



## Resolution on the 2009 Kairos Document

30.04.2011 | Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR)

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees*

*April 15, 2010*

The ongoing struggle of Israelis and Palestinians to live side by side in the land sacred to both is one of the greatest tragedies of our time. People of good will, whatever their faith or background, have beheld twin horrors: Israel's existential struggle in the face of massive invasions and years of indiscriminate bombings and murderous terrorism, along with the horrible suffering and indignities experienced on a daily basis by Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. Israel and the Palestinians desperately need a peaceful settlement that brings about an end to the occupation of Palestinians lands<sup>1</sup> and that provides dignity and self-rule to the Palestinians and security to Israelis in a Jewish and democratic state. Such a solution is a moral and practical necessity in the interest of all. This moment in history calls for sober, honest, and nuanced voices coming especially from involved religious leaders who understand the necessity of compromise and who can speak truth to power on both sides. The cause of peace is not served by pronouncements which vindicate one side while demonizing the other, but by the courage of moral clarity and respect for truth.

In December, 2009, a document known as "Kairos / A Moment of Truth: A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering" was issued and signed by nine Palestinian members of the Christian Clergy and six Palestinian Christian laypersons.

A close reading of Kairos reveals that it is anything but a document based on truth. Careful consideration of what it says and what it does not say, of the history it paints and the history it obfuscates, and of the moral yardstick it applies to Israel yet compromises in the face of Palestinian violence, reveals a morally inconsistent and theologically suspect document that speaks only part of the truth, and not always that.

Sadly, this document also rejects or ignores more than a half a century of Jewish-Christian rapprochement and takes its place among other Christian documents which, throughout history, have intended to delegitimize the Jewish people's continuing Covenant with God, particularly by arguing that our Covenant has been superseded by Jesus and Christianity. Too often, such Church documents have been utilized as pretexts for our persecution, our expulsion, and even our attempted annihilation. Since the Shoah and World War II, and particularly beginning with Vatican II, the Jewish people has come to expect better from our Christian brothers and sisters.

Like the Kairos authors, the Central Conference of American Rabbis is deeply concerned about the welfare of the Palestinian people, as our record indicates.<sup>2</sup> Our strenuous objections to Kairos do not diminish our commitment to a two-state solution as the only avenue to achieve a just and lasting peace, preserving a secure Jewish State of Israel and facilitating for the first time the realization of the Palestinian people's nationhood. Among its many failings, Kairos:

1. Echoes supersessionist language of the Christian past, since rejected by most

- mainstream Christian denominations, referring to the Torah absent Christian revelation as, in the words of the Christian Scriptures, “a dead letter.”<sup>3</sup>
2. While opposing and negating the applicability of scriptural texts, historical presence, and theological discourse to justify the existence of a Jewish state,<sup>4</sup> does exactly that in making its case for a Palestinian State.<sup>5</sup>
  3. Consistently objects to “the Occupation,” without making clear that it is referring exclusively to lands occupied by Israel and in dispute since the Six-Day War of 1967. Ultimately, the document becomes clear, altogether rejecting the very notion of a Jewish State.<sup>6</sup>
  4. Insists that the root cause of Palestinian resistance – both violent and non-violent – is “the Occupation,”<sup>7</sup> obfuscating the historical truth of the Arab world’s militant rejection of the existence of a Jewish state pre-dating 1948, and the decades of war and terrorism, which, in 1967, prompted and necessitated the taking of the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan heights.
  5. Purports to promote non-violent resistance as the only legitimate Christian response to the Israeli occupation, yet expresses “respect” and “high esteem for those who have given their life for our nation,” thereby implicitly condoning, even praising, suicide bombers.<sup>8</sup>
  6. Attempts to neutralize the concept of terrorism through the euphemistic reference to “terrorism,”<sup>9</sup> implying that the deliberate Palestinian targeting of Israeli civilians with the aim of killing as many as possible in order to strike fear and terror is not terrorism at all, but a form of “legal resistance.”
  7. Paints a compelling picture of the reality of Palestinians living under Israeli rule, but ignores the reality of Israelis forced to flee for their lives into bomb shelters, or in fear of being blown up while eating in a restaurant, celebrating a Passover Seder or dancing at a Bar Mitzvah Celebration.

