

Behind the news: Visions for peace – Voices of faith

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Providing church, ecumenical and interfaith information, resources, and analysis on issues of current global concern

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1. Focus on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Through *Behind the News: Visions for Peace - Voices of Faith*, Action by Churches Together (ACT International), the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA), and the World Council of Churches (WCC) provide alternative voices and perspectives on areas of critical conflict involving and demanding action by people of faith.

Such an area is the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The tragedy of structural as well as physical violence continues to grow, and demands more concerted action among people of faith for justice and true peace in the region. Therefore, this issue of *Behind the News* focuses on voices and actions for a just peace in the Middle East. Especially when we are bombarded with words and images of fear, violence, death, and diplomatic games, we need to hear what people of faith are saying, be inspired by their non-violent actions, and be motivated to ourselves do more to end the root causes of the violence.

Many churches and ecumenical organizations have been working for decades on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, and their past policies and statements now provide a foundation for action in the midst of the current violence. This bulletin will not attempt to summarize such long-standing advocacy. Instead, it will provide some of the statements and actions of the past two months, according to our mandate that:

Behind the News focuses on alternative voices and perspectives behind stories in (or conspicuously absent from) the international news.

Visions for Peace highlights statements, ideas and actions that aim to build peace and reconciliation in situations of conflict and violence.

Voices of Faith shares information particularly from churches, ecumenical organizations, and other faiths, emphasizing different regional perspectives.

All these statements condemn terrorism and violence. In lifting up these statements and actions, we are very aware that this issue only scratches the surface of what the national and international organizations, churches and faith groups are saying and doing for a just peace in this conflict. But we hope and pray that this service can bring together voices and common resolve to speak clearly, act decisively, and maintain a vision of justice, dignity and peace for all.

2. Statements and actions from the local Christian community

a) Joint statements and actions from the patriarchs and heads of churches in Jerusalem:

On March 9, the thirteen patriarchs and heads of churches in Jerusalem* issued a call to "All the people in this Holy Land, Palestinians and Israelis" affirming that "War shelling and destruction will not bring justice and security; rather it will intensify hatred and bitterness." They stated that "the way the present Israeli Government is dealing with the situation makes neither for security nor for a just peace" and that "Israeli security is dependant on Palestinian freedom and justice." They also urged the Palestinian people to end "every kind of violent response". www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/9-3-02jerus-call.html

On 2 April, the patriarchs and heads of churches in Jerusalem made a public offer to serve as mediators in the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians www.wfn.org/2002/04/msg00018.html. Over the next two days, the church leaders organized marches and demonstrations, one in Jerusalem leading to the house of Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon, the other to the Bethlehem checkpoint. The church leaders have received no response from political leaders to their offers to mediate <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/press/02/08pu.html>, and their repeated attempts to enter Bethlehem to encourage a peaceful resolution of the standoff at the Church of the Nativity have been prevented by Israeli soldiers at the Bethlehem checkpoint www.wfn.org/2002/04/msg00117.html.

The patriarchs and heads of churches met with US secretary of state Colin Powell on April 14. They presented a memorandum outlining their concerns about the present situation in Palestine and Israel, noting that "Security for Israel means justice and freedom for Palestinians." They stated that the current conflict is not a "mere question of violence"... "Violence is only a symptom of the root cause of the Middle East conflict, namely, the Israeli occupation of 1967 territories," they said, noting the need for continued interfaith dialogue, cessation of military operations, and international protection key to "secure the lives of the people".

Their letter concludes, "We have represented Christianity in this part of the world for the last two thousand years. We believe that the future of Palestinian Christianity is also in peace and not in war. We believe that the Christian Church can be an instrument of peace, justice and reconciliation. As Dr Martin Luther King, Jr said, "I have a dream." Our dream is that these two peoples who represent the three monotheistic religions may live in just peace and freedom, in security and reconciliation. (www.wfn.org/2002/04/msg00189.html)

*The patriarchs and heads of churches in Jerusalem represent four families of churches:

Greek Orthodox

Oriental Orthodox (Armenians, Copts, Ethiopians and Syrians)

Catholics (Roman Catholic [Latin Patriarchate], Custody of the Holy Land, Greek Catholic, Maronites, Syrians, Armenians)

Evangelicals (Anglicans, Lutherans)

In addition to joint efforts, leaders and members of individual churches are providing pastoral care to people suffering from fear, violence and humanitarian crises, and are involved in peacebuilding and advocacy efforts.

b) Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem: The highest-ranking Roman Catholic official in the Middle East, Patriarch Michel Sabbah, strongly criticized Israel for fomenting violence and hatred throughout the region by adopting a policy based on coercion and violence against the Palestinians. Speaking during an interview with the Arabic Service of the BBC on 3 April, he said "The image Israel is trying to portray about what is happening clouds the truth and

distorts reality. The real problem here is not terror, it is an entire people being subjected to military occupation and repression."

The Latin Patriarchate, along with the other Heads of Churches, has attempted to mediate in the standoff at Nativity Church, and issued a brief explanation of the situation following the third consecutive Sunday where Christians in Bethlehem could not attend Catholic, Greek or Armenian Orthodox services in the church. <http://www.wfn.org/2002/04/msg00103.html>. A comprehensive collection of material on the Latin Patriarchate and from H.B. Michel Sabbah, can be found through www.albushra.org and their link to <http://go.to/nonviolence>

On 5 April, Fr Giacomo Bini, minister general of the Order of Friars Minor, speaking on behalf of all Franciscans who have been the Custodians of the Holy Land since 1217, stated that "We Franciscans cannot allow a tragic slaughter to take place in Bethlehem, at the Nativity Church." There are 40 Friars, 4 Franciscan nuns, about 30 Orthodox and Armenian monks inside the church compound. The message confirmed the Franciscans' willingness to work as mediators in the conflict, and called on all heads of state to put aside the use of force. On 11 April, Fr Bini issued another statement confirming that humanitarian intervention is urgently needed, and that the friars in the church are not hostages. The statement further demanded that the Palestinians be allowed to leave the building, and that their safety be assured "so that our Community can resume its work of peace-building".
<http://www.fides.org/English/2002/holyland/ebnews020411b.html>

c) The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem, H.B. Irineos, Greek Orthodox Patriarch in Jerusalem, has yet to receive endorsement by the Israeli government despite his election by the synod of bishops last August. Under the church's constitution, election of the patriarch must be approved by the ruling powers in the Holy Land - Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the Kingdom of Jordan. Jordan and the PA have approved the appointment. Ministers in the Israeli government claim that Irineos is pro-Palestinian. During US secretary of state Colin Powell's visit, the Israeli government approved the appointment, but this has been delayed due to a further protest by a group of government ministers.

<http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=154269&contrassID=2&subContrassID=1&sbSubContrassID=0&listSrc=Ym>

Background information on the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate can be found at:

<http://www.holylight.gr/patria/enpatria.html>

d) The Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, The Right Rev. Riah Abu El-Assal, in a message to international friends sent on 24 April, recounts the dire humanitarian situation in the occupied territories, the devastation in many areas and the urgent need for international action. He quotes from Dante "The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who, in times of great moral crisis, maintain their neutrality." Giving thanks for the many letters of support and the prayers, he says work to influence public opinion is still desperately needed.

<http://www.wfn.org/2002/04/msg00330.html>

e) Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan: Bishop Munib Younan reported that on April 16, Israeli defence forces invaded the Lutheran School of Hope in Ramallah. Because all of Ramallah was under curfew, no one was in the school, but neighbours notified the pastor of the Lutheran Church of Hope of sounds of guns, sledgehammers, and broken glass. "It seems that this is not a war against terrorism," Younan said. "This seems to be a war against the hope and the future of the Palestinian people." <http://listserv.elca.org/cgi-bin/wa.exe?A2=ind0204&L=elcaneews&D=1&H=1&O=D&F=&S=&P=2867>. This followed a previous search of the school on April 8 in which the pastor was asked by Israeli soldiers to accompany them in searching the school. Rev. Ansara reported afterward that "They would push me first into each room and then would jump into the room with their weapons levelled." No people or weapons were found in the building.

