



Towards a just peace in Israel and Palestine

No peace without international pressure

Some background information on the petition to Mr. Van Rompuy and the national governments

A complex and asymmetrical conflict

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is complex, not black and white. Both Israelis and Palestinians are suffering. We, NGO's and peace organizations are looking for a solution from a 'rights' approach: enduring and just peace. It is not a simple, but a complex conflict. Both parties are not equal: Israel is more powerful than Palestine, Israel is the occupying force and has occupied the Palestinian territories since 1967. It is moreover pursuing an expansion policy. Israel has been a state for 60 years; Palestine is still not a state.

Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories

There are now over 500.000 Israeli settlers in more than 120 settlements on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. These settlements are illegal according to international law: an occupying force is not allowed to transfer its citizens to occupied territory. With these settlements and the wall Israel controls more than 60% of the land in the West Bank (that is Palestinian territory) and the majority of the natural water supplies.

The settlements and the connecting bypass roads, the checkpoints, the wall, the uprooting of trees, the demolition of houses and the increasing violence by settlers infringe on the basic rights of the Palestinians. They obstruct freedom of movement, they make the economic development of Palestine impossible, they shut the door on peace and threaten to render the two state solution impossible.

Import from settlements in Europe

The EU is the main export market for products originating from the Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territories. They are usually labeled as Israeli products. The October 2012 report '*Trading Away Peace. How Europe helps sustain illegal settlements*', endorsed by 22 European social organizations a.o. Broederlijk Delen, states that the total value of the import in the EU from Israeli settlements on the West Bank is 15 times that of the import from Palestine. Taking into account the fact that there are more than 4 million Palestinians and 500.000 Israeli settlers in the occupied Palestinian territories, this means that the import per settler is 100 times bigger than the import per Palestinian.

One of the reasons is the financial support by the Israeli government to colonists in the illegal settlements. In the West Bank, transport infrastructure, industrial development and agriculture are highly subsidized. Settlers have free access to international markets and can easily establish modern agricultural companies and competitive industrial zones.

Israel on the other hand occupies Palestinian land and hinders free mobility of persons and goods in the West Bank through hundreds of checkpoints. Access to markets, agricultural land, water supplies and natural resources is severely restricted.

Gaza, an open air prison

After the 2006 elections won by Hamas, the international community isolated the party. In 2007 a united government with Fatah failed and Hamas seized power in Gaza. From then on Israel kept up a blockade on Gaza. They want to pressurize the citizens of Gaza to turn away from Hamas, which is seen as a terrorist movement. But it has had a contrary effect. The blockade did not bring Hamas but rather the citizens to their knees. It stimulated extremist points of view and armed groups. The blockade constitutes a collective punishment for the people of Gaza, which is against international law, and has led to a humanitarian catastrophe: a large part of the population depends on food aid, there is 35% unemployment and poverty is on the rise.

Petition

This petition is an initiative of the Kinderrechtenhuis Alken, supported by Broederlijk Delen, Hannah Herent, Jeugd en Vrede and Pax Christi Vlaanderen. It appeals to Mr. Van Rompuy, president of the European Council and to the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The organizations want to exert pressure on the EU and its member states to take positive action in order to achieve just peace in Israel and Palestine. The petition can be signed from Christmas 2012 onwards at the following organizations:

Kinderrechtenhuis Alken, Stationstraat 135, 3570 Alken

Tel.: 011/31 10 33

<http://www.kinderrechtenhuis.be>

Broederlijk Delen, Huidevettersstraat 165, 1000 Brussel

Tel.: 02/502 57 00

<http://www.broederlijkdelen.be/>

Hannah vzw, Mechelsesteenweg 361, 3020 Herent

Tel.: 0476/43 16 53 or 016/23 85 74

<http://www.hannah.be/>

Jeugd en Vrede vzw, Koningin Astridlaan 160, 2800 Mechelen

Tel.: 015/43 56 96

<http://www.jeugdenvrede.be/>

Pax Christi Vlaanderen, Italiëlei 98a, 2000 Antwerpen

Tel.: 03/225 10 00

<http://www.paxchristi.be/>

Contact: Frans Swartelé, Stationsstraat 135, B-3570 Alken

Email: frans.swartele@telenet.be

- The petition (abridged version) is preferably signed **online** at: http://bit.ly/petition2012_en
- The printable version of the full petition text is at: http://www.hannah.be/petition_en.pdf
- A background note can be downloaded from: http://www.hannah.be/petition2012_en.pdf

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