numbers are not of bus routes but 70 after, 1917, 500 BC, Forty-Eight. These are the lines you really travel on.'
Yehuda Amichai, Israeli poet



Families divided: Ali and Sanaa's story

As he dangles his giggling three-year-old daughter Yaffa in the air, Ali Sarasreh couldn't look happier. He hasn't seen her for two weeks and he thinks she may have grown. 'Being away from your wife and children is not normal – I missed them!' he says. 'But the good feelings have just started again.'

Ali's wife Sanaa and their three children live in her father's home in Jerusalem, where she has residency status, national insurance rights and the children are enrolled in school. But 36-year-old Ali, who carries a West Bank identity card, is not allowed to live with them and stays at the family home in Bethlehem. They are united every fortnight, when Sanaa travels to Bethlehem.

'Ali's a playful father who likes to bring life to the house,' says 29-year-old Sanaa. 'That's what the children miss. They ask about their father all the time, it's very hard.'

The family's separation is the result of Israel's differing policies towards Palestinians who live in the West Bank and those who are residents of Jerusalem – the city both Israelis and Palestinians claim as their capital.

Being a Jerusalem resident is a rare status for Palestinians, and one they do not relinquish easily. This situation dates back to the Six Day War in 1967 after which Israel occupied East Jerusalem and offered Palestinians living there the option of becoming Israeli citizens.

East Jerusalemite Palestinians refused, becoming 'permanent residents' instead. Before the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000 the Israeli government had a legal procedure called 'family unification', whereby Palestinians such as Sanaa who had Jerusalem residency could apply for their non-resident spouses to live with them – a process that has now been frozen by the Israeli government.



Ali Sarasreh cradles his daughter Yaffa's face in his hands at his home in Bethlehem. He can only see her once a fortnight, as Israel won't grant him permission to live with his wife and children in Jerusalem

Maqlouba: a life turned upside down

Every second Friday the Sarasreh family eat together before Sanaa and the three children return to Jerusalem. Sanaa usually cooks Ali's favourite dish of meat and rice – *maqlouba* – traditionally made for welcoming family members who have been away.

Maqlouba means 'upside down' in Arabic, because of the method of turning over the pot just before serving. But it's not the only thing turned upside down in this family. The strain of living apart from her husband is evident in Sanaa's face. 'I'm broken,' she says, her eyes wet with tears. 'What can I tell you? It's a tragedy – being alone with the children.'

For the past five years Sanaa's applications for Ali to be able to live with the family in Jerusalem have been rejected and he can't risk living illegally in the city. 'If I get arrested, then I will lose my job,' says Ali, who owns a small hardware shop in Bethlehem. Like many businesses in Bethlehem, Ali's shop has suffered as a result of the separation barrier Israel has built between Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

'People from Jerusalem used to shop here because it was cheaper than in the city, but now they can't,' says Ali. 'It is also difficult for me to buy stock for my shop.'

The barrier has had a devastating economic impact on the town, which for centuries was culturally, economically and spiritually tied to Jerusalem, just five miles away. Many of the tourist shops have closed down or their owners have moved away.

The city's dependency on tourism has meant falling visitor numbers have also hit it hard.