<http://www.wfn.org/2002/04/msg00121.html>

On April 4, the Israeli Defence Forces entered the compound of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem and searched all rooms and offices, detaining the pastor, Rev. Dr Mitri Raheb, and causing significant damage to the building. <http://listserv.elca.org/cgi-bin/wa.exe?A2=ind0204&L=elcanews&D=1&H=1&O=D&F=&S=&P=539>
More information is available through the International Centre of Bethlehem, a part of the Lutheran Church compound, at <http://www.annadwa.org>

In Bishop Younan's Easter Message from Jerusalem on March 26, he affirms, "The resurrection of Christ assures us that, no matter what, life is stronger than death. This gives us confidence that the spiralling violence will not have the last word, nor will injustice, occupation, illness, broken relationships, or anything else which tears us down and is against God's will for all creation. Even if we are crushed, the Resurrection gives us hope that both Palestinians and Israelis can have peace, freedom, reconciliation and security which will lead to the dignity and abundant life God intends for all people. For Palestinian Christians, the Resurrection is the only hope to which we cling." <http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/easter.html>

Background on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan at:
http://www.elca.org/dgm/country_packet/packets/europe-middle_east/palestine/church.html
and <http://www.holyland-lutherans.org/>
Letters from Jerusalem also posted at <http://www.elca.org/dgm/story/jerusalem.asp>

f) Members of English-Speaking Christian Communities in the Holy Land, predominantly American, sent an open letter to US secretary of state Colin Powell on April 7, stating that "The increased violence has underscored the failure of successive American administrations to implement defined policies for the resolution of this conflict" and calling on the US government to "finalize a settlement to this conflict in accordance with [United Nations] resolutions 242, 338 and 1397... Consistency of will to move beyond the rhetoric of US policy and to implement its stated goals will restore the credibility to the peace process and to the role the US government seeks to play as the honest broker of the peace process."
See <http://umns.umc.org/02/april/154.htm> and the full text at <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-6.html>.

3. Statements, actions and reports from local Palestinian and Israeli peace and human rights organizations

a) International fieldworkers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories from the Danish/Icelandic Christian accompaniment programme, Christian Peacemaker Teams and United Civilians for Peace, issued a joint statement on 5 April describing how their efforts to meet those in need of relief and medical care were undermined by actions of the Israeli army, and urged the European governments to pressure both parties to start negotiations based on the UN Resolutions and Saudi peace proposal. <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-18.html>

LAW - The Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment issues almost daily updates on human rights abuses in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, most recently focusing on the investigation of the Israeli army action in the Jenin refugee camp. (<http://www.lawsociety.org/>) A press release from early March also provides a vivid account of the harrassment of Khader Shkirat, the general director of LAW - the Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment - by the Israeli Intelligence and army in an attempt to find a fugitive whom they thought was hiding in Shkirat's house. Urgent appeals brought representatives of Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations, Israeli Knesset members, and representatives from European Union consulates to observe and intervene in the threatened demolition of his house, and the Israeli troops eventually left the scene. <http://www.lawsociety.org/Press/Preleases/2002/March/mar8.html>

B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories issues daily documentation on human rights violations. <http://www.btselem.org/>

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, a non-violent, direct-action group comprised of many members of Israeli peace and human rights organizations, has set up an on-line survey to help plan and finance a rebuilding campaign "The Right to Live in a Homeland: 1000 House Parties to Rebuild Palestinian Homes." The survey is at <http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?2853L0SF37ME8MBTTJHKXGS4>. In calling for the campaign, ICAHD coordinator Jeff Halper states, "The systematic demolition of Palestinian homes throughout the Occupied Territories, together with the devastation of the Palestinian infrastructure, goes far beyond mere retaliation for terrorist attacks." <http://www.icahd.org/eng/>

Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center (<http://www.sabeel.org/>) issued a statement on March 12 calling for an immediate end of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories as the only solution to the seemingly unending violence in the Middle East. Calling for interventions to "an end to the present deadly cycle of violence", Sabeel appealed for international protection and return to the negotiating table, lifting up in prayer "the multitude of non-violent methods that people are using to resist". <http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/sabeel.html>.

The Arab Educational Institute (<http://members.tripod.com/aeicenter/aeicenter/>), affiliated to the Pax Christi Movement, has issued appeals to people to put pressure on their governments to compel Sharon to withdraw Israeli forces from the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Recent appeals have focused on ending the Israeli siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-20.html>

On April 8, staff of the East Jerusalem YMCA offices reported that the Israeli army blew up and destroyed the entrance and the contents of the offices located in Ramallah. http://www.ymca.int/update_me.htm. This web site also features statements and actions by the World YMCA and national chapters.

The Jerusalem Center for Women issued an open letter on March 8 commemorating International Women's Day by calling for mutual recognition of individual and collective rights, and an urgent appeal on March 16 noting that "there can be no security for anyone if war crimes are committed with impunity". <http://www.j-c-w.org/monthly%20news.htm>

Badil: Resource Center for Palestinian Refugee and Rehabilitation Rights calls the current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories a "humanitarian catastrophe" particularly for the refugee community, and calls on the international community to combine immediate humanitarian assistance with international protection and pressure on the Israeli government to abide by international law. <http://www.badil.org/Press/2002/press246-02.htm>

4. Statements and actions of the global church and ecumenical family

a) World Council of Churches

The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) was launched in February 2002 in Geneva by the World Council of Churches. The mission of the EAPPI is "the accompaniment of Palestinians and Israelis in non-violent actions and concerted advocacy efforts to end the occupation." This includes: monitoring and reporting on human rights violations, offering protection through non-violent presence; supporting acts of non-violent resistance alongside local Christian and Muslim Palestinians and Israeli peace activists; and engaging in public policy advocacy. Over 40 churches and church-related organizations participated in the development of the framework for the EAPPI which is open to churches and ecumenical organizations in the broad ecumenical movement <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/press/02/06pre.html>

The World Council of Churches sent an open letter on 15 March to WCC member churches, regional and national councils of churches and ecumenical partner organizations calling for an “immediate common effort... to break through the stagnation of the international community [with respect to the Israel-Palestine conflict] and to encourage action that corresponds to words.” The letter urges churches to strengthen their involvement in the 2002 campaign to “End the Illegal Occupation of Palestine” and in the EAPPI, and to call on governments to support proposals brought to the UN Security Council for the deployment of a monitoring body in the region. (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/press/02/05pu.html>).

A poster for the 2002 Focus of the Decade to Overcome Violence, "End the illegal Occupation of Palestine: Support a Just Peace in the Middle East" is available through WCC International Relations (ife@wcc-coe.org). See also <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/press/01/48pre.html> and <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/palestine/index-temp.html>

The WCC deputy general secretary, Georges Lemopoulos and Salpy Eskidjian of the WCC International Relations team travelled to Jerusalem from 2-4 April to meet with the patriarchs and heads of churches and Christian communities in Jerusalem and discuss ecumenical efforts with regard to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The delegation met with many church officials, PLO representatives, local human rights defenders, Palestinians in Israel, medical and emergency relief staff, representatives of international and local church-related organizations and the Jerusalem Inter-Church Committee. The delegation condemned the terrifying loss of Palestinian and Israeli lives and “echoed the unified voice of the local church leaders in endorsing the right of a people to resist the violence of military occupation and to struggle for its end by non-violent means.” <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/press/02/09pu.html>

b) In early April, Pope John Paul II met with the Israeli and US ambassadors and with a representative of the Arab League and reiterated in public interventions the Vatican’s policy on the escalating crisis in the Middle East:

- “The unequivocal condemnation of terrorism, from whatever side it may come
- disapproval of the conditions of injustice and humiliation imposed on the Palestinian people, as well as reprisals and retaliation, which only make the sense of frustration and hatred grow,
- respect for the UN resolutions by all sides,
- proportionality in the use of legitimate means of defence, and
- the duty for the parties in conflict to protect the sacred places which are very significant for the three monotheistic religions and the patrimony of all of humanity.”

