

# Protestantse Kerk

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Datum                      Ons kenmerk  
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Protestantse Kerk**

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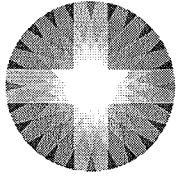
Dear friends,

We always appreciate it to be kept informed by you and we thank you for sending us your statements concerning the statements on the Palestinian Authority and the UN. We have read them carefully and by doing so we felt urged to react, particularly because you ask us to remember the Palestinian people in our prayers, so that your leadership will be guided into the best possible course of action in the coming week(s) for the service of peace in the region and the world.

Of course, it is the right of the Palestinian leadership to go to the United Nations in order to receive full recognition as a state and it is your good right to encourage this idea of going to the United Nations. Although we as a church are not a political party, we in principle also think that a so called two state solution may be a viable option. Even so, we don't think it to be the competence of our church to speak out about the way such a solution should be reached.

We understand that you believe, think and speak on the basis of a commitment for peace and justice and out of a situation of strife and injustice. We also understand your solidarity with the suffering of your people. This is not easy, but in this way you want to respond to the Gospel of Christ. We certainly understand that part of this suffering is caused by the policies of the state of Israel regarding the Palestinians (as we made clear by our letter to the Israeli government of last year). Therefore you can be sure that you will be in our thoughts and prayers and that we will support you in making the voice of Palestinian Christians heard. We certainly will pray for you and your leadership. You are our partner and we want to listen to you and enter with you in a dialogue concerning the peace and justice in the Middle East and therefore we take your call for prayer very seriously. We will pray for you and your leadership, as we also pray for the Jewish people and the leadership of Israel. We will pray for justice and peace, and we will pray that God will bend the hearts of all who are responsible to do righteousness and strife for peace.

We also want to share our concerns with you. We are hesitant to your political analysis of the situation. As Protestant Church in the Netherlands we are afraid to get stuck in black and white schemes that are too simple to cover the complexities of the situation. We get the feeling that the complexities of action and reaction are not given the right attention in your statement and that this in the end will not help but hurt. Our main point is, that in your analysis of the situation in the Middle East and the fate of the Palestinian people, it seems that the only party to be blamed, is Israel. And in the slipstream of Israel, also the US is blamed as the only country which frustrates the request of the Palestinians to acknowledge a Palestinian state. In this way the case for justice and peace leads to an identification of one particular political view in which there is a very clear



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demarcation between good and bad. Of course there is a clear asymmetry in the conflict, but even in such situations we must take care not to stigmatize the one without being critical to the other. We believe that Christians and churches should on the contrary work on 'deconstructing images of the enemy', as the World Council of Churches puts it. We think that this is what discerns churches from political entities. We miss this notion in your analysis, and that makes it for us impossible to endorse it.

How then to stick together? We think that it could be healing to discuss these things between us and we therefore invite you to take the issue up with our programme officers who are involved in Middle Eastern programs. In fact, we think that our partnership is an occasion to put these questions on the table as much as it is an occasion for you to ask for - and for us to show - our solidarity; as long as we can share our views and concerns with one another.

Finally, we feel one with you in the way you affirm your commitment for non-violence. This is a clear and courageous position. We recognise the true voice of the church in it. We wish you Gods wisdom, comfort and love,

Ds. P. Verhoeff  
Moderator of the General Synod of the  
Protestants Church in the Netherlands

Dr. A.J. Plaisier  
General Secretary of the Protestants Church in  
the Netherlands