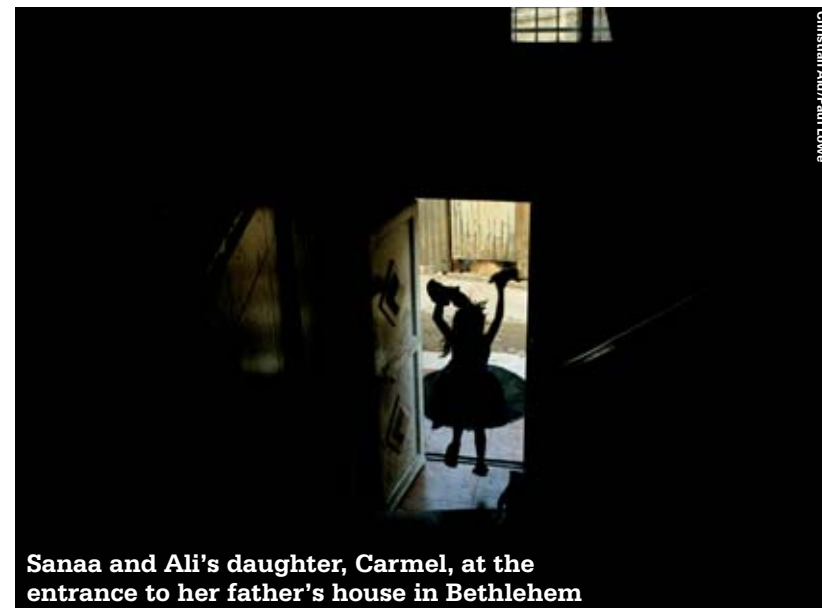
Without a political solution to remove the obstacles Palestinians face in the occupied territories – and the hardship and poverty they cause – the future for families like the Sarasrehs looks bleak.

Lifeline: B'Tselem

Since 2000, the Israeli government has 'frozen' the family unification process, saying there have been cases of Palestinians receiving legal status in Israel through marriage who went on to carry out attacks against Israeli civilians. Israeli human rights organisation and Christian Aid partner B'Tselem argues that this does not justify the collective punishment of hundreds of thousands of individuals, including many children, and calls on the Israeli government to enable Palestinians to exercise their rights to live as a family in the occupied territories.

B'Tselem says Israel's ultimate objective is to 'change the demographics of [Jerusalem] by blocking immigration of spouses of residents into the area and by encouraging emigration of divided Palestinian families'.

There are around 72,000 Palestinian families directly affected by Israel's freezing of the family unification policy. B'Tselem and other Christian Aid partners are lobbying for the rights of Palestinians to live together as families.



Sanaa and Ali's daughter, Carmel, at the entrance to her father's house in Bethlehem



Sanaa Sarasreh and her husband Ali, preparing to say goodbye before she returns to Jerusalem without him

A city divided: Hebron



Wire netting installed by the Israeli army over the Old City of Hebron designed to catch bricks, rubbish and other detritus thrown down by settlers on to Palestinians living below

In Hebron, Palestinian and Israeli communities live in closer proximity than anywhere else in the West Bank outside Jerusalem. In the heart of Hebron's Old City live 500 Jewish settlers who have moved in gradually under army protection since Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967. Around them live 150,000 Palestinians.

With the complicity and assistance of the Israeli army, these settlers have evicted thousands of Palestinian residents from the Old City, forcing them to move to other parts of town.

Despite violating international law, the presence of the settlers is quietly sanctioned by the Israeli government, which has allocated 6,000 soldiers to protect the community.

The settlers say they are reviving the Jewish presence in Hebron that ended in 1929 when 67 Jews were killed and their property taken over. The Palestinians argue they are slowly being 'cleansed' from the city by the new arrivals and cite the more recent memory of Baruch Goldstein, a settler from New York who shot dead 29 Muslims praying in the Ibrahimi mosque in 1994. There has been blood shed on both sides.



'We hope life will return to this area – that's why we stay,' says Hatim Jaber Abu Ammar, aged 52. His shop is one of the very few left in the Old City of Hebron, where settlers have moved in above Palestinian shops and homes

Too high a price to pay

Polls have shown that the majority of Israelis do not support the four settlements built in Hebron – the largest of which, Qiryat Arba, has 6,500 residents – and many people feel that settlement construction in the occupied territories is one of the greatest obstacles to a solution to the conflict.

As one Israeli ex-soldier confides: 'I'm an Orthodox Jew, so of course I feel connected to the idea of Jews moving back here, but I think the suffering and death on both sides is too high a price to pay.'

Lifeline: Al Haq

Hebron has one of the highest poverty levels in the West Bank, and Palestinian unemployment stands at around 70 per cent in parts of the city.

'Economically, they have tried to destroy us,' says Hana Abu Haikel, a 40-year-old Palestinian whose home is in Hebron's Tel Rumeida neighbourhood. It is adjacent to a group of heavily guarded Israeli houses, built since 1984 on what its founders say is Jewish land belonging to the kingdom of David – now the settlement of Ramat Yishai. Hana's family has been subjected to more than 20 years of intimidation, harassment and economic collapse.