The holy father further called for the entire church to dedicate Sunday, 7 April to prayers for peace in the Middle East. <http://www.wfn.org/2002/04/msg00101.html>

Pope John Paul II spoke on the telephone on 16 April with the Franciscan friars confined in Bethlehem’s Basilica of the Nativity to express his solidarity and to thank them for their “Christian witness”. “Courage!” the pope said, “Continue the resistance and custody of the holy places.” On 21 April, Pope John Paul II made another appeal for peace in the Middle East. He called for an end to the stand-off between Palestinians and Israelis at Bethlehem’s Nativity Church, saying it was marked by “blackmail and an intolerable exchange of accusations”. The pope said the Bethlehem church and all the holy sites should “quickly be restored to prayer and pilgrims, to God and man”.
<http://www.wfn.org/2002/04/msg00246.html>

Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, Vatican secretary for relations with states, insisted on the need for an independent military force to halt violence in the Middle East. He made this proposal on 13 April in an interview with Vatican Radio. The objective of such a force, he said, should be to “silence weapons, create a climate of mutual trust, and make the two

contenders return to sit down at the negotiating table”. He also called for a solution to the siege of the Basilica of the Nativity. <http://www.wfn.org/2002/04/msg00201.html>

For further information on Catholic responses, see Olive Branch from Jerusalem, e-mail: nonviolence@writem.com

c) The general secretary of the Conference of European Churches, Keith Clements wrote to all CEC member churches and associated organizations on 18 April, calling upon them and the European Union to address more resolutely the issues of peace and justice in Israel-Palestine. The letter transmitted the declaration made by the patriarchs and heads of churches in Jerusalem at their meeting with Mr Colin Powell, and urged European churches to receive, study and act on this text in their own European context. <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-2.html>

d) The general secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi, wrote to Ariel Sharon, the prime minister of Israel, urging an immediate halt to the current operations in the Palestinian territories by the Israeli Defence Forces which “can bring neither peace nor security.” In a letter to the 215 member churches of the Alliance, Nyomi calls on them to keep the people of the Holy Land in their thoughts and prayers; to write to their governments, urging them to put pressure on the Israeli government to turn from its present course of self-defeating violence; and to write in similar terms, or where possible, go in person to the Israeli embassy in their countries. Nyomi has also written to Yasser Arafat, president of the Palestinian Authority, expressing “dismay that his people are suffering so dreadfully under military attack.”.” <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-3.html>

e) As the Israeli military continued its operations in West Bank towns, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) asked for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from Palestinian territory, and a stop to attacks on civilians and civilian property including places of worship. In a call to “step back from the path of war”, the LWF general secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, urged Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon to heed the voices of concern from the international community. For more on this story, click on <http://193.73.242.125/News/LWI/EN/955.EN.html> For other related information on the Israel-Palestine situation, go to www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/OIahr/OIAHR-Documentation_Israel-Palestine.html

f) On 15 April, the Executive Committee of the Middle East Council of Churches met to discuss the situation in Palestine. Among the actions taken were: condemnation in the strongest possible terms of Israeli actions against the Palestinian people; the expressed desire that the presidents of the MECC jointly address an appeal to all relevant governments and organizations in the world to use all possible means to pursue peace; a request to the MECC general secretary to continue supporting the Palestinian people and to take appropriate action to secure financial assistance for the Palestinian people; and a request to Christians in the Middle East to pray for the people of the region in these times of trial, and to ask that those in positions of power have the insight, wisdom and righteousness to guide the political process. <http://www.mecchurches.org/posandpress/news.asp?id=77> and <http://www.wfn.org/2002/04/msg00279.html>

g) The general secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia, Rev. Ahn Jae Woong, wrote to the UN secretary-general, the prime minister of Israel, and the president of the Palestinian People’s Liberation Organization on 10 April. The letter expresses CCA’s grave distress at the horrifying escalation of violence in the Occupied Territories, and further urges that the United Nations immediately implement the UN Security Council Resolutions 1397 and 1402 (2002) in order to effect an immediate cease-fire, withdrawal of occupation troops from Palestinian cities, and resumption of the peace process. <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-4.html>

h) The Middle East region of the World Student Christian Federation, called for acts of solidarity with “a population subjected to the violence of occupation, humiliation and denial of human rights” and for all parties to fulfill their obligations. “The building of cooperative and integrative relationships between the countries of the Middle East is not possible so long as Arabs are denied the fullness of their rights.” <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-10.html>

i) The international secretary of Pax Christi International, Etienne De Jonghe, wrote to the UN secretary-general and to the president of the European Council on 29 March to deplore the ongoing violence and the countless violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law taking place in connection to the conflict. The letter affirms the need for an international peacekeeping mission, structured and composed to meet the circumstances of the region. The letter to the European Union calls on the EU member states to make possible the deployment of UN monitors or peacekeepers in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. <http://www.paxchristi.net/>

j) The International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Pax Christi International, and the network of peace churches “Church and Peace” organized an ecumenical delegation of peace pilgrims from five European countries to visit Israeli and Palestinian peace organizations in the Holy Land from 8-13 April. The delegation met with many church and peace organizations in the region, and affirmed that the only foundation for any future peace for either side lies in a two-state solution with secure boundaries, and with Jerusalem being the capital city of both the State of Israel and the new State of Palestine. <http://www.paxchristi.net/>

k) On 5 April, a statement was issued by Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and all Russia and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church on the situation in the Middle East. The statement says that “today the Holy Land has been blasphemously defiled with enmity and stained with blood... we are shocked by the abuse of shrines, the use of buildings and territories which belong to religious organizations for violent struggle”. The statement asks the leadership of the Russian Federation, the United States, the United Nations and the European Union to exert every effort to establish peace in the conflict region. The statement warns that any further escalation of the bloodshed will not only involve destabilization of the situation throughout the Middle East, but also create a real threat of a clash between civilizations in other regions.” <http://www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/ne204052.htm>

l) The Russian Orthodox Church reported that the House for Pilgrims of the Russian Orthodox Church in Bethlehem was occupied by Israeli servicemen on 2 April. Requests by the church for them to leave have been ignored, and there is concern about the wellbeing of four persons who remain in the building. “All this imperils the life and safety of the civilians and jeopardises the church property, which is there to serve the believers who come to the city of the Nativity of Christ as pilgrims.” See <http://www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/ne204033.htm>. Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia sent letters to president Moshe Katsav and prime minister Ariel Sharon of Israel demanding an immediate withdrawal of the troops from the territory, which it owns. His Holiness the Patriarch also sent letters to Russian president V. Putin, US president G. Bush and the UN secretary-general, asking them to promote a solution to this problem. <http://www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/ne204022.htm>

m) Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew met with Christian, Islamic and Islamic leaders in mid-April and signed a joint appeal that stated that encouragement of military operations and terrorism “will transform today's world into a hell and sow the seeds of hatred in future generations”. His All Holiness has directly appealed to world leaders “to exhaust all possible means” to bring an immediate end to the unrest and to bring back peace to the region and its peoples. <http://www.wfn.org/2002/04/mmsg00274.html>

n) In his Easter message on 31 March, Aram I, Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic Church (Cilicia) welcomed the resolution of the Arab League during its last meeting. “Through this

resolution, the Arab world extended the hand of peace to Israel. Israel should withdraw from the occupied Arab lands and recognize the Palestinian state; in other words, they should act with justice. Only then will the road to permanent and lasting peace open. We hope that all the states in the region will act responsibly, avoid terrorism and lead the region to peace through negotiations. The major world powers should help to begin a peace process that will establish total security in the region and mutual trust and cooperation among all of its peoples". (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/behindthenews/i-p-22.html>)

o) The Middle East Council of Churches Youth expressed their solidarity with the Palestinian People on April 25. "We all want peace," They stated. "We all want the violence to end and for all fighters to go home. But what if there is no home as a result of the demolitions, no family because of the killings, and nothing to return to except despair, to a fear that the future only holds more bloodshed, tears, expulsions and inhumanity? Let us together advocate for peace with a kind of redemptive justice that reinstates Palestinian humanity." The statement includes recommendations for world youth communities. <http://www.mecchurches.org/posandpress/news.asp?id=80>

p) The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch has organized a Christian march in solidarity with Palestine. HB Patriarch Ignatius IV of Antioch acknowledged the growing sensitivity and respect of the world for the pain of the Middle East. He asked the participants, "When will it be time to see peace and justice prevailing in the land of peace and justice? When will there be dignity for every house, farm, family, parent, student... for all of those who don't yet see any future other than giving their lives for the sake of the truth?" Metropolitan George Khodr also contributed an article to Raiati (the Mount Lebanon Bishopric weekly) on Palestine. <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-11.html>

q) The General Lay Council of the Coptic Orthodox Church convened an extraordinary session presided by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III to follow the deteriorating situation arising in the Holy Land. The council "calls upon the churches of the world to make any contacts with their powers to awaken the international conscience for the protection of the unarmed oppressed ones, retrieval of peace to the area and lifting the continuing sieges to put an end to violence." <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-13.html>