The Kairos Document has been explicitly endorsed by a relative few Palestinian Christian leaders.<sup>10</sup> However, the acceptance and endorsement of this document by certain other individuals and church groups with which we have enjoyed harmonious interfaith relations has been surprising, disturbing and profoundly disappointing. For the contemporary Christian to ascribe to this supercessionist document would be saying to their Jewish neighbors and friends – indeed to the world – that Judaism has no validity as a covenant religion, that the pain and martyrdom endured by countless generations of Jews was for naught; that the world would have been better off without the religious, cultural, spiritual, social, scientific and educational contributions of Jewish people throughout ages; and that the God we worship and serve is no God at all. So many mainstream churches have rejected supersessionism, not only because of the centuries of persecution it has engendered, but because they believe it not to be true. In short, those who would associate themselves with this document and the religious foundation upon which it is based would be erasing years of Christian soul searching and repentance as if they had not been. We expect more from our interfaith partners. We are forced to wonder whether these Church organizations do not recognize the supersessionist and anti-Semitic nature of the Kairos document or whether they no longer care to share interfaith dialogue with us. Therefore, the Central Conference of American Rabbis:

1. Declares that Kairos is a factually, theologically and morally flawed document;
2. Insists that the document’s explicit supersessionism and inherent anti-Semitism prevent Kairos from providing a legitimate framework for interfaith dialogue and understanding;
3. Acknowledges with appreciation Kairos’ call to the Palestinian people to reject hate<sup>11</sup> (as we all must do), to follow the Christian commandment to “love both enemies and friends” and to resist “through respect of life,” as required by cited Christian Scriptures;<sup>12</sup>

4. Challenges the authors of Kairos to be true to the love and respect of life they endorse and the very scriptures they quote by rejecting as immoral and un-Christian the indiscriminate and deliberately targeted murder of Israeli men, women and children;
5. Again insists that such acts of murder, either as acts of revenge or with the specious designation of "legal Palestinian resistance," <sup>13</sup> do indeed comprise terrorism, denounced by people of conscience throughout the world as an unacceptable tool for achieving political ends;
6. Asserts that the Jewish people's right to national sovereignty in the Land of Israel is primarily established, not by subjective religious belief or fundamentalist reading of Hebrew Scriptures, but by a millennium of national existence and civilization there, followed, even in exile, by nearly two millennia of unbroken physical and spiritual support of and yearning for the Land;
7. Labels as theologically hypocritical and historically dishonest the assertion that the Palestinian people's historic presence on the land establishes its right of return, <sup>14</sup> but that the Jewish people's historic presence, dating back 3000 years, does not establish that very same right;
8. Calls on Christians of good faith to recognize the complexity of the Israeli-Arab conflict, which is complicated by territorial dispute as well as competing allegiances to sacred land, Palestinian suffering and Palestinian terror; and which must not be reduced, as Kairos' authors do, to an assertion that the Jewish people are in the wrong and that the Palestinian cause is fully just;
9. Calls on all who have endorsed Kairos to look deeply into its words and honestly into their own souls and to recognize and forswear the flawed and distorted picture of reality it paints;
10. Serves notice that the CCAR would require serious reflection before continuing our common cause with any Church body or organization that endorses or continues to endorse Kairos;
11. Re-affirms our commitment to our continuing interfaith cooperation with Christian groups that affirm the continuing, unique Covenant between God and the Jewish people; and
12. Recommits itself to all worthy and legitimate endeavors to bring an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people, to be achieved through negotiations to establish a Palestinian State adjacent to and in cooperation with a secure Jewish State of Israel.
13. Urges our members to educate themselves on this matter and to seek opportunities to share concerns about the Kairos document with their local Christian colleagues and lay people.

1. We define such "Palestinian lands" as land in Israel's hands since the Six-Day War of 1967 that was not part of Israel before that time and which has not been annexed by Israel. We also recognize that the exact boundaries of such land may be altered in the course of negotiations.

2. See "Where We Stand on Israel," 2002 and 2003; Resolution on Peace in Israel, 2001 inter alia; Resolution on Gaza and the West Bank, 2006; Resolution on Building a Defensive Barrier between Israel and Palestinian Communities, 2004; Resolution on Discriminatory Home Demolitions in Israel, 2005; and countless others.

3. Kairos 2.2.2

4. Kairos 2.2.2

5. Kairos 2.3.1

6. Kairos 9.3

7. Kairos 1.4

8. Kairos 4.2.5

9. Kairos 4.3

10. On its website, the Kairos Document purports itself to be endorsed by thirteen Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem. And yet, that supposed statement of endorsement makes no allusion to the contents of the document nor does it endorse nor make reference to the contents of the Kairos document itself. It is instructive to note that the original Kairos document listed Bishop Dr. Munib Younan, head of the "Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land.," as one of the sixteen signers, the only one who held a position other than pastor at that time; but that Bishop Younan's name was subsequently removed from the list of signatories.
11. Kairos 5.4.3
  12. Kairos 4.1
  13. Kairos 1.5
  14. Kairos 2.3.2; 2.3.4

Source: <http://www.cicweb.ca/scene/2010/04/a-rebuttal-to-the-kairos-document>