Hana's elderly mother needs constant medical attention but her daughter cannot provide her with even basic healthcare. 'We have tried to get my mother to hospital

many times,' she explains. 'Once she was in a critical condition and we called an ambulance.

'It had to go through six checkpoints and then had to wait for seven hours a short distance from our house, because the Israeli army wouldn't allow it to pass.'

With the help of Christian Aid partner, the human rights organisation Al Haq, Hana has been able to file nine cases of harassment and violence by settlers with the High Court in Israel.

The Abu Haikel family has also been subjected to physical attacks by settlers. Their house is just 150 metres from the centre of the Old City, but because of the barricade of settlement houses Hana has to drive several kilometres or walk over rough ground to get home – often carrying groceries and heavy items that aggravate her hernia and back problems.

She is the sole bread winner of the family and the burden on her is immense. 'Many times I have tried to get to work [as a hairdresser] but the soldiers won't let me pass through the checkpoint.'

There have been very few convictions of settlers who have attacked Palestinians in Hebron, but organisations such as Al Haq believe it is vital that settler crimes are recorded, despite the lack of a reliable legal process. 'Al Haq's field researchers put themselves at risk many times and without their support my family and I wouldn't have been able to stand up to all these hardships,' says Hana.

Christian Aid believes that the implementation of international law is the only way to free both sides from a seemingly intractable and vicious cycle of violence and impoverishment.



Palestinian children play alongside boarded-up shops in the Old City of Hebron, once the bustling heart of the city

Breaking down barriers: Israelis and Palestinians unite

Israeli and Palestinian communities have both lost loved ones in their continuing conflict, but some people have chosen to convert the pain of losing family members into a tool for peace.

Christian Aid partner organisation Parents' Circle is a group of bereaved Israelis and Palestinians seeking to break down the illusory lines dividing them through their reconciliation work.

Rami Elhanan, 56, is an Israeli whose daughter Smadar was killed in a suicide bombing on 4 September 1997. She was just two weeks away from her 14th birthday. Rami, with other members of Parents' Circle, now works tirelessly to bring about movement in the deadlock between the two communities.



Christian Aid/Paul Lowe

Palestinian workers queuing by the wall
at dawn in Bethlehem, trying to reach their
workplace in Jerusalem

Rami's story

'My name is Rami Elhanan and I am a 56-year-old graphic designer whose family has been living in Jerusalem for seven generations. I am a Jew, and an Israeli, but first of all I am a human being.

'Twenty-three years ago a young girl was born in Hadassah hospital. We named her Smadar – the grape of the vine from the Song of Solomon. My wife and I happily lived in this bubble we had built until 4 September 1997, when our bubble was blown to pieces.

'Two Palestinian suicide bombers blew themselves up in Jerusalem, killing five people, including three little girls. One of them was my daughter Smadar.

'In the beginning you hope the finger will not turn to you this time round. You find yourself running in the streets, between police stations and hospitals, and then later that night you find yourself in the morgue and the finger is pointing straight at your eyes. And you see a sight you will never be able to forget.

'You have to look in the mirror and decide: "What are you going to do with the rest of your life? With this new unbearable pain you have?"

'There are two options. The first is the natural one. You are so angry that you want to get even. But after a while you start to think: why would killing someone else bring back my baby?

'And you start to think of the other option, which is much more difficult. The option of trying to understand what would drive someone to do this. It took me a year to reach this option. I met Yitzhak Frankenthal, the founder of Parents' Circle, who had lost his son and created this organisation for people who have lost children but still want peace.

Lifeline: Parents' Circle

'Yitzhak asked me to attend a Parents' Circle meeting and from that moment on I decided to devote my life to conveying this message: it is not our destiny to forever die in this Holy Land. We can once and for all break this cycle of violence and we can do it through dialogue and not through violence.