s) Churches Together in Britain and Ireland's Middle East Forum have written to the British prime minister and to the Israeli ambassador in London. In the letter to the Israeli ambassador, the letter suggests that "the answer is deceptively simple – withdraw. By that course, Israel will put itself into a position to begin to win back relationships which its current policies are so seriously jeopardizing." The letter to the British prime minister expresses the hope that the British government "is open to bringing more than verbal pressure to bear on the Israeli government to change its current, ultimately self-destructive policy and adhere to international law..." <http://www.ctbi.org.uk/news/2002/nrctbi0217.htm>

t) The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, said in a statement on 3 April, "It is the ordinary citizens of both communities who are paying the price of political failure." "We are witnessing an increasingly polarized situation, in which dangerously simplistic diagnoses provoke equally dangerous would-be remedies." He called for an immediate cease-fire and redoubled efforts on the part of the international community to find a lasting peace. <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/articles/29/25/acns2934.html>

u) The Primates of the Anglican Communion, meeting in Canterbury on April 14, issued a statement denouncing "the shelling, suicide bomb attacks, and military incursions as both evil and futile." In urging leaders on both sides to break the spiral of retaliation, the statement urges the Israeli government in particular to "cease activities in the occupied territories that threaten the lives of so many innocent civilians and put the human rights of so many communities at risk". <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/ens/2002-093.html>
The Anglican Archbishops' Council affirmed the primates' statement, emphasized the humanitarian needs, and called for a "clear condemnation of suicide bombing, as morally

unacceptable, from leaders of all faiths in the Middle East".

<http://www.wfn.org/2002/04/msg00328.html>.

v) The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales issued a "statement on the desperate situation in the Holy Land on 11 April. "While public authorities have the right and duty to defend their people... nevertheless, the invasions of the Israeli forces into the Palestinian towns go far beyond the limits of self-defence." The statement calls for implementation of two recent resolutions of the UN Security Council, and commends the courageous witness of the international peace observers. A report of the statement can be found at <http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/CN/02/020412.htm>

w) The Church of Scotland Overseas Board & Committee on Church and Nation expressed outrage at the events in Israel and Palestine and called for an immediate cessation of all hostilities in a statement on 3 April. The statement "condemns all violence and calls for an immediate cessation of all hostilities and an early end to the illegal occupation of Palestine... The terrible tragedy of violence must cease. To be silent is to be complicit with the violence." <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-16.html>

x) Aprodev, the Association of World Council of Churches-related Development Organizations in Europe, and CIDSE, Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité, wrote to European Union officials on 12 April. The letter notes that "as European citizens, we are deeply aware of Europe's responsibility in the present crisis", and urges the EU to use all lawful and peaceful means at their disposal to promote peace. The letter further calls for the immediate suspension of the "European Community-Israel Association Agreement" in line with the European Parliament Resolution on the Middle East adopted on 10 April 2002. <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-5.html>

y) Christian organizations in France called for international intervention in the Middle East in a statement issued on 5 April. "We cannot be quiet, given the state of war in the Middle East, and we unite our voices for a return to negotiations in the framework of a just and durable peace," they said. The statement calls on the international community to intervene with Israeli leadership for the withdrawal of the army from all Palestinian territories, to lift the blockade on these territories, to ensure access by humanitarian personnel, and to commit themselves to bring an end to the occupation and colonization of the Palestinian territories in accord with UN resolutions. Organizations signing the statement included Justice et Paix, CIMADE, Commissaire de Terre Sainte, Acat France, Comité catholique contre la faim et pour le développement, Pax Christi France, Secours Catholique/Caritas France. (http://www.secours-catholique.asso.fr/urgences/28_02_2002/palestine.htm)

z) Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens and All Greece has written to the ambassador of Israel beseeching his government "to act with restraint in order to conserve the moral capital that has accrued as a result of the suffering of your people in the recent past". The letter says that the church is particularly troubled by reports that Israeli forces are threatening to violate the sacred space of the Church of the Nativity. <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-17.html>

aa) The Regional Coordination Office of Southern African Churches in Ministry with Uprooted People wrote to the general secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches in April, supporting the statement issued by the patriarchs and heads of churches and Christian communities in Jerusalem. The letter further asks AACC to express its solidarity with churches in the Middle East, to organize throughout Africa a day of prayer for Middle East peace and reconciliation, to appeal to Israel to comply fully with the demands of the UN Security Council, and to accompany American churches as they seek to hold their government accountable and lobby for genuine peace and reconciliation in the Middle East. <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-7.html>

bb) The National Christian Council in Japan wrote to the Israeli Embassy in Japan on 29 March, expressing their sadness at the casualties of both Israelis and Palestinians as a result of the continuous violent conflicts between Palestine and Israel in the past two years. The letter says that "We deeply regret that 'Christian nations' have persecuted Jewish people for many years. We especially repent that many Christians were merely onlookers during the cruel atrocities committed under the Nazi regime. However, it will lead to a similar Nazi genocide policy if the Israeli government continues to invade the Palestinian ruled territory and take the land and water away, destroy homes and build settlements which threaten Palestinian livelihood, and kill Palestinians." The NCCJ also organized a rally to "Stop Killing, End the Occupation" in support of Palestine and peace/social justice from 20-21 April.
<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-12.html>

cc) The Anglican Cathedral and Christian World Service of Aotearoa/New Zealand organized an all-day prayer vigil for Palestine-Israel on 19 April in Christchurch. Participants in the vigil signed a petition, "A Call for Peace" which was handed to the Member of Parliament for Christchurch. <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-19.html>

dd) The Servicio para la paz y justicia of Latin America issued a statement condemning the massacre of Palestinians, and called for an Active Movement of Non-Violence to be initiated to work toward an authentic peace in the Middle East, respecting the resolutions of the UN, the withdrawal of the Israeli Army from Palestinian territory, the withdrawal of the Israelis from the settlements, and respect and freedom of movement for Palestinian Authorities.
<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-9.html>

ee) On 16 April, the General Assembly of the National Council of Catholic Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) adopted a statement "In favour of peace in the Middle East". The statement says that the construction of peace can be a slow and costly process, but constitutes the only way to follow... A people without a country cannot live in peace, for which reason it is imperative to recognize the right of the Palestinian people to their own territory." The statement goes on to call on leaders world-wide and on the United Nations to take the necessary steps to bring about a just and lasting peace in the region. <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-8.html>

ff) The primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, the Most Rev. Michael Peers, on 8 April issued a message on Israel and Palestine to Canadian Anglicans, inviting members to take seriously the biblical call to peace with justice. He provides a brief background to the conflict and the advocacy efforts of the Anglican Church of Canada on this issue; those efforts have the recurring theme of a call to prayer and "a renewed sense of partnership with those who are put at risk by the violence or oppression of others". He recounts that, in a letter to a national paper, he wrote, "The current violence in Palestine has deep roots, but Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory in defiance of United Nations resolutions is at its heart... Our church and our tradition abhor violence. But peace without justice is as much a tragic illusion now as it was in the time of the prophet Jeremiah: 'They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying Peace, Peace, when there is no peace.'"
http://www.anglican.ca/news/column/muse.html?museItem=2002-04-05_mp.muse

gg) The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA sent a delegation of 14 US church leaders to the Holy Land from 16-27 April to offer pastoral support for Christians in the region and to support efforts for a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The delegation, composed of Protestant, Orthodox and Anglican church leaders, visited Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Israel/Palestine, and was hosted by the Middle East Council of Churches and Jerusalem church leaders. The delegation's statement, issued on April 30, notes the findings of the delegation and the critical components of a just resolution of the conflict, including: an end to the cycle of violence; affirmation by all of the right of the State of Israel to exist within secure borders; the establishment of an international peacekeeping force; end of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza; cessation of the building of new Israeli settlements and of the expansion of existing settlements; addressing

the disposition of settlements that negate the geographic integrity of a viable Palestinian state; the sharing of Jerusalem by the two peoples and three faiths; the commitment by Israel to address the issue of the right of return for Palestinian refugees. <http://www.nccusa.org/>

hh) The Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), an interfaith pacifist organization in the United States, organized an Interfaith Peace-Builders Delegation to Palestine and Israel April 12-26 (<http://www.forusa.org/Programs/IPB/IPBDelegation0402.html>). The 16-member delegation travelled to the region for the purpose of analysing US foreign policy in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, expressing solidarity with organizations on both sides working for a non-violent end to the Israeli occupation, and upon return, educating the US public and influencing US foreign policy. The programme is co-sponsored by the Muslim Peace Fellowship and the Jewish Peace Fellowship. A similar delegation is being planned for June 28 to July 12, 2002.

