



## Building a Just Peace to the Israel – Palestine Conflict

August 2020

*We acknowledge that by our commitment as Christians to the liberation of the Palestinian people we stand against the theology of Empire, a global order of domination manifesting in racial, economic, cultural, and ecological oppression that threatens humanity and all of creation. In making this confession, we embrace our membership in the community of the broken bread, the church fulfilling its mission to bring the good news of God's gift of love, mercy, compassion, and abundant life for all.*  
From the Kairos Palestine 'Cry for Hope' statement of 1 July 2020 endorsed by the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

Previous Synod meetings of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania have committed the Synod to seek to contribute to a just peace in the Israel – Palestine conflict. As part of that effort, the Synod has campaigned on cases where Israeli soldiers or police have murdered Palestinian civilians and have not been brought to justice. The cases show there are Israeli soldiers and police who have a reckless disregard for the lives of Palestinian civilians. These soldiers and police are very rarely held to account in any way for their actions by the Israeli authorities.

The ability to achieve lasting and meaningful peace is made much harder when either side carry out such abuses, especially when the violations are carried out with impunity.

### **Autistic Palestinian man gunned down on his way to disability centre**

On 30 May 2020, Israeli Border Police officers gunned down 32-year-old Iyad al-Halaq who was autistic. Iyad was from Wadi al-Joz in East Jerusalem and was on his way to the Elwyn Al Quds Centre for individuals with disabilities, which he attended daily.

Iyad was afraid of the armed police officers who stood along the route to the special needs centre he went to, where he participated in a vocational training program. It took him a month before he felt brave enough to walk the route by himself, just a kilometre from his home.

On his first days at the centre, the teacher stopped with Iyad next to the police guard post at Lions Gate. She explained to him that he had nothing to fear. She promised they would not harm him. She also told the police officers that he was disabled and was attending the centre where she worked.

Iyad passed the police post every day for six years with no problems. In his pocket he carried a certificate issued by the centre, stating in Hebrew and Arabic that he was a person with special needs. He also carried a National Insurance Institute card confirming he had a disability.

On the morning of 30 May, Iyad became confused by shouting police. He attempted to flee them and was labelled a terrorist by the border police who shot him in the leg.

The wounded Iyad entered a garbage room off a street. He lay on his back on the ground with his caregiver, Warda Abu Hadid, by him. She pleaded for his life, and he clung to her. She tried to explain to the officers in Hebrew and Arabic that he had a disability. They shot him dead, one of them firing three bullets from an assault rifle into his torso at point-blank range as he lay terrified on the floor.



The garbage room where he was extrajudicially executed is located in a narrow courtyard in Jerusalem's Old City, inside Lions Gate, precisely at the start of the Via Dolorosa. The place is where Jesus walked from the site of his trial to the location of his crucifixion, on what is now called King Faisal Street.

After Iyad was dead, Abu Hadid was taken to a police position near Lions Gate and strip-searched and then interrogated for three hours.



Police then raided and searched the home of Iyad's parents.

The Israeli Prime Minister expressed his sorrow at the killing of Iyad. The police officer who killed Iyad has been placed under house arrest.

However, in an ominous sign, a month and a half after Iyad's murder the Israeli authorities announced that there is no CCTV footage of the events that led to Iyad's shooting. The Israeli authorities stated that the CCTV cameras in the area "were not connected at the relevant time".

There has been grief expressed by Israelis at the murder of Iyad, particularly from parents of children with autism. Avid Friedman, an Israeli father of a child with autism, paid Iyad's father a condolence visit.

### **Palestinian teen killed in Israeli raid**

On 13 May 2020 at around 5:30 am, a commercial van drove into the Beit Jibrin neighbourhood in the eastern section of al-Fawar Refugee Camp, south of Hebron. Approximately ten Israeli soldiers got out and approached a house. Several dozen Palestinian youths began to throw stones and empty bottles at them. At the house, the person they were seeking to arrest was not home. The soldiers started to exit the camp on foot. They responded to the stone-throwing youths with stun grenades, tear gas canisters and rubber-coated bullets.

Zeid Qaysiyah, aged 17, went up onto the roof of his house as the soldiers approached. Several relatives were already on the roof to watch what was happening. The relatives warned Zeid not to go close to the edge of the roof. He ignored their warnings, and an Israeli soldier shot him in the face with a .22 bullet from approximately 100 m away. He was rushed to hospital by relatives and pronounced dead a short while later.

### **What You Can Do**

Write a polite and respectful letter to:

His Excellency Mr Mark Meir SOFER  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Israel  
6 Turrana Street  
Yarralumla, ACT, 2600

Email: [info@canberra.mfa.gov.il](mailto:info@canberra.mfa.gov.il)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Points to make in your letter:

- Express deep distress at the alleged extrajudicial execution of Iyad al-Halaq by an Israeli Border Police officer on 30 May 2020 in East Jerusalem.
- Ask for assurance that there will be a thorough investigation, and the officer who killed Iyad al-Halaq will be brought to justice.
- Seek assurance that the Israeli Government is providing the family of Iyad al-Halaq with any support that they have requested.
- Express deep concern at the shooting death of Zeid Qaysiyah, aged 17, on 13 May 2020 at the al-Fawar Refugee Camp by an Israeli soldier. Note that eye-witness accounts report that Zeid Qaysiyah was unarmed and posing no threat at the time he was shot.
- Seek assurances that a thorough investigation into his shooting will be carried out and the soldier who shot him will be held to account.

**Acknowledgement:** Material in this action was taken from the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* and the Israeli human rights organisation B'tselem.