'Our blood is the same colour and our pain is the same pain. If we who have paid the highest price possible [of losing a child] can still talk to one another, then anyone can.

'We have power in our hands – the power of pain. You can use that power to create more pain, or to create hope. By dialogue and reconciliation, I, together with my Palestinian friends, will bang our heads against this wall until we put cracks in it. And one day it will fall.

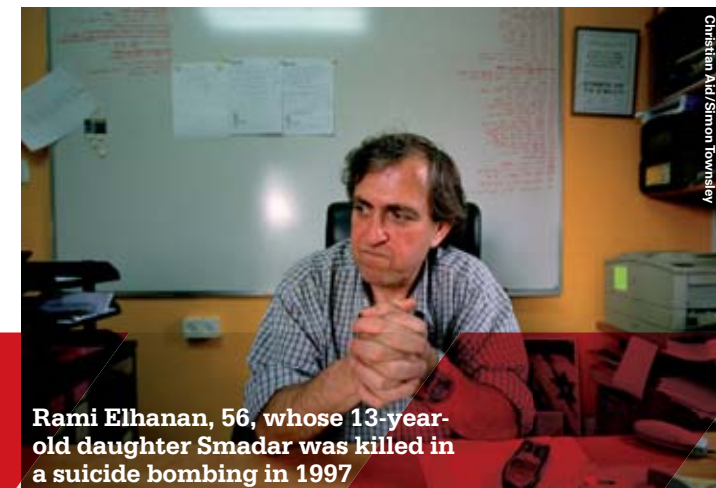
'The wall is a tragedy. If someone is angry enough, no wall on earth will stop him. You have to eliminate the reasons for the anger. Especially if you are building the wall on the land of the person who is angry.

'Today, while these two crazy peoples massacre each other, the free and civilised world is not only standing aside but supporting one side, Israel, almost unconditionally. Standing aside is a crime.'

'If someone is angry enough, no wall on earth will stop him. You have to eliminate the reasons for the anger.'



Yom Hazikarom, a memorial service held in a suburb of Tel Aviv for Israeli soldiers and victims of terror attacks



Rami Elhanan, 56, whose 13-year-old daughter Smadar was killed in a suicide bombing in 1997

Living on the edge: the Gaza Strip

Current situation

Isolated and desperately poor, the Gaza Strip is the region's tinderbox. Living conditions in the Gaza Strip are some of the worst in the entire Occupied Palestinian Territories. Densely populated, unable to trade freely and blighted by continuing conflict, this narrow corridor of land has been pushed to the very brink of existence.

In 2005, Israel evacuated its settlers from Gaza and redeployed troops to the perimeter of the strip. But rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel still prompt a devastating response by the Israeli military, and disproportionate use of force against Gaza's civilian population.

Border closures prevent regular access to markets and supplies of food and fuel can be sporadic. The resulting inflation of prices of basic necessities hits the poorest. Christian Aid partner, the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees (PARC), says Gaza's farmers can no longer rely on exporting their produce because of restrictions on the movement of goods, and so are forced to sell them internally, well below the cost of production.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that 78 per cent of Gazans are now without an income.

Gaza has effectively been sealed off from the world. Palestinians cannot travel between there and the West Bank, whether for education, work or family visits, and there is a growing climate of despair and internal conflict. As the Palestinian Authority struggles to function and provide vital services – including law enforcement – crime and political division thrive. The result is a rise in the use of weapons in personal, family and factional disputes, aggravating the current state of security chaos in the Gaza Strip.

'Our borders are closed and we feel trapped. What kind of future do we have?' asks Naila Ayash, director of the Women's Affairs Centre, a Christian Aid partner in Gaza. This is the question that dominates all Palestinians' lives, whether they live in the West Bank, Gaza Strip or East Jerusalem.