ii) The World Association for Christian Communication and the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA organised a conference on “Megaphones and Muffled Voices: What Constitutes Full and Fair Media Coverage of Israeli-Palestinian Issues?” in New York from 17-18 April. The conference included panels on topics such as voices from the scene, developing a code of fair practices, analysis of media coverage, and towards fair coverage. <http://www.wfn.org/2002/04/msg00343.html>

jj) The faculty of the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (Massachusetts, USA) issued a statement on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on 16 April. The statement notes that “History has shown that, left mostly to themselves, the people of this war-torn and suffering land have been unable to stem the waves of hatred and vengeance that engulf periodic hopes of peace. Therefore, we earnestly call upon the international community, as well as upon all countries in the region, to act immediately to end the chaos of violence and then to address with unflinching determination the core issues of grievances and conflict.” <http://www.hhc.edu/Bottom/newsframeset.htm>

kk) The Wisconsin Council of Churches (USA) adopted a statement on non-violence which was sent to President Bush. The letter urged him to do all in his power to end violence on all sides of the Israeli-Palestine conflict, and states that the deployment of an international peacekeeping team under the auspices of the United Nations is an important and necessary first step in ending the violence and moving toward a just peace. <http://www.wichurches.org/board/statements/index.html>

ll) A group of non-governmental organizations and churches (including inter alia the Quaker UN Office, Mennonite Central Committee, United Methodist Office for the United Nations, Church World Service, Presbyterian Church SA, Loretto Community, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Anglican Consultative Committee, Mercy International Association/Sisters of Mercy, and United Church of Christ) wrote to the president of the UN Security Council noting that for almost 35 years the Security Council has been unable to take forceful and effective action to end Israeli occupation and to end the illegal building of settlements. The letter welcomes efforts by the secretary general to promote a ceasefire and to explore immediate steps towards a resolution. The letter concludes by saying: “But time is short! The Council knows how to act forcefully and effectively and to make its will felt in other circumstances. When will the Council act – in the interest of Israelis, Palestinians, and the whole international community – to enforce an end to the occupation, as its own resolutions require?” (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-21.html>)

mm) The Churches for Middle East Peace, a Washington-based coalition of 16 Protestant denominations, Catholics and ecumenical organizations, wrote to members of the US congress on 18 April, asking them to “cease any legislative initiatives designed to punish the Palestinian people or limit their representatives to conduct much-needed diplomatic efforts and negotiations toward implementing a cease-fire and negotiating a peaceful solution.” This was in response to introduced legislation that would require the US president to impose

sanctions against the PLO and the Palestinian Authority. CMEP is also collecting signatures for "A Christian Call for Peace". <http://www.cnep.org/>

nn) On 1 April, the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church USA, Frank T. Griswold, issued an urgent plea for peace in the Middle East. "Clearly the two parties in this tragic conflict no longer have the means or the will to control events," he said. "I implore the United Nations, supported fully by the United States, to send a peacekeeping force into occupied Palestinian areas for the purpose of ensuring an immediate cease-fire."

<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/ens/2002-083.html>

oo) The United Church of Christ and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), sent a joint letter to US President Bush on 1 April which calls for the "intervention of the community of nations to help arrive at a long-term resolution that is fair and just. An essential component of a just solution is the end of the occupation, rightly affirmed in the recent UN Security Council resolutions. The United States is in a unique position to play the central role to this end, and we believe that it must do so, and must not wait."

<http://www.wfn.org/2002/04/msg00058.html>

pp) A joint pastoral letter from the Boards of Directors of the Covenanted Ministries of the United Church of Christ to members and congregations to consider the "way of peace" in responding to a number of global conflict areas: the response to September 11, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Holy Land. The letter addresses the right of Israel to secure borders and the rights of the Palestinian people to sovereignty and self-determination. The statement also cautions that "criticism of the policies of the government of Israel should not give excuse for the latent - and sometimes overt - anti-Semitism that has been such a scourge in the past."

<http://www.ucc.org/board02.htm>

qq) The presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Rev. Mark S. Hanson, wrote to US President Bush on 2 April, urging the US to "do everything within its power to bring about a cease-fire in the Middle East between Israelis and Palestinians and then work for sustained peace with justice there." He also forwarded the appeal from all eleven patriarchs and heads of the Christian churches in Jerusalem, urging the US to help stop the violence. <http://listserv.elca.org/cgi-bin/wa.exe?A2=ind0204&L=elcanews&D=1&H=1&O=D&F=&S=&P=299>

rr) The president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement on the Middle East on 4 April which calls for an immediate cease-fire and return to the "arduous task of negotiating a just peace, without delay or pre-conditions. Only negotiation can lead to an end to violence and occupation, a secure state for Israel and a viable state for Palestinians." The statement also calls on the "US government to use every means to persuade leaders on both sides to turn away from actions which permit, incite or employ violence and to return to the search for peace based on mutual respect and equal justice for Palestinians and Israelis."

<http://www.nccbuscc.org/comm/archives/2002/02-058.htm>

ss) The stated clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church USA Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, issued a statement on the crisis in the Middle East on 5 April. "Since 1967, our church has called for the recognition of Israel's right to exist as a sovereign state within secure borders, the right of the Palestinian people to self determination, including the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state, and the right of both peoples to live in peace as neighbours." The statement goes on to "urge the United States, which is recognized as a potentially key partner, to exert its positive influence to end the occupation."

<http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/oldnews/2002/02137.htm>

tt) The General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church, issued a statement on 18 March, noting that the church has "called for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions #242, #338, #194, #267, #465 and #681 as first steps in settling the issues of borders and security, Jerusalem, refugees' right of return and

compensation, Israeli settlements, water resources, and release of political prisoners and detainees.” The statement also calls for the creation of an independent Palestinian state as soon as possible, calls on the United Nations to send an international peacekeeping force and calls upon all entities that serve as mediators in this conflict to seek the recognition and implementation of international human rights and humanitarian laws. <http://www.umbc-gbcs.org/gbpr130.htm>

uu) American Friends Service Committee expressed its grave concern at the deepening crisis in the Middle East on 4 April and called for a) Israel to fully withdraw; b) Israelis and Palestinians to stop all killings, c) the US government to support an end to occupation and the placement of a UN international peacekeeping force and d) a framework to monitor negotiations based on all relevant UN resolutions, human rights principles, and international law. <http://www.afsc.org/ispal/>

5. Inter-religious statements and responses from other faith communities

- a) The International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ), an umbrella of 36 organizations world-wide engaged in dialogue between Christians and Jews and increasingly with Muslims, issued a statement on April 25 renewing its appeal to political and religious leadership in the region and elsewhere to bring an end to the violence in the Middle East and "find a just solution to restore civil life to the people in Israel and Palestine". Included in the appeal, the ICCJ called upon:
- the government of Israel to end all military activity in the occupied territories
 - the Palestinian leadership and all responsible people among the Palestinians to combat and end terrorism and its infrastructure
 - both sides to cooperate with a UN Jenin commission
 - all people of good will to counteract the growing re-emergence of anti-semitism
 - all Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities to support increasingly necessary efforts for encounters and mutual understanding among the three religions.
- The statement calls for an end to "the damaging abuse of religion to legitimise hatred and violence" and calls upon religions to "lead the way towards peace and justice".
<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-15.html>
- b) The Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel made an Emergency Appeal to Religious and Political Leaders on April 4 to end the violence on both sides and return to the path of peace through dialogue and negotiations, ending mutual blame and abide by agreements already reached. <http://www.icci.co.il/>
- c) Support is growing among US religious leaders for a declaration signed in January by leaders of the three Abrahamic faiths that calls for a "religiously sanctioned cease-fire" in Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The First Alexandria Declaration of the Religious Leaders of the Holy Land (<http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH013u0>) was originally issued in Alexandria, Egypt, on January 21. In addition to a cease-fire "respected and observed on all sides", it also calls for "the implementation of the Mitchell and Tenet recommendations, including the lifting of restrictions and return to negotiations" on the part of Israelis and Palestinians. Signers of the Alexandria Declaration include the Sephardi chief rabbi in Israel, a representative of Israel's Chief Rabbinical Council, the deputy foreign minister of Israel, the sheik who heads the Palestine Authority's religious courts, the sheik who leads the world's supreme Sunni Muslim institution, the Orthodox, Armenian, and Latin (Roman Catholic) patriarchs, and the Anglican bishop in Jerusalem. <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/ens/2002-078.html>
- d) Rabbi Michael Lerner has proposed to the Tikkun Community a Strategy for Ending the Occupation: Spring 2002 (http://www.tikkun.org/community/index.cfm/action/current_projects/article/3.html). The central goals in the strategy include:

