

Christians4Palestine – Ireland Bulletin

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‘Peace, justice and equality for all our brothers and sisters in Palestine — Christian, Muslim and Jew’

Introduction

Christians4Palestine Ireland is a multi-faith, cross-community activist organisation that works to raise awareness of the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people and the injustices perpetrated against them. This bulletin aims to provide articles and information to broaden knowledge and understanding of the region.

This bulletin focuses on an exciting new opportunity to provide much needed support for Palestinians in the West Bank and Belfast.

Twinning with Palestine

If you'd like to learn more about *Christians4Palestine's* proposal to offer support and assistance by 'twinning' local churches and communities with West Bank towns and villages, please visit our website at:

christians4palestine.org

available free on the website...

- podcasts
- bulletins
- fundraising projects

Events and latest activities are on Instagram



SCAN ME

Twinning Belfast Parishes with Palestinian Parishes

The Bishop of Down and Connor, +Alan McGuckian SJ, has formally approached the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Pierbattista Pizzabella, to enter into a twinning arrangement between parishes in their respective Dioceses and both have given the initiative their blessing. The planning for the twinning now takes place.

The town of Bet Sahur has been suggested by the Latin Patriarch as one of the first Parishes to twin. Bet Sahur is a small village on the outskirts of **Bethlehem** which is located south east of **Jerusalem**. It is known as the **'shepherds field'** because it was here that the angels announced the birth of **Jesus** to the shepherds who then went to visit Him.

Although the twinning initially is between Christian parishes, it is important to note that support will be **given to all Palestinians, irrespective of religious background**. The Palestinian Christian population in towns and villages supports the Palestinian Muslim population and vice versa.

All Palestinians suffer at the hands of illegal Israeli settlers, who use terror to ethnically cleanse the West Bank. In addition to encouraging and supporting the settlers, the Israeli Government also strangles the towns and villages economically, socially and psychologically, through severe travel restrictions and humiliation of the population. The strategy is to drive Palestinian families out of Palestine by making it impossible to live there.

The initial twinning will take place between the **Falls Family of Parishes in West Belfast** and the parish of **Our Lady of Fatima in Beth Sahur, West Bank, Palestine**. The sincere hope is that it will be the first of many long term partnerships between our two populations.

Two Palestinian solidarity groups, **Christians for Palestine** and **Gaels against Genocide** will be joined members of the **South Belfast Meeting** of the **Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Ireland** to provide support for this twinning project and extend the reach of the programme to as many local supporters as possible.

News of the opportunity to provide tangible support to Palestinian communities has raised interest in a number of other parts of Ireland including **Fermanagh** and **Cork**. The more parishes involved, the more support we can offer to a community under siege, and the better we will understand the issues they face. Ongoing education and events will ensure that the dire situation of the Palestinian people doesn't disappear from our consciousness.

If you would like to get involved with this twinning project or consider setting up a new twinning initiative then please get in touch at

Email:christians4palestine@outlook.com

What is BDS?

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) is a method of non-violent resistance to the Israeli Regime and companies who support it. Many of you will recall that boycotts were a key factor in ending the Apartheid Regime in South Africa that oppressed the majority black population. The BDS Movement's strategy is to target a few significant companies, that are complicit in the genocide, and encourage the public to boycott these and buy goods or services from **alternative** business or companies.

If you wish to participate in this boycott, here are some of the companies to avoid.

1. **TEVA:** A huge Israeli Pharmaceutical company that is complicit in the genocide. They manufacture a wide range of generic drugs, regularly prescribed by doctors. Many other companies make the same generic drugs, so you can impact TEVA by asking your pharmacist to provide an alternative to **TEVA** products.
2. **Allianz Insurance Group:** A major investor in ELBIT Systems who supply the arms and drones used to kill civilians in Gaza. Check your insurance supplier and switch to a different provider.
3. **Booking.com and VRBO:** Both companies advertise properties in the Occupied Palestinian Territories stolen by Settler Colonialists. If you select a property or hotel on their web site then book it directly with the hotel. You will discourage their support for genocide and find it 10%-20% cheaper as well.
4. **Starbucks:** Buy your coffee in local coffee houses boycott Starbucks
5. **McDonalds:** Buy your food in local cafes and restaurants
6. **Israeli products** in supermarkets.

Apartheid Free Zones

C4P is encouraging companies and organisations to register and become an **Apartheid Free Zone**. This means starting to make the transition from goods and services that support the genocide directly or indirectly.

We are working with restaurants, bars and Churches to start that process. To sign up use the



'Driving the Palestinians out of Jerusalem'

The ownership and governance of Jerusalem is complex. International Law recognises East Jerusalem as a future capital of a Palestinian state, however it is strictly controlled by the Israeli State. The Israeli government are passing laws that are aimed at driving out the Palestinians in East Jerusalem in a number of ways.

Firstly, Israel claims that occupied East Jerusalem is part of its "eternal, undivided" capital, therefore **Palestinian Christians and Muslims who are born and live there, are denied Israeli citizenship**.

Palestinians in Jerusalem are given "permanent residency" ID cards and temporary Jordanian passports that are only used for travel purposes. They are essentially **stateless, stuck in legal limbo** – they are not citizens of Israel, nor are they citizens of Jordan, or Palestine.

Reverend Ashraf Tannous, is a Palestinian Lutheran Minister who lives in **East Jerusalem**. His Church, Bethlehem Christmas Church, is located in **Bethlehem**, West Bank, Occupied Palestine—only a few miles south east of his home. To travel to his church—his place of work—he must traverse many security gates—turning what should be a journey of minutes into hours—every day. At these gates—he and his children are often subjected to abuse and harassment. Since October 2023, 1200 additional security gates have been installed. Almost 170 surround Bethlehem. Today Bethlehem, formerly a majority Christian town, is strangled by illegal Israeli settlements and apartheid walls.

Israel has created even more hoops for Palestinians to jump through, aimed at revoking even their low-level, permanent-resident status. The primary Israeli government department responsible for investigating, granting, and **revoking residency permissions** for Palestinians in Jerusalem is the **Population and Immigration Authority**. Within this body, specific, and often opaque, procedures are used to **revoke** residency, particularly regarding "**centre of life**" checks (verifying if a Palestinian has moved outside Jerusalem). The Ministry of Interior holds the authority to revoke permanent residence permits based on a "**breach of allegiance**".

Recently **Rev Ashraf** had to go through his credit cards and other expenditure to prove to this Israeli organisation how much of his own money he has spent **in 'Israel' or outside Israel**. If they judge that not enough has been spent in Israel, his permit would be revoked and he would have to leave his home and family or move them out of Jerusalem. This systematic abuse and humiliation is aimed at driving all Palestinians—Muslim and Christian from Jerusalem their home, by making life so difficult that they just give up.

These laws only worsen the difficult conditions for the 420,000 Palestinians living in occupied East Jerusalem, who are treated as **foreign immigrants by the Israeli state. They are aimed at strangling their economy by making it almost impossible to work; serving to ethnically cleanse using apartheid laws**.

Still the Palestinian Christians resist and remain. As Christians, we are called to raise awareness of these ethnic cleansing and apartheid laws implemented by the Israeli State.

In Christian solidarity we can continue to support their projects, assist them to help maintain some economic activity, and use public pressure to repeal these apartheid measures.