Islam Sahloul, 12, and her sister Nisreen, 8, walking home from school. Their first home was demolished by Israeli incursions and they now attend the Sunrise and Hope Centre run by the Culture and Free Thought Association, a Christian Aid partner in the Gaza Strip. There they can express themselves through art therapy and extra-curricular activities

Sisters Amani and Riham doing their homework outside the block of flats where they live in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip. The legacy of conflict between Palestinians and Israeli settlers is evident in the spray of bullet holes over their home. Both the girls witnessed the death of their uncle by Israeli tank fire

'We even left our key in the door'

Gaza is essentially a large refugee camp, and many of its inhabitants fled their homes in what is now Israel in 1948. Elderly Gazans such as 80-year-old Ali Koulab still recall the homes they left behind.

As his daughter-in-law holds a cup of water to his lips, Ali Koulab stares at the wall, his eyes glazed by the cataracts. 'I am originally from Hamama,' says Ali – a town that now lies on the Israeli side of the border, north of the Gaza Strip. His village was attacked when he was a young man and he was forced to flee with his family and settle in Gaza City.

'I was a builder at the time when the occupiers came. I have no papers to my house – I lost them. We thought we were only

leaving our homes for a couple of days so we even left the key in the door, and the door open.'

Hamama's 5,000 inhabitants fled from the Israeli army in 1948, and no trace of the original village remains. Retrieving the memory is almost too much for Ali to bear and he gasps for breath. Bed-ridden and diabetic, he needs full-time care from his son's wife, Wafaa Salah, 35, herself a mother of eight.

Wafaa is a member of a handicraft cooperative supported by Christian Aid. She has been able to supplement her family's meagre income by producing Palestinian embroidery to order. The cooperative is called Al Ayadi El Naaema (meaning 'the soft hands of women'), and local women like Wafaa produce crafts that can be sold at fair prices through the cooperative's showroom.

However, because of the worsening security, visitors to the Gaza Strip are very rare and business is achingly slow. Wafaa's family relies primarily on food packages provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency but the embroidery provides her with some additional income with which she can buy school-books for her children. 'We receive flour and rice from the UN,' explains Wafaa. 'This helps me make bread at home to feed my children. It is very difficult to survive. We don't pay our bills any more because we can't.'

Wafaa pulls up a plastic chair and sits beside her father-in-law's day bed, taking his hand in hers. He mumbles something barely discernible: 'I hope I can still go back to my home one day...'



Wafaa Salah tends to her frail and elderly father-in-law Ali Koulab. Wafaa belongs to a network of Palestinian women who create intricate embroidery to supplement their income. The network received a grant from Christian Aid

Reflections and prayers

Christian Aid/Paul Lowe



An olive tree, symbol of peace, on a hill overlooking Jerusalem

‘Then justice will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.’
Isaiah 32:16-17



The prophet Isaiah sees peace as the fruit of justice. The words for peace in Arabic (*salaam*) and Hebrew (*shalom*) have the same etymological root and the same breadth of meaning: wholeness, health, safety and security.

The concept of peace with justice is far removed from the current context for Palestinians or Israelis. A viable Palestinian state is not possible if Palestinians continue to be cut off from Jerusalem which has been, and for many continues to be, their social, cultural and religious centre.

Jerusalem is home to adherents of the three faiths that share a common heritage in Abraham – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. While it is widely perceived that religion is at the heart of competing claims to the land, the scriptures of these three faiths reflect a quest for peace and tolerance.

But this quest for peace and justice seems incongruous in the context of the military occupation imposed on the Palestinian people. Military incursions and continuing land confiscation by Israel for settlement expansion, and militant attacks by Palestinians, only serve to separate, divide and further impoverish the lives of civilians.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem 2,000 years ago. Yet how much have we learned since? How much should we weep at the folly of humankind with its brutality, its desire to dominate, its exclusion of others? Jesus weeps today for Palestinian and Israeli, for Muslim, Christian and Jew. He weeps for a world which constantly divides those who are together in his heart.

What do we do with the power we have – to hurt or heal, to build or destroy? It is only through peace founded on justice that Jerusalem can live up to its name, 'city of peace' in Hebrew.

It is only when we recognise God in every human being that we learn not to be afraid but to be forgiven and to forgive. The quest for a viable Palestinian state can come only through this recognition and acceptance, when people's lives are turned upside down not by hatred and fear but by the liberating and peacemaking of living God's way.