1. ending the oppression of the Palestinian people
 2. providing greater security and less likelihood of terror for Israel
 3. re-crediting Judaism and the Jewish tradition in the eyes of Jews who wrongly identify Israel's policies with Judaism
 4. protecting the Jewish people from the growing global anger and anti-Semitism that are being fanned by Israel's treatment of Palestinians
 5. re-crediting the global hopes for a world of peace and justice which are undermined by views that see this particular struggle as an example of the intractable nature of antagonisms and thus the futility in trying to heal or change the world.
- Tikkun (a Hebrew word which means "to transform, heal and repair") is a community for affiliated and non-affiliated Jews and others who share the community's core vision of how "to create a world based not only on economic justice, peace and human rights, but also on love, caring, ecological sensitivity and an ability to respond to the world with awe and wonder".
- e) An inter-religious call for US actions to help make peace in the Middle East has been drafted in close consultation among several Jewish and Christian leaders and is being sent out with their endorsement to others in their communities. "In the Name of God, Seek Peace and Pursue It" calls for the creation of an international force to protect both sides from violence, and for a regional peace conference to take up the Saudi proposals for regional peace. It states that the US should "secure an agreement on the emergence of a viable Palestine and a secure Israel". Organizers of the statement wish to publish it in a leading American newspaper. <http://www.shalomctr.org/html/peace90.html>
- f) The Shalom Center, a network of American Jews who draw on Jewish tradition and spirituality to seek peace, pursue justice, heal the earth, and build community, have published five articles on Judaism and non-violence, including essays by Buber, Heshel, and Rabbi Samuel Aaron Tamaret. <http://www.shalomctr.org/html/peace.html>
- g) Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Australians, including the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils and the National Council of Churches in Australia, issued a joint call for "A Time for Peace" on 11 April to reaffirm their shared commitment to peace and respect for human dignity, and condemning any form of violence arising in Australia on account of the conflict in the Middle East, including expressions of racism, and acts of vandalism on places of worship. <http://www.ncca.org.au/mediarelease/20020411-ncca-timeforpeace.asp>

6. Summaries of inter-governmental response

a) United Nations: The UN Security Council passed three resolutions on the conflict over the last month, namely SCR 1402 (30/3), 1403 (4/4) and 1405 (19/4). The most substantive is SCR 1402 which calls on both parties to move immediately to a cease-fire and for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian cities. Resolutions 1403 and 1405 welcome, in addition, the mission to the region by the US secretary of state and the UN general secretary's initiative to establish a fact-finding mission on the Jenin refugee camp. SCR 1405 also calls for immediate access to be given to humanitarian and medical organizations to reach the Palestinian civilian population.

The fact-finding mission on Jenin, headed by the former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari, had been scheduled to visit the region at the end of the month. However, Israeli reservations on its composition and mandate, and a decision by the Israeli cabinet of non-cooperation have meant that it has been put on hold. In addition to initiating the Jenin mission, the UN secretary general has further elaborated on the idea of establishing a multinational force for the Middle East for consideration by the Security Council.

Middle East updates on the work of the Security Council and the Secretary General:
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocusRel.asp?infocusID=22&Body=Middle&Body1=East>

United Nations Security Council resolutions:

1397 of 12 March: <http://www.un.org/Docs/scres/2002/res1397e.pdf>

1402 of 30 March: <http://www.un.org/Docs/scres/2002/res1402e.pdf>

1402 of 4 April: <http://www.un.org/Docs/scres/2002/res1403e.pdf>

United Nations General Assembly resolution 181 of 1947:

<http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/62c13fb98d54fe240525672700581383/6232f2ac638dc241852560e5005c1f2b!OpenDocument>

b) In Geneva the 58th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights has passed four resolutions relating to Israel/Palestine, namely on the right for a sovereign and independent Palestinian state, on Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and on grave human rights violations by Israel. The Commission also took a decision to send high commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson to the region with the purpose of reporting back to the session on the human rights situation. However, due to Israeli objections on grounds of safety and timing, the mission never materialized.

<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/2/58chr/58main.htm>

World Council of Churches at the 58th Session:

<http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/chr2002-index-e.html>

Text of intervention: <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/press/02/07pu.html>

c) European Union: On April 10 the European Union (together with the UN, US and Russia) issued a statement calling for an immediate halt to Israeli operations and a withdrawal from the Palestinian territories. It also called on President Arafat to make the maximum possible effort to stop terror attacks against Israelis. On April 15, the EU foreign ministers meeting in Luxemburg supported the US peace mission, but did not back the earlier call by the European Parliament for suspending the EU-Israeli Association agreement. At the EuroMediterranean meeting in Valencia on April 23, the EU expressed support for the continuity of PNA as a 'germ' of a Palestinian state, reiterated Israel's obligation to comply with international law, and emphasized that any dialogue between the two sides is now very important. In addition the EU high representative for foreign affairs travelled to the region and held talks with President Arafat and Israeli officials on April 24.

April 12 letter from WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser to the European Union <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/press/02/10pu.html>

Spanish presidency - till June 2002

<http://www.ue2002.es/principal.asp?idioma=ingles>

EU high representative for foreign affairs

<http://ue.eu.int/pesc/home.asp?lang=en>

Joint statement by the EU, the USA, Russia and the UN on the Middle East (10 April 2002) :

<http://ue.eu.int/pressdata/EN/declarations/70137.pdf>

EU statement to the current session of the UN Commission on Human Rights:

<http://www.unhchr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/NewsRoom?OpenFrameSet>

European Parliament resolution on 10 April:

http://www.europarl.eu.int/home/default_en.htm

d) Arab League: In a unanimous declaration at its Beirut Summit, the Arab League stated on 28 March that peace must be just and comprehensive and based on the 'land for peace'

principle. Based on the proposal by the Saudi Crown Prince Abdallah, they propose the withdrawal of Israel to the June 1967 borders, a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem and the establishment of a Palestinian state on the territory occupied since 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital, in return for considering the conflict over, signing peace agreements with Israel and normalising relations.

7. Humanitarian Relief and related issues: Summaries and Links

The ongoing violence in Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is causing widespread suffering and is disrupting life in many communities. Aid agencies are responding to this situation and try to deliver relief goods to the affected people. The summaries and links below highlight the humanitarian situation and the humanitarian needs in the conflict area.

- a) The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) reports that it has airlifted nearly 40 tons of high-energy biscuits for displaced Palestinians caught up in the fighting in the West Bank. The planeload of biscuits arrived in Tel-Aviv from Italy. The biscuits will be distributed immediately to displaced people as well as to institutions that have been completely cut off and are without cooking facilities.

“The situation is particularly worrying for those Palestinians who have escaped from the fighting. They have had to leave their destroyed homes to take refuge in churches, mosques and other public buildings where they cannot cook. As a temporary measure, we will distribute high-energy biscuits until the situation improves and they can get a hot meal,” said Khaled Adly, director of WFP's Cairo regional bureau.

For more on the story, click on <http://www.wfp.org/index.asp?section=2>. This link takes you to the UN's World Food Programme Newsroom webpage. Click on the link for Latest Press Releases.