For as the prophet Isaiah reminds us, recognising the presence of God can turn daily reality upside down so that when 'a spirit from on high is poured out on us', then 'the wilderness bears a fruitful field'.

Rev Dr Naim Ateek, director of Sabeel and Canon of St George's Episcopal Cathedral in Jerusalem says: 'Our commitment to the God of justice and peace demands of us to raise our voices and appeal to people in power to halt the oppression and constructively use the peace process as an instrument of justice, so that a genuine peace can prevail.'

Any resolution to the current conflict must involve peace with justice where the rights and aspirations of both Palestinians and Israelis are respected and can be met with 'quietness and trust forever'.

Prayer

Living Lord, ignite in us a passion for justice and a yearning to right all wrong.

Strengthen us to work for peace in the land we call holy;
for peace among Jew, Christian and Muslim
for reconciliation between communities
for harmony between faiths.

Inspire us to act with the urgency of your quickening fire,
for blessed are the peacemakers
they shall be called children of God.

Amen.

Prayer

God our Creator, we give you thanks for lips that we might speak.

God our Saviour, give us the courage to overcome our fear so we might use our lips in service to speak out against evil.

God our Sustainer, help us to walk in your way and work towards your reign where justice and peace prevail.

Amen.

© Prayers: Christian Aid/Ramani Leathard

Left: **Muslim men gather for Friday prayers outside a mosque in Bethlehem.** Centre: **The Western Wall in Jerusalem.** Right: **The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City of Jerusalem**



Christian Aid/Antonio Olmos



Christian Aid/Simon Townsley



Christian Aid/Paul Lowe



Rahaf, five, scrambling up a mulberry tree in the garden of her home in Nablus, in the northern West Bank. Rahaf's mother Saousan received training in rearing chickens from Christian Aid partner the YMCA's Women's Training Programme. This has helped improve the family's income

Take action

‘Standing aside is a crime.’
Rami Elhanan,
member of Parents’ Circle,
a Christian Aid partner

Both sides in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict desperately need a solution that will bring about peace and security. But in the context of such a seemingly intractable conflict, it is often difficult to know how this can be done.

Christian Aid strongly believes that if there is to be lasting peace and a chance for people to work their way out of poverty, violations of international law by both Israelis and Palestinians must be challenged. The UK and Irish governments and the European Union (EU) can play a key role in making that happen.

Here are some practical actions you can take to help end the spiral of poverty and violence in the Middle East.

What you can do

1. Sign the wall!

Call on the UK's foreign minister or the Irish minister for foreign affairs to use their influence to build bridges, not walls, in the Middle East.

Collect signatures and addresses on the enclosed poster of the separation barrier and protest against the impact of settlements, the barrier, and restrictions on the movement of Palestinian population.

Put up the poster in your church, community centre, school or university and get as many people as you can to write their name and address on it.

For the UK, send your poster and letter to:

Foreign Secretary,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH.

For the Republic of Ireland, send your poster and letter to:

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Department of Foreign Affairs
80 St Stephen's Green
Dublin 2
Republic of Ireland.

To order more copies of the poster, please call or email **orders@christian-aid.org** or call **08700 787 788**.

Dear Foreign Secretary/Minister for Foreign Affairs

We are sending you this photograph of a section of the barrier Israel is building in the West Bank as a reminder of the need for an end to Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem.

The barrier is not only a symbol of the current impasse in the Middle East, but it is also having a hugely damaging impact on Palestinian livelihoods. People are unable to move freely, trade effectively or get to schools and hospitals.

While Israel has every right to defend itself from attack, the route of this 703km-long barrier cannot be justified in the name of security. It is cutting through the West Bank, rather than being built on the Green Line, and is annexing Palestinian land for Israeli settlements which are illegal under international law.

It is also carving up East Jerusalem, severing the economic, social and cultural links many Palestinians have to the city.

The people who have signed the attached poster want you to know that the route of the barrier and Israel's continued settlement construction cannot be tolerated under international law. Please use your influence to end this injustice.

Yours sincerely

2. End the trade travesty: write to your MEP

Write to your MEP and ask them to use their influence to ensure human rights are not violated under the EU's trading partnerships with Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The EU currently has a trading 'Association Agreement' with Israel that allows Israel to sell its goods to European markets with preferential terms. However, Israel has been applying the agreement illegally to goods

produced in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. For example, Israel is exporting goods labelled 'Made in Israel' that are produced in settlements which are illegal under international law. The EU's management of this agreement with Israel has accommodated Israel's illegal settlement policies by allowing this to happen.

Dear [name] MEP

I am deeply concerned about Israel's illegal settlement policies and believe they represent a root cause of Palestinian poverty.

The EU's management of its Association Agreement with Israel has allowed Israel to sell goods made in illegal settlements to European markets, marked 'Made in Israel', when they are in fact made in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

For years these settlement products have received duty preferences which under the agreement were reserved only for products coming from Israel.

An arrangement between the EU and Israel has, since February 2005, enabled Israel to continue to treat unlawful settlements as part of the state of Israel and certify settlement products as 'Israeli', in violation of the Association Agreement, while at the same time only paying preferential levels of duty on them. However, for the consumer it still remains unclear which products are coming from where.

By making no attempt to put an end to, and in fact condoning, Israel's misapplication of the Association Agreement, the EU is accommodating Israel's unlawful settlement-related practice under the agreement. The EU should ensure that Israel is not allowed to continue to apply the Association Agreement in contravention of international law.

I urge you to use your influence to ensure that:

- the EU reviews and enforces its contractual relations with both Israel and the Palestinian Authority (which has its own agreement with the EU) to ensure that they do not implement their side of their respective agreements through acts of terrorism; the establishment of settlements and related infrastructure; torture; house demolitions; the construction of the separation barrier; or any other serious violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law.
- European consumers are made aware, through clear labelling, which products are produced in Israel proper and which products are produced in unlawful Israeli settlements built on occupied land.

Yours sincerely

Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority are systematically violating their agreements with the EU.

Write to your MEP, using the sample letter (left), calling for the EU to hold Israel and the Palestinian Authority to account for violating human rights and other clauses in EU Association Agreements which they have signed.

Find out who your MEP is and how to contact them at www.europarl.org.uk/uk_meps/MembersMain.htm

For Ireland visit: www.europarl.ie/meps/index.html

3. Lobby parliament: 29 November 2007

2007 marks 40 years since Israel occupied the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. Many organisations such as Christian Aid are calling for renewed efforts to end this illegal occupation. We will be participating in a lobby of parliament on 29 November 2007 and urge you to add your voices to the thousands who will attend.

For the latest news on the lobby and to read more in-depth information on our work in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, please visit our website www.christianaid.org.uk or www.christianaid.ie

4. Keep hope alive: join the Palestinian olive harvest

Make a practical and symbolic gesture by helping Palestinian farmers harvest their olives. Olive picking is vital to the Palestinian economy but farmers are often harassed or prevented from picking their olives by Israeli settlers or military forces. The East Jerusalem YMCA and the YWCA, both Christian Aid partners, run programmes every autumn in coordination with the Alternative Tourism Group for visitors who wish to help farmers during the olive harvest. To participate, visit www.jai-pal.org

The YMCA also replants olive trees in areas where they have been uprooted or destroyed. One million trees and thousands of acres of farmland have been destroyed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories by the Israeli army since 2000. You can sponsor the planting of olive trees through the YMCA's Keep Hope Alive campaign. For more information on sponsoring tree-planting, visit www.ej-ymca.org

5. Spread the word!

Order more copies of this pack by sending an email to orders@christian-aid.org or by calling **08700 787 788** and encourage your church or community group to hold a service or workshop on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Use the information, reflection and case studies in this pack to help you.



Volunteers from Christian Aid partner, the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), protecting Palestinian students in Hebron as they try to pass the entrance to an Israeli settlement on the way to school. The EAPPI programme acts as a non-violent presence and human rights monitor.

To apply to become an accompanier for three months, visit www.eappi.org