- b) As humanitarian needs grow in the Middle East, humanitarian convoys are gaining access to the beleaguered occupied areas of Palestine with difficulty. Read the full story at: <http://www.disasternews.net/news/news.php?articleid=1422> on Disaster News Network (DNN) - a web news service that tells the story of disaster response and suggests appropriate ways the public can help survivors. It also facilitates information-sharing among disaster responders. The not-for-profit organization was founded in early 1996 to create content for social justice-related websites.
- c) Action by Churches Together (ACT) International (www.act-intl.org) has for many years been involved in humanitarian assistance in the Palestinian Territories. In August 2001, the general secretary of World Council of Churches (WCC), Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser, said that ACT should remain the focal point for humanitarian assistance in this region. For more, click on http://act-intl.org/news/dt_nr_2001/nrpt0101.html

In the last month, ACT members have been actively involved in providing such humanitarian relief. On several occasions, the world-wide alliance of churches and related agencies has been part of humanitarian relief convoys to the West Bank. The executive secretary of International Christian Community (ICC), Ramzi Zananiri, writes that for him, the result of the shelling of the buildings in the West Bank town of Ramallah was not the only sign of destruction. Another sign was the expression on the face of a young girl hiding behind a pole, as the convoy drove past. "It felt terrible to see so lively a city now totally empty - turned into a war zone. It has become a ghost town," he writes. For more on this story, go to: http://act-intl.org/news/dt_nr_2002/upm_e0202.html

Earlier in April, ACT members met in Beirut, Lebanon, to discuss the crisis in the Middle East. For more on the meeting and the despair people feel at having been forced to live as refugees for more than half-a-century, click on <http://act->

intl.org/news/dt_nr_2002/dtpt0202.html or http://act-intl.org/news/dt_nr_2002/dtpt0102.html

- d) Dominic Nutt, a Christian Aid emergencies journalist, gives a first-person account of working in Bethlehem. He writes: "We walked into Bethlehem wide-eyed and anxious, like new-born deer making our first steps away from our mothers. I was accompanied by a gaggle of Danish journalists and an American human rights worker called Eve. With us was a Palestinian guide, Michele, a calm 32-year-old woman fluent in English, French and Hebrew.

It was 10.30am and the streets were deserted and quiet, apart from the occasional rattle of gunfire and a few distant explosions coming from the town centre. The curfew was due to be lifted for a few hours in half an hour, something that happens every three days under Israeli control..." For more on this story, click on <http://www.christian-aid.org/news/features/0204isrp3.htm>

Christian Aid, an agency of the churches in the UK and Ireland that works wherever the need is greatest, irrespective of religion, regularly updates its work in the Palestinian Territories at: http://www.christian-aid.org/middle_east/index.htm. The agency has also issued a statement - a call for action on the Occupied Palestinian Territories - for the immediate suspension of EU Association Agreement with Israel unless basic human rights are restored in Palestinian territories.

- e) For an overview of Lutheran World Relief's response to the crisis in the Middle East, click on <http://www.lwr.org/emergencies/02/mideast.html>
- f) ReliefWeb, a project of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), offers an overview of all humanitarian agencies' work in the Palestinian Territories:
<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/vLCE/Occupied+Palestinian+Territory?OpenDocument&StartKey=Occupied+Palestinian+Territory&Expandview>
- g) Alertnet provides global news, communications and logistics services to the international disaster relief community and the public. Reuters 150 years' experience reporting from disaster zones around the world allows AlertNet to give disaster relief organizations reliable information, fast. Anyone can access the public pages, which carry a live newsfeed from Reuters, together with articles describing how relief agencies are responding to the latest humanitarian crises. For more on the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East and emergencies elsewhere, click on: <http://www.alertnet.org/>
- h) For more on the conflict in the Middle East and issues of human rights from the perspective of Human Rights Watch, click on: <http://www.hrw.org/mideast/is-ot-pa.php>
- i) The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) provides education, health, and relief and social services to 3.9 million registered Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. UNRWA continued its emergency operations despite closures, obstacles to movement and a rapidly deteriorating security situation. For more information on their activities, visit the UNRWA website at: <http://www.un.org/unrwa/> for the overview. In the news section is an overview of the latest UNRWA operations concerning the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian Territories, for example, news about an UN convoy with humanitarian aid that was prevented by the Israeli military authorities from leaving Nablus: <http://www.un.org/unrwa/news/index.html#latest>
- j) On 17 April, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) asked the Israeli authorities to grant foreign rescue teams immediate access to the Jenin refugee camp so that they could help clear the rubble there. ICRC and Palestine Red Crescent Society

(PRCS) staff have been working in the camp since 15 April, after being kept on standby for six days in the town of Jenin. Part of the camp looks as if it has been struck by an earthquake. More on what ICRC is doing under: <http://www.icrc.org/eng>

- k) Lutheran World Federation (LWF), member of Action by Churches Together (ACT) International, presents documentation on the Israel-Palestine Situation on its website at: http://www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/OIahr/OIAHR-Documentation_Israel-Palestine.html. LWF also runs the Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem, which provides much-needed medical assistance to Palestinians.

7. Resources and links for information and action

a) The history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is long and complex. The telling of history is also very politically charged, and even the most seemingly objective source has its own perspective. Those wishing to learn more of the background to the conflict need to look at a variety of sources. The following provides a start:

BBC News:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/in_depth/middle_east/2001/israel_and_the_palestinians/

The United Nations web page on the question of Palestine:

<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/qpalnew/overview.htm>

The Middle East Research and Information Center provides a primer on Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict in pdf format at

<http://www.pcusa.org/pcusa/wmd/ep/resources/mideast/conflict/2-MERIP.pdf>

b) For news on daily developments, we need to move beyond national or regional news networks for a wider perspective, looking particularly at local sources. Such sources include:

Alternative Information Center: The AIC is a Palestinian-Israeli organization which disseminates information, research and political analysis on Palestinian and Israeli society, as well as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while promoting cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis, based on the values of social justice, solidarity and community involvement.

<http://www.alternativenews.org>

The Palestine Monitor was set up by the Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO) to be an information clearinghouse. <http://www.palestinemonitor.org>

Ha'aretz Daily Newspaper is based in Tel Aviv: <http://www.haaretzdaily.com>

Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information, founded in Jerusalem in 1988, is the only joint Palestinian-Israeli public policy think-tank in the world. It is devoted to developing practical solutions for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

<http://www.ipcri.org/index1.html>

c) For background information, facts, maps and research documentation on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, see the following sites:

PASSIA: Palestinian Academic Society for Study of International Affairs

<http://www.passia.org/>

The Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem

<http://www.arij.org/>

Al-Awda, The Palestine Right to Return Coalition

<http://www.al-awda.org>

Al-Awda Christian Outreach is an activist list to reach the Christian Community in support of Palestinian human rights, especially the rights of refugees. To join, individuals can send a blank message to Al-Awda-Christian-Outreach-subscribe@yahoo.com

e) The Christian Peacemaker Teams, a project of the Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Church Canada, Church of the Brethren, Friends United Meeting and other Christians, have had a presence in Hebron since 1995, and continue to issue daily journals of eyewitness reports, interpretive articles, prayer and worship resources, and photos.

<http://www.prairienet.org/cpt/>

CPT also organizes the "Campaign for Secure Dwellings"

(<http://www.prairienet.org/cpt/campaign.php>) - an effort to link churches and congregations with the realities of specific neighbourhoods or villages in the Occupied Palestinian territories that face home demolition, land confiscation or other threats to the security of families.

f) United Civilians for Peace reports from the second delegation of Dutch monitors in the Occupied Territories can be found at <http://www.unitedcivilians.com/> and in English at <http://www.unitedcivilians.com/Reports%20in%20English.htm>

g) Since the beginning of March, Christian accompaniers seconded by DanchurchAid and Icelandic Church Aid have been in Israel-Palestine under the Danish/Icelandic Christian Accompaniment Programme. The programme is a pilot project for the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). The eight accompaniers have been regularly writing reports on what they experience and observe in the Occupied Territories, particularly the recent Israeli military incursions and human rights violations. They have also been escorting LWF Augusta Victoria ambulances and health workers through checkpoints, as well as humanitarian convoys to the occupied territories, most recently the Joint Humanitarian Relief of the Christian Organizations convoy to Jenin on April 25. Contact email: rudolf_h@netvision.net.il

h) The Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement between People - Beit Sahour is part of the International Solidarity Movement and organizes non-violent actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. <http://www.rapprochement.org/>

i) Wi'am - Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center based in Bethlehem has worked on traditional conflict resolution practices to resolve community differences. <http://www.planet.edu/~alashlah/>

j) The Other Israel is a bimonthly publication that aims to provide extensive coverage of the diverse struggles waged by the Israeli peace movement at large. It also contains commentaries on events in Israel and the Middle East from a perspective in which the interests of Israelis and Palestinians are ultimately reconcilable. http://members.tripod.com/~other_Israel/

k) A number of US churches and church-connected organizations have formed the Church World Service and Witness Middle East Forum which provides a weekly e-mail newsletter to update on developments related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the churches' efforts for peace. The newsletter provides information about upcoming meetings and events, new resources, the prayer vigil for peace in the Middle East, the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), media strategies and advocacy initiatives of Churches for Middle East Peace. To receive the newsletter, complete the form at www.loga.org/mideastforum/signup.htm.

l) Network for Alternative Travel regularly provides a listing of alternative tours, resources, and action items related to the Holy Land. See www.HolyLandAlternatives.net or contact BJBailey1@aol.com

- m) A Style Sheet on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict (an alphabetized listing of terms and their meanings) is available at www.ameu.org. Sign on, press "archives" and then "current issue".
- n) Human Rights Watch (HRW), a non-governmental organization dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world, offers the opportunity, no matter where one lives or who one is, to take action to try and improve the human rights situation during the current violence in Israel, the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Palestinian Authority Territories. "What you can do" at: <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/israel/action.htm> offers links to an "Activists Tools" page as well as media and government information.
- o) Instead of standing by and doing nothing, the mass media should intervene to prevent crimes against humanity. In an article entitled: "Communication may not build peace but it can certainly contribute to war," Cees J. Hamelink argues the case for an international media alert system to monitor media content in areas of conflict. For more, go to on the World Association for Christian Communication's website at: http://www.wacc.org.uk/publications/md/md2002-2/hamelink_war.html
- p) Week of Compassion presents stories and updates. This is the way to find out how the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and its partners and ecumenical ministries are responding to emergencies as well as ongoing development needs: <http://www.weekofcompassion.org/>
- q) An ecumenical prayer vigil has been organized for prayer and solidarity with the Christian communities in Jerusalem, for all those who are suffering in the Holy Land, for Palestinians and Israelis, and for peace in the Middle East and the world. Prayers (updated each week) and other worship resources are available at <http://www.loga.org/PrayerVigilHome.htm>, and churches and other organizations are encouraged to sign on to this effort.
- r) A "Grassroots Organizer's Packet" of resources for worship, study, and action is available from Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP - on the web at www.cmep.org).
- s) Pax Christi USA has assembled suggestions for action by lay people concerning the Israeli-Palestinian crisis at http://www.paxchristiusa.org/news_events_more.asp?id=211.
- t) "What has been happening to Bethlehem University?" is a story from a Franciscan brother inside the university. Available at <http://www.paxromana.org/eupdates/eupdate3.html>
- u) "Unbelievable Destruction," an editorial by Jim Wallis and resources on peacebuilding are available through Sojourners at http://www.sojo.net/news/index.cfm/action/display_archives/mode/current_opinion/article/C O_041002.html
- v) News statements issued from national and international religious organizations can be found in chronological order through World Faith News. www.wfn.org
- w) Amnesty International invited people to join in International Days of Mourning, April 27-28, to remember all victims of human rights violations in Israel and the Occupied Territories as the secretary general of AI, Irene Khan, visits the region. http://web.amnesty.org/web/web.nsf/pages/iot_home
- x) Tarek Mitri, WCC staff for inter-religious relations and dialogue, has prepared a short text in French on Bethlehem and Palestinian Christians. <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews/i-p-1.html>
- y) The Nation regularly reports on, investigates and analyzes the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It has devoted a special web page to related material on the Middle East. Currently, where you

can find recent relevant Nation articles, links to other groups offering background information and a recommended-reading list. Included is an article by international lawyer Richard Falk, "Ending the Death Dance", which provides a perspective on why Oslo failed and how we arrived at the current situation, in the context of a misuse of the "war on terrorism".
<http://www.thenation.com/special/2002middleeast.mhtml>

8. Worship Resources

a) "Prayers for Peace from the Churches of Jerusalem": In the context of the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace (2001-2010), the World Council of Churches' Executive Committee, meeting in September 2001, called on member churches and ecumenical partners "to focus attention in 2002 on intensive efforts to End the Illegal Occupation of Palestine". In order to launch this campaign, the churches of Jerusalem were invited to share with the ecumenical fellowship their prayers and messages for peace.
<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/resourcepack.html>

b) Sabeel, an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians, has compiled several links and resources for worship, prayers, and sermons at <http://www.sabeel.org/worship.html>.

c) As three religions are most visible among those affected by the current crisis, Pax Christi USA has compiled two worship resources which combine elements from the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian traditions. A "Muslim - Jewish - Christian Prayer for Peace" can be found at http://www.paxchristiusa.org/news_events_more.asp?id=210. A longer "Service of Prayer for Peace in the Middle East", adapted from an interfaith prayer service prepared by the U.S. Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East, is also available at http://www.paxchristiusa.org/news_events_more.asp?id=214 and http://www.paxchristiusa.org/news_events_more.asp?id=215.

d) Responsive readings based on scripture passages from Micah and Galations, along with suggested items for prayer for the current crisis in Israel and Palestine, are provided by Christian Peacemaker Teams at <http://www.prairienet.org/cpt/csdsampleworship.php>. A litany for those on both sides of the conflict is also available at <http://www.prairienet.org/cpt/tent2000.php#worship>. Additional items for prayer and reflection - originally prepared for Lent - are available at http://www.prairienet.org/cpt/lgt_lenthebron.html. A Lenten reflection from Dianne Roe, a United Methodist who serves with the Christian Peacemaker Teams, is also available from the United Methodist Church website at <http://www.umc.org/closeup/palestine/lentenreflection.htm>.

e) Rabbis for Human Rights - an Israeli organization which opposes the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories - offers a supplementary prayer (Al Kheyd) for use during Yom Kippur at <http://jewishpeacefellowship.org/MiddleEast2.htm>. Several scriptural and other resources from the Jewish tradition that support the pursuit of nonviolent peacemaking are listed on <http://www.jewishpeacefellowship.org/index.htm#Tradition>.

f) Christian Aid offers a reflection "Peace on earth?" based on the following to Bible passages:

'And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying.

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!"

Luke 2: 13-14

'Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the father has sent me so I send you.'

John 20: 21 http://www.christian-aid.org/middle_east/0204refl.htm

Two prayers for the Middle East based on Matthew 2:18: 'A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are dead', can be found by clicking on the following link: <http://www.christian-aid.org/worship/archive/0204holl.htm>

h) [CMEP](http://www.cmep.org/Shared%20JER/worship%20resource.pdf) also makes available in a pdf file a liturgy titled "Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem" (<http://www.cmep.org/Shared%20JER/worship%20resource.pdf>) with homily notes, lectionary texts, suggested hymns, and other resources.

i) [Mennonite Central Committee](http://www.mcc.org/middleeastcrisis/prayer.html) offers space on their site for people to submit their prayers for the current crisis in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, and some of the prayers already submitted are displayed at <http://www.mcc.org/middleeastcrisis/prayer.html>.

Behind the news: Visions for Peace – Voices of Faith is a joint initiative of:

World Council of Churches (WCC) - a fellowship of 342 churches, in more than 100 countries in all continents from virtually all Christian traditions. The Roman Catholic Church is not a member church but works cooperatively with the WCC. The highest governing body is the Assembly, which meets approximately every seven years. The WCC was formally inaugurated in 1948 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance - a global action network of 62 churches and church-related organizations who have pledged themselves to change unjust policies and practices related to global trade and HIV/AIDS, and to take up as a special concern work on peace and conflict resolution by forging strategic partnership. Alliance participants come from every corner of the globe and varied traditions within the ecumenical family – Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican, as well as church-related organizations who themselves represent and serve many Christian faith traditions. Alliance participants are committed to speak out with one voice against injustice and structures which deprive human beings of dignity, and for alternative visions based on the Gospel.

Action by Churches Together (ACT) - an international alliance of churches and relief agencies assisting thousands of people recovering from emergencies in more than 50 countries worldwide.

This bulletin/website is intended to provide an ecumenical space for visions for peace and voices of faith; these materials do not necessarily reflect official policy of WCC, ACT, or EAA.

Please circulate the Bulletin to friends, colleagues and people who are looking for alternative perspectives on the current situation.

To subscribe to the bulletin, contact bulletins@wcc-coe.org

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Behind the news: Visions for peace – Voices of faith

Web: <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews>