

# The Common Good

*Taking a Preferential Option for the Poor*

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## Apartheid – Israel’s treatment of Palestinians

Amnesty International Report

Israeli authorities are committing the crime of apartheid against Palestinians, Amnesty International said in a damning new report released 1 February 2024. The investigation details how Israel enforces a system of oppression and domination against the Palestinian people

wherever it has control over their rights. This includes Palestinians living in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), as well as displaced refugees in other countries.

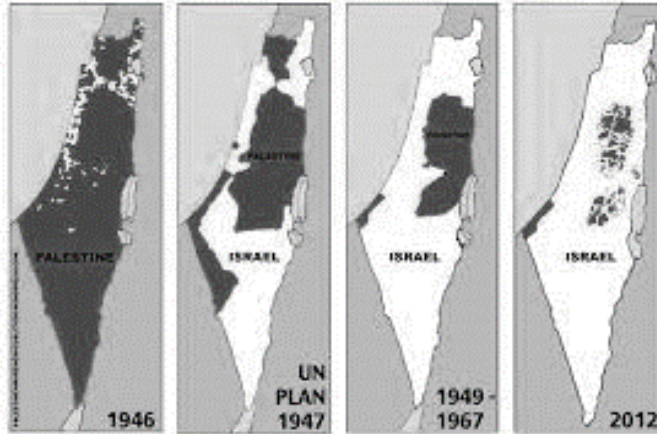
This comprehensive report sets out how massive seizures of Palestinian land and property, unlawful killings, forcible transfer, drastic movement restrictions, and the denial of nationality and citizenship to Palestinians are all components of a system which amounts to apartheid under international law. This system is maintained by violations which Amnesty International found to constitute apartheid as a crime against humanity, as defined in the Rome Statute and Apartheid Convention.

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community has an obligation to act.

Amnesty International’s findings build on a growing body of work by Palestinian, Israeli and international NGOs, who have increasingly applied the apartheid framework to the situation in Israel and/or the OPT.

### Identifying apartheid

A system of apartheid is an institutionalized regime of oppression and domination by one racial group over another. It is a serious human rights violation which is prohibited in public international law. Amnesty International’s extensive research and legal analysis, carried out in consultation with external experts, demonstrates that Israel enforces such a system against Palestinians through laws, policies and practices which ensure their prolonged and cruel discriminatory treatment.

In light of the systematic unlawful killings of Palestinians documented in its report, Amnesty International is also calling for the UN Security Council to impose a comprehensive arms embargo on Israel.

### Palestinians treated as a threat

Since its establishment in 1948, Israel has pursued a policy of establishing and then maintaining a Jewish demographic majority and maximizing control over land and resources to benefit Jewish Israelis. In 1967, Israel extended this policy to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Today, all territories controlled by Israel



continue to be administered with the purpose of benefiting Jewish Israelis to the detriment of Palestinians, while Palestinian refugees continue to be excluded.

Amnesty International recognizes that Jews, like Palestinians, claim a right to self-determination, and does not challenge Israel's desire to be a home for Jews. Similarly, it does not consider that Israel labelling itself a 'Jewish state' in itself indicates an intention to oppress and dominate.

However, Amnesty International's report shows that successive Israeli governments have considered Palestinians a demographic threat, and imposed measures to control and decrease their presence and access to land in Israel and the OPT. These demographic aims are well illustrated by official plans to 'Judaize' areas of Israel and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which continue to put thousands of Palestinians at risk of forcible transfer.

### Who are we?

Members of Te Wairua Maranga Trust, which publishes this paper, have since August 1989 been operating as a community following a Catholic Worker spirituality. We view the Treaty of Waitangi as our nation's founding covenant. We try, however inadequately at times, to live the Sermon on the Mount and its modern implications. We operate three houses of hospitality in Christchurch named after Suzanne Aubert, Joseph Cardijn and Thomas Merton. We offer hospitality to people in need either on a temporary or more permanent basis. We have a continuing outreach to a number of families offering friendship and support. We promote non-violence and a 'small is beautiful' approach to life, practise co-operative work and peace-making, focus on issues of justice, support prison ministry, help create intentional communities, and try to practise voluntary poverty and personalism.

We engage in regular prayer and we also celebrate regular liturgies at the Suzanne Aubert House, 8A Cotterill St, Addington, (off Poulson St, near Church Square), followed by a shared meal. Anyone is welcome – phone Francis, 338-7105.

We do not seek funding from traditional sources. We hope to receive enough to keep our houses of hospitality open and our various works going. Catholic Worker houses do not issue tax receipts since they are running neither a business nor a church social agency. We invite people to participate personally and unconditionally. Should you wish to make a regular contribution, you may do so through our Te Wairua Maranga Westpac Trust holding account (number 031703-0036346-02). Donations may also be made to **Te Wairua Maranga Trust, Box 33-135, Christchurch. The Common Good:** Editor: Jim Consedine, [jim.conse@xtra.co.nz](mailto:jim.conse@xtra.co.nz).

[www.catholicworker.org.nz](http://www.catholicworker.org.nz)

For example, Palestinian citizens of Israel are denied a nationality, establishing a legal differentiation from Jewish Israelis. In the West Bank and Gaza, where Israel has controlled the population registry since 1967, Palestinians have no citizenship and most are considered stateless, requiring ID cards from the Israeli military to live and work in the territories.

Palestinian refugees and their descendants, who were displaced in the 1947-49 and 1967 conflicts, continue to be denied the right to return to their former places of residence. Israel's exclusion of refugees is a flagrant violation of international law which has left millions in a perpetual limbo of forced displacement.

Palestinians in annexed East Jerusalem are granted permanent residence instead of citizenship – though this status is permanent in name only. Since 1967, more than 14,000 Palestinians have had their residency revoked at the discretion of the Ministry of the Interior, resulting in their forcible transfer outside the city.

Palestinian citizens of Israel, who comprise about 19% of the population, face many forms of institutionalized discrimination. In 2018, discrimination against Palestinians was crystallized in a constitutional law which, for the first time, enshrined Israel exclusively as the 'nation state of the Jewish people'. The law also promotes the building of Jewish settlements and downgrades Arabic's status as an official language.

### Dispossession

The dispossession and displacement of Palestinians from their homes is a crucial pillar of Israel's apartheid system. Since its establishment the Israeli state has enforced massive and cruel land seizures against Palestinians and continues to implement myriad laws and policies to force Palestinians into small enclaves. Since 1948, Israel has demolished hundreds of thousands of Palestinian homes and other properties across all areas under its jurisdiction and effective control.

As in the Negev/Naqba, Palestinians in East Jerusalem and Area C of the OPT live under full Israeli control. The authorities deny building permits to Palestinians in these areas, forcing them to build illegal structures which are demolished again and again.

In the OPT, the continued expansion of illegal Israeli settlements exacerbates the situation. The construction of these settlements in the OPT has been a government policy since 1967. Settlements today cover 10% of the land in the West Bank, and some 38% of Palestinian land in East Jerusalem was

expropriated between 1967 and 2017.

Palestinian neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem are frequently targeted by settler organizations which, with the full backing of the Israeli government, work to displace Palestinian families and hand their homes to settlers. One such neighbourhood, Sheikh Jarrah, has been the site of frequent protests since May 2021 as families battle to keep their homes under the threat of a settler lawsuit.

### **Draconian movement restrictions**

Since the mid-1990s Israeli authorities have imposed increasingly stringent movement restrictions on Palestinians in the OPT. A web of military checkpoints, roadblocks, fences and other structures controls the movement of Palestinians within the OPT and restricts their travel into Israel or abroad.

A 700km fence, which Israel is still extending, has isolated Palestinian communities inside 'military zones', and they must obtain multiple special permits any time they enter or leave their homes. In Gaza, more than 2 million Palestinians live under an Israeli blockade which has created a humanitarian crisis. It is near-impossible for Gazans to travel abroad or into the rest of the OPT, and they are effectively segregated from the rest of the world.

For Palestinians, the difficulty of travelling within and in and out of the OPT is a constant reminder of their powerlessness. Their every move is subject to the Israeli military's approval, and the simplest daily task means navigating a web of violent control.

### **The way forward**

Amnesty International provides numerous specific

## **Editorial 1 A poisoning of the soul**

Watching daily TV bulletins on the immoral catastrophic war on Gaza, I am appalled at the callous destruction of life of thousands of Palestinians, including more than 14 000 innocent children. Words cannot express the evil being carried out on a daily basis by Israel, a supposed God-founded nation, with thousands of lives, homes, hospitals, schools and clinics destroyed.

In addition to everything else, we must ask what damage this war is doing to the soul of Israel with thousands of its soldiers, many of them conscripts, committing unthinkable atrocities as part of their deployment. Israel will pay a huge spiritual price for this war. As a nation, their soul is already poisoned by 75 years of racist discrimination against Palestine. It continues to get steadily weaker as a result of this war, despite what their relentless state-controlled propaganda says.

If the US in Vietnam experience is anything to go by, the level of PTSD damage on their soldiers will be hugely damaging, leading to widespread drug addiction, alcoholism, marriage and relationship break-ups and a

recommendations for how the Israeli authorities can dismantle the apartheid system and the discrimination, segregation and oppression which sustain it.

The organization is calling for an end to the brutal practice of home demolitions and forced evictions as a first step. Israel must grant equal rights to all Palestinians in Israel and the OPT, in line with principles of international human rights and humanitarian law. It must recognize the right of Palestinian refugees and their descendants to return to homes where they or their families once lived and provide victims of human rights violations and crimes against humanity with full reparations.

The scale and seriousness of the violations documented in Amnesty International's report call for a drastic change in the international community's approach to the human rights crisis in Israel and the OPT.

All states may exercise universal jurisdiction over persons reasonably suspected of committing the crime of apartheid under international law, and states that are party to the Apartheid Convention have an obligation to do so.

The international response to apartheid must no longer be limited to bland condemnations and equivocating. Unless the root causes are tackled, Palestinians and Israelis will remain locked in the cycle of violence which has destroyed so many lives.

Amnesty International Report - February 1, 2022 – *Israel's Apartheid against Palestinians – A Cruel System of Domination and Crime against Humanity*, Abridged copy

family violence epidemic. These are the domestic fruits of every war! Israel will be no exception.

### **What to do?**

Dorothy Day once wrote from her prison cell, where she was doing time for peace activities, that she was *'lying back on my bunk thinking of war, peace, human rights and the apathy of the great masses of people who believe that nothing can be done. I am more than ever convinced that the pathway of St Therese of Lisieux works. We do the minute things that come to hand, we pray our prayers and beg for an increase of faith – and God will do the rest.'*

This was shorthand Dorothy-speak for what those who care and wish to work for peace and justice can do that will sustain them on the journey in the face of the massive challenges that war, poverty, violence, the arms race, embedded racism and widespread injustice present.

It doesn't mean we need to go it alone. We can join bigger movements for change where we will find supportive friendship and communal motivation. Dorothy

would encourage that. Her special insight was to commit to a just cause but not to get lost in the process as so many do, through burn-out, disillusionment, loss of faith and disappointment. Hence the need for daily prayer and spiritual nourishment as well as action.

There are currently more than 30 wars being fought around the world, some big, some small, all deadly. While the best known are those in Ukraine and in Gaza, where the western media has the most eyes, less known are those in Sudan where more than 7000 have been killed, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Syria, Yemen and Somalia, to mention only six.

### **Maintaining hope**

As these wars continue to rack up more and more victims, killed, maimed, psychologically destroyed, left bereft amidst the rubble of their homes, their communities destroyed, we can all do something however small to help create a more peaceful future.

Desmond Tutu, Dr King, Dan Berrigan and John Dear

all teach that hope is universal love in action through the practice of daring, creative nonviolent action. We need to know that despite the odds, our Christian faith teaches us that our struggles for justice, however small, add a positive note to the eternal symphony of the coming reign of God. As Leonard Cohen sings so poetically, a little crack lets the light come in!

Besides educating our neighbours, lobbying authorities, holding vigils at strategic places, marching with others, resisting in whatever non-violent ways possible, donating to relief funds, we also need to be mindful of our own inner spirits. These need to be constantly nourished and nurtured. Church and parish communities could be more pro-active in this.

We must never allow war to become an accepted part of the mainstream narrative of life. War is an abomination and always will be. Never acceptable. Never routine. Never normal.

Never the way of the non-violent Jesus.

—Jim Consedine

## **Editorial 2 Hope, inspiration, and support**

That our planet earth is in crisis is something science has been telling us for decades. Several decisive UN reports attesting to the crisis have been published since the 1990s and have challenged everyone to change their way of living and consuming in order to avoid a catastrophe in this century. Only the woefully ignorant and those with vested interests are refusing to notice. The heating climate, raging fires, increasing floods, elimination of natural species, warming oceans and expanding deserts are sending us messages every day.

My brother Robert Consedine died in September 2022 and his dying message over several months was to maintain hope in the midst of the planetary and Church crises of which he was very conscious. It is a message that makes sense to people of faith including Christians who believe that life is a gift from God and to be cherished at all times. We have to accept the threatening science which is scary yet maintain Christian hope that all is not going to turn bad for the world as we know it.

Pope Francis has been appealing through his talks and writings for 10 years for people to take action on the environment and protect our common home. On 4th October 2023, the feast of St Francis of Assisi, he published *Laudate Deum*, his second encyclical on the ecological crisis, updating *Laudato Si'*.

### **Small groups**

Besides consuming less personally and becoming more aware of the destructive habits Westerners have come to routinely accept, a major question is, how do we practically take any effective sort of action? It is difficult to do alone and sustain over time. The reality is we need one another to do it.

We could start by inviting a small, committed group of friends or neighbours to start talking about the issues. With

them we could meet regularly (fortnightly/monthly?) and reflect, discuss and pray about life, its purpose, our world and our Church. Even within nuclear families, it can be done. Let's turn off the television one night a week and talk about serious issues. It is a real option for many and a positive way forward.

I know of at least six such small groups around the city already who do just that. Some have been meeting regularly for more than 20 years. They have bonded and the depth of relationships has sustained them through all these years. The positive spin-offs of friendship and support are tremendous. They provide a non-hierarchical model of the synodal church emerging as the new way of being church in the future.

This is not rocket science, nor is it new. It is a common-sense model dating back to the earliest days of the Church when Christians were under threat from a punitive state and sought support, hope and inspiration from one another. Now we are under threat from other sources and need a similar strategy.

We have better theology, more accurate information, a deeper understanding of our interconnected world than our forebears ever had. We have a developing spirituality with cosmic dimensions and the language to take us forward if we commit ourselves to the vision of saving the planet (and our Church) from its continued slide and supporting those who do.

We shouldn't wait for our political and ecclesial leadership to take the initiative. Good people that most are, they have failed us for generations in these matters. Many don't know how to maintain effective non-hierarchical human relationships themselves much less promote them among the wider community. But most ordinary folk who put their minds to it do understand these things.

And that is where we can start.

—Jim Consedine

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# *Laudate Deum* – Francis calls for a ‘drastic’ response to climate change

Max Foley-Keene

Pope Francis concludes *Laudate Deum*, his October 4th apostolic exhortation on the climate crisis, by pointing to condemning the ‘irresponsible lifestyle connected with the Western model.’ Let us, then, engage in an examination of conscience, calling to mind some elements of the Western lifestyle.

Think of those little daily actions that rarely inspire deep reflection: flipping a light switch, picking up a coffee, flushing a toilet, refrigerating your leftovers. Behind all these actions is a web of interdependence. A cup of coffee is the result of cultivation, packing, shipping, brewing, and service—the work of human hands enlisting the fruit of the earth: coffee beans, soil, water, fuel. When these processes come at an environmental cost—and they usually do—those costs are very often concealed from view.

How often do we encounter those who bear the special burdens of environmental degradation, the people who live, in Pope Francis’s disquieting phrase, ‘at the bottom of the pile’? Even those of us with firm ecological commitments find that we contribute, in countless little and mostly unconscious ways, to the destruction of our common home. And we are damaged by our participation in these processes, even when it’s unintentional—and even if we struggle to find alternatives. As the effects of our actions are hidden from view, we become increasingly numb and thoughtless.

The human species, as Francis repeatedly reminds us in his two ecological writings, has acquired for itself awesome and terrifying powers. Yet, what Francis calls the ‘technocratic paradigm’ is very often experienced as powerlessness, even for relatively privileged Westerners. Every individual is, in fact, radically dependent on the whole of Creation, but the practices associated with the technocratic paradigm allow us to imagine ourselves as autonomous. This is alienation; it is also sin.

In *Laudato Si’*, Francis insisted that human beings are created for relationship: with God, with the earth, and with our neighbours, especially the poor. ‘These three vital relationships,’ Francis writes, ‘have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin.’ Social and economic structures that contribute to the rupture of these three fundamental relationships can be properly described as sinful.

## Radical restructuring required

*Laudate Deum* is an urgent cry for us to create new structures that will foster and protect these relationships. Francis calls for coordination on a massive scale and the erection of a true world political authority. He demands a response to the climate crisis that is ‘drastic, intense, and counts on the commitment of all.’ In the face of technologies and economic institutions that appear to have escaped human control, he insists that human beings must

‘control political power,’ subjecting new technologies to some conscious plan.

Yet at the same time, Pope Francis warns against the assumption that human power is limitless and asks us to rediscover the virtues of humility and restraint. In this latest exhortation, Francis quotes a critical passage from *Laudato Si’*.

We stand naked and exposed in the face of our ever-increasing power, lacking the wherewithal to control it. We have certain superficial mechanisms, but we cannot claim to have a sound ethics, a culture and spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded self-restraint.

Ultimately, Francis is seeking nothing less than a revolution in how human beings relate to their own capacities. We are creatures capable of creatively refashioning nature to meet our needs, but we have forgotten our obligation to take responsibility for Creation, to ‘till and keep’ the garden of the world. Instead of viewing fellow creatures as companions on our earthly sojourn, we view them as adversaries. Confrontation and mastery replace friendship and stewardship.

Francis, in his ecological writings, is a virtue theorist. ‘Only by cultivating sound virtues,’ Francis insists, ‘will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment.’ Virtues are excellences of character that emerge when we learn to perceive reality in a particular way and engage in activities that produce certain sustaining dispositions. I cannot be genuinely courageous, for example, if I am not practiced in courage, so that it has become a kind of habit. While Francis makes it clear that effectively repairing our common home will require ‘major political decisions’ at the highest levels of power, he worries that such large-scale efforts at transformation are unlikely to be sustained if we are not practiced in ecological care. ‘It is we human beings above all who need to change.’

In *Laudato Si’* and *Laudate Deum*, Francis describes a whole host of ecological virtues: care, love, gratitude, humility, sobriety, solidarity. None of them have any hope of getting off the ground if we do not first learn to see properly. We need to perceive that Creation is a sacrament, a material manifestation of God’s love, which is, Francis writes, ‘the fundamental moving force in all created things.’

## Christ the model

Jesus Christ models praiseworthy ecological attention, inviting his followers to see God’s love in the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. How can we learn to see that Creation is a web of interdependence? Only once we do that can we react with the proper dispositions to ecological destruction. Francis urges us to feel ‘the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement,’ the sickness of the

earth as our own ailment. Christ, once again, models the habits of ecological virtue.

Francis reminds us that Christ spent the vast majority of his life as an anonymous carpenter ‘in daily contact with the matter created by God,’ endowing human labour with sacred significance. His example shows us the close connection between work and relationship. ‘Underlying every form of work,’ Francis writes, ‘is a concept of the relationship which we can and must have with what is other than ourselves.’ If our activity is not animated by care—a desire to preserve and repair—we will come to see ourselves as masters rather than servants.

Virtue, the saying goes, is its own reward. The

exploitative and extractive practices on which our way of life now depends estrange us from God, the earth, and ourselves. They have turned us into anxious, aimless creatures. In his call to construct a political-ecological order sustained by the ecological virtues, Francis offers the promise of internal peace and a ‘serene attentiveness’ that joyfully accepts every moment, and every creature, as a gift from God.

What’s required to restore our common home, it turns out, is also what’s required to restore our own peace of mind.

*Max Foley-Keene writes in Commonweal magazine. Reprinted from 10 October 2023.*

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## Increase Fungibility to Decrease Conflict

David Nelson

I’ve observed as a common theme in particularly intractable conflicts whereby both opposing parties place considerable intrinsic value in having exclusive agency over a non-fungible asset.

A fungible asset is something that is swappable. If I have a ten-dollar bill I can swap it for your ten-dollar bill and it would be the same as if we didn’t even make the trade. When you go shopping you can pick any 3L bottle of milk from the shelf, it doesn’t matter which one you pick because they are all the same. Currency, fresh milk, gold and many other things are fungible. Non-fungible things can’t be swapped in the same way. If I go to your house and offer to swap your freshly bought milk for my week-old milk you probably wouldn’t be happy with that trade. So old milk is not fungible with fresh milk.

Here are some examples of how valuing non-fungible things has the potential to create conflict.

Both the Jews and the Palestinians in Gaza have as a core intrinsic value obtaining ownership of an extremely non-fungible piece of land in the Middle East. We can’t offer either side 365 square kilometres in say New Zealand because they want that particular 365 square kilometres in the Gaza strip.

Both Putin and the Ukrainian people intrinsically value Kyiv and other Ukrainian territories in a non-fungible way. Even if we could offer Ukraine or Russia a different city with the same population to have sovereignty over instead they would refuse.

Both indigenous rights activists and settlers are motivated by placing intrinsic value in agency over disputed ancestral land.

Both parents during a separation place non-fungible value on custody over their children. Offering to give a parent custody over a child in the foster care system as a replacement for their child would be considered insulting because parents value their children in a non-fungible way.

Museums often don’t want to return stolen artefacts to their country of origin because artefacts are non-fungible and cannot be replaced.

In all these cases both parties intrinsically value a non-fungible asset. If they valued it instrumentally then they

could be willing to trade for something they more deeply value. If it was something that is fungible then you would be able to divide it, produce more of it or other parties could trade their copies of it to satisfy the need. If only one party intrinsically values a non-fungible asset then there is no conflict because you need two parties for a conflict but there is latent potential for conflict.

Voting for your country to adopt more open immigration policies for the people affected by these conflicts would help. Being able to construct affordable floating cities on the ocean with open immigration policies will also fundamentally increase the fungibility of land. Both of these options will enable the people of Gaza or Ukraine to decide between their value of having agency over their ancestral land versus their value of safety and prosperity. Not all Palestinians or Ukrainians would choose the second over the first but I suspect a lot would. Which could go a long way to reducing tensions. Currently these people do not have that choice and as a result those values are tightly coupled.

I believe that countries overvalue non-fungible territory and undervalue their fungible citizenry. When countries correct for their mis-prioritisation then they will be shifting their values away from the non-fungible to the fungible which will go a long way to reducing tensions.

And now consider if you have intrinsic values that are tied to non-fungible things. If so please challenge yourself on that view. The more we value fungible things the closer we come to reducing a huge cause of conflict in the world. Conversely, the more we value non-fungible the more conflict ensues.

I’ve observed as a common theme in particularly intractable conflicts whereby both opposing parties place considerable intrinsic value in having exclusive agency over a non-fungible asset.

*David Nelson is a doctoral student at Canterbury University who regularly worships at the CW evening service.*

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# Dancing, debate, korero at Ōtaki

Kaaren Mathias

The 2024 Ōtaki summer camp was a gathering of around 300 young people from around Aotearoa who are keen to make a difference, get informed, enjoy music, make friends and find inspiration for the year ahead. It was my first time at ŌSC and being well outside the prescribed age range of 17-35 years, I arrived feeling hopeful but slightly nervous. I travelled up from Wellington with a carload of others and we walked across the paddock trailing our tents and sleeping bags.

We were welcomed and a kaiarahi offered to show us around, and we found our name tags were squares cut out of ice-cream container lids. Great idea - I have never found a use for those lids previously! This people-friendly eco-friendly welcome was threaded through the whole weekend.

The welcome at the marae included kōrero in te reo Māori which reminded me that all of us need to work on our reo, lots of hongis and the low sun filtered through the macrocarpa trees and splashed auspicious gold on us all. The kōrero and singing by Moana Maniapoto that first night was humble, funny, inspiring and got us off to a great start. Then after colourful salads and plum friand and other amazing kai, we were back to the rest of camp at the Leason's Catholic Worker farm down the road. Shelley and Adi Leason provided welcome and shared hospitality to 300 motley young and old people during that weekend in January.

Maiki Sherman (Ngāpuhi, Whakatōhea), a TVNZ political editor, held the stage of Saturday morning in the main tent and shared her analysis of the November election. I found it all super interesting to hear and it was very encouraging to be in a crowd of people as interested in politics as my 15-year-old and myself. Also good to share a commitment with others at ŌSC to policies that lead to social justice, planetary health, peace and social inclusion.

Over the weekend we also talked about using media, climate change action, the Gaza genocide, te Tiriti justice, disability and Big Dairy. Other great speakers included Kassie Hartendorp (Ngāti Raukawa) talking about how political change happens, Nicky Hager, who works with a team that keeps this whole event happening each year, Ollie Neas, Shanti Mathias, Adam Currie, Ethan Te Ora (Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato Tainui), Samira Archer, Avigail Allan and Justine Sachs.

Highlights for me were the gentle leading questions by Matua Rangi, the river eco-walk up the Ōtaki gorge where Marnie Prickett, Mike Joy and Lan

Pham talked about how they weave politics into their science and vice versa (what is it about freshwater ecologists and political engagement? – what a trio!). Swimming in the clear waters of the upper Ōtaki, unpolluted by dairy farming, was all fun.

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Another highlight for me was the incisive thinking and clear overview on current social justice issues and collective organising by Max Harris (Action Station) and Morgan Godfery Te Pahipoto (Ngāti Awa) and Lalomanu (Sāmoa). I loved how the space was welcoming to tauwi and tangata whenua, to people with many different abilities, to all genders and sexualities, to people of faith and without a formal religious connection. It was a slice of how we might gather in heaven it seemed to me.

The barn dance with Berrigan band on Saturday night welcomed us all to join in, whether we are good or indifferent in our dancing skills. The Sunday night music by Mara TK was more in the psychedelic soul vibe and hugely popular ([www.audioculture.co.nz/profile/mara-tk](http://www.audioculture.co.nz/profile/mara-tk))

How great to have a big event like this for three days with no alcohol or drugs or animal products being used by anyone. Actually, there was some cows' milk. The fabulous vegan food was orchestrated by a team led by the amazing Marion (check out <https://marionated.wordpress.com/>)

I was happy I could join this gathering of enthusiastic, politically engaged young people from around the motu to gather ideas for collective action for justice, peace and environments. I was happy that my services as camp doctor were hardly needed and that everyone stayed healthy. But perhaps more importantly, I was happy to be together with other people seeking inspiration and hope and that's pretty much what happened for me.

*Kaaren Mathias, a physician and university lecturer, is a member of the Christchurch CW*

## I come from there

I come from there and I have memories  
Born as mortals are, I have a mother  
And a house with many windows  
I have brothers, friends  
And a prison cell with a cold window

Mine is the wave, snatched by seagulls  
I have my own view  
And an extra blade of grass  
Mine is the moon at the far end of the words  
And the bounty of birds  
And the immortal olive tree

I walked this land before the swords  
Turned its living body into a laden table  
I come from there. I render the sky unto her  
mother  
When the sky weeps for her mother  
And I weep to make myself known  
To a returning cloud.

I learnt all the words worthy of the court of  
blood  
So that I could break the rule  
I learnt all the words and broke them up  
To make a single word – Homeland

—Mahmoud Darwish – Palestinian Poet

## Christmas in Bethlehem 2023

How will the angels avoid fighter-jets  
to sing their song to the shepherds?  
How will the Wise Men  
with their camels  
struggle through the rubble on the road  
to find the baby?

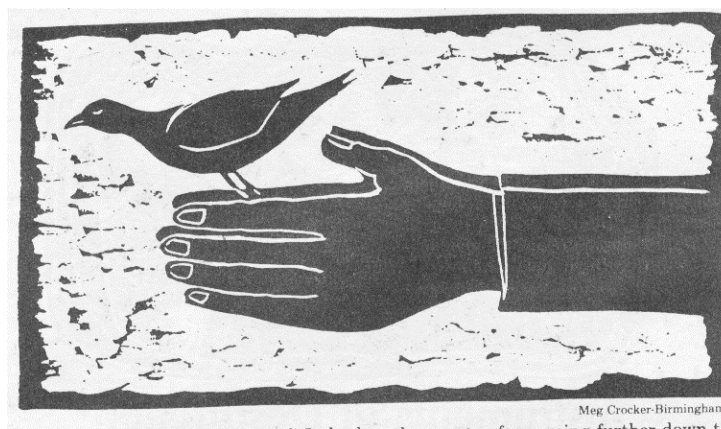
Joseph  
will lead the frightened donkey  
amidst bombs and bullets  
and around potholes

Mary  
will keep one hand on her tummy  
protecting the Baby

He will come  
like all babies  
in his own time

Any woman knows  
nothing can stop  
a baby being born

—Margaret Ingram



Meg Crocker-Birmingham

## Prayer

prayer can be as profound  
as the universe itself  
or as easy as chatting  
at the bus stop with a friend  
talking about everything  
nothing in particular

prayer sees the wider picture  
invites surrender of one's heart  
confronts the big issues  
grapples with challenging situations  
helps to make sense  
of even the deepest mysteries

prayer is relational with the Source  
the Great Spirit of Love  
who is ever present, proactive  
inviting us to tune  
our personal antennae  
to carefully crafted responses

prayer can be silent, meditative  
culled from books, scripture  
spontaneous, shared in community  
or more informal  
like chatting at the bus stop  
with a friend

—Jim Consedine

## under the rubble

our house in Gaza fell on me  
I didn't actually see it fall  
but heard the bombs coming  
whining through the night  
then boom bang, a giant shudder  
everything went dark and dizzy

I was in the top bunk  
my brother Malik underneath  
he had been asleep  
I was awake, frightened, scared  
I look out for him on bomb nights  
'cos I'm six, he's only four

first the roof and chimney fell  
then the walls crashed in  
I briefly saw the man in the moon  
about a mile away in the sky  
he was crying my guts spilled everywhere  
I remember screaming  
then my head was squashed  
the pain was really bad  
I couldn't breathe

my new school bag  
hanging on the bedpost  
was destroyed too  
I'm not sure why  
it had only books in it

—Jim Consedine

## Around the Traps

**Most Vulnerable in Prison** – Prison is becoming New Zealand's largest psychiatric institution with hundreds of mentally unwell people being kept in solitary confinement rather than treated in the health system. Instead of getting the treatment they need under the Mental Health Act, some of the country's most vulnerable are spending up to 23 hours a day in Intervention and Support Units (ISU). The Press, 16 December 2023

**Fasting in Solidarity** – On both Christmas Day and the Feast of the Holy Innocents (Dec 28th), Jim joined other

Catholic Workers in the US and the Philippines on a water-only fast in solidarity with the people of Bethlehem who this year had to cancel Christmas celebrations because of the bombing of their city by Israeli jets. 'How can we tuck into a huge feed on Christmas Day when people in the birthplace of Jesus are struggling for bread and water?', was his cryptic comment announcing the fast.

**Unguided Dumb Bombs used in Gaza** – Almost half of the munitions Israel has used since the war began have been unguided bombs, a ratio that some arms experts say helps explain the war's enormous civilian death toll. The

Israeli Defence Force (IDF) has fired more than 29 000 air-to-ground munitions into the Palestinian enclave since October 7th and only 50 to 60 percent of them have been precision-guided. The rest were what is known as “dumb bombs” which are not guided and liable to explode anywhere with lethal results.

*The Press*, 16 December 2023

**The Cost of war** – A US intelligence report has accessed that the Ukraine war has cost Russia 315 000 dead and injured troops, or nearly 90% of the personnel it had when the war began. It said that losses in personnel and armoured vehicles had set back Russia’s military modernisation by 18 years. The US has already handed over \$75 billion in aid for Ukraine but a large proportion of its funding is spent in America on the production of military equipment. *The Press*, 14 December 2023

## Lent - A choice of directions

Joan Chittister OSB



Lent gives us an opportunity to look again at who we are, at where we’re going in life, at how we’re getting to where we say we want to go. The Chinese say, ‘If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will take you there.’ But the aimlessness, the confusion, the anomie, that goes with it, wears us down, wears us out.

Everybody needs to know that they have lived for something. Everyone has a responsibility to leave this world better than when they found it. Everyone needs to carry a light into the darkness of the world around them so that others, too, may follow and find the way.

To go through life with no thought of responsibility for anything other than the self is to live like a leech off the riches of the world around us. To ask the questions, *What is my life goal? What am I contributing to this world?* And to hear no answer in the echo of the soul, is to be living a hollow life indeed.

Lent does not permit us the luxury of such banality.

## Book Review

***The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine – a history of settler colonialism and resistance, 1917-2017*, by Rashid Khalidi, Imprint Publisher, Metropolitan Books, US\$30. Reviewer Jim Considine.**

This book, from the foremost US historian of the Middle East, presents us with a landmark history of one hundred years of war waged against the Palestinians, told through pivotal events and family history. Professor Khalidi is the professor of Modern Arab Studies at Columbia University.

In 1899, Yusuf Diya al-Khalidi, mayor of Jerusalem, alarmed by the Zionist call to create a Jewish national home in Palestine, wrote a letter aimed at Theodore Herzl: the country had an indigenous people who would not easily accept their own displacement. He warned of the perils ahead, ending his note, ‘in the name of God, let Palestine be left alone.’ Thus Rashid Khalidi, al-Khalidi’s great-great-nephew, begins this sweeping history, the first general account of the conflict told from an explicitly Palestinian perspective.

Lent ends in the shadow of the empty cross and in the sunrise of an empty tomb. There are great things to be done by us and each of them takes great effort, requires great struggle, will face great resistance. But the way to the empty tomb goes through the mount of the cross.

Lent is our time to prepare to carry the crosses of the world ourselves. The people around us are hungry; it is up to us to see that they are fed, whatever the cost to ourselves. Children around us are in danger on the streets; it is up to us to see that they are safe. The world is at the mercy of US foreign policy, US economic policy and US militarism; it is up to us to soften the hearts of our own government so that the rest of the world can live a life of dignity and pride. We must ‘set our faces like flint,’ let nothing deter the Jesus life in us, knowing that however our efforts end, the resurrection is surely on its way.

Lent puts options before us. We can choose to be open or hard hearted, attuned to God or closed to everything but the self, full of faith or drowned in despair, stagnant or full of life.

Lent is a choice of directions.

Drawing on a wealth of untapped archival materials and the reports of generations of family members—mayors, judges, scholars, diplomats, and journalists—*The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine* upends accepted interpretations of the conflict, which tend, at best, to describe a tragic clash between two peoples with claims to the same territory. Instead, Khalidi traces a hundred years of colonial war on the Palestinians, waged first by the Zionist movement and then Israel, but backed by Britain and the United States, the great powers of the age. He highlights the key episodes in this colonial campaign, from the 1917 Balfour Declaration to the destruction of Palestine in 1948, from Israel’s 1982 invasion of Lebanon to the endless and futile peace process.

Original, authoritative, and important, *The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine* is not a chronicle of victimization, neither does it whitewash the mistakes of Palestinian leaders nor deny the emergence of national movements on both sides. In reevaluating the forces arrayed against the Palestinians, it offers an illuminating new view of a conflict that continues to this day.

# Letters

Christchurch  
7 December 2023

Dear Editor,

All media reports about the war being waged in Gaza begin with the Hamas attacks on October 7th 2023. Any other beginning is taboo.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres though, stirred up a hornet's nest when he said that the October Hamas attack 'did not happen in a vacuum'. For this he was vilified by the Israeli regime. Yet, Israel has been periodically 'mowing the law', i.e. bombing, Gaza since 2006. Bombing campaigns are 'romanticized' with names like 'Operation Cast Lead', and 'Operation Pillar of Defense' and 'Operation Protective Edge'.

I remember the report by Dr Alice Rothchild of Jewish Voice for Peace, exposing the 'super-spreader' pandemic conditions created by the bombing in 2021 of Gaza's only Covid testing centre. I have tremendous respect for Dr Rothchild and for Jewish Voice for Peace movement. I also respect journalist Robert Fisk who strongly felt 'that nothing – absolutely zilch – happens without a past. Always it's the 'who' and the 'how' – but rarely the 'why'.'

Guterres was brave and right to say what he did. How can we campaign for a better world, a world of peace and justice for all, without background historical knowledge?

Yours,

*Lois Griffiths*

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Woolston  
Christchurch

Dear Jim

I just wanted to say that your poem in CG107, 'God is Weeping,' is an incredible reflection on the horror of the Israel/Palestine conflict. I too weep with God. Another thought, have you read the book *The Palestine Laboratory* by Antony Loewenstein, a Jewish reporter living in Australia?

God bless your ongoing inspiring ministry with *The Common Good*.

Blessings,

*Mary Lynch*

(Yes, I have read the book. Its sub-title 'How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation around the world,' says it all. It blew my mind. A great read. Ed.)

St Francis CW,  
200 Jackson Road,  
Whirinaki, RD3  
Kaikohe 0473

Dear CW whanau,

As you can see from our homemade Christmas card, our minds and hearts have been extremely occupied with the recent outbreak in fighting between Hamas and Israel. The assault on the besieged and oppressed people of Gaza following Hamas's murders has us feeling panicked about the ruthless insanity of Israel and our own countries of Australia and NZ as their Allies.

In order to act differently to our everyday lives, to acknowledge the destruction of others' lives and the attempted decimation of culture, we have begun to gather publicly each Sunday evening to share Palestinian inspired dishes and to speak together about the Palestinian people, their history and the current war. We hope and pray for peace and freedom for all in Palestine and an end to apartheid.

John Dear wrote in CG107, 'I think hope is a verb. It is universal love in action, the practice of daring creative non-violence.' To hope doesn't have to be naïve. It is an act of rebellion against the powers that seek to consume goodness. Babies are born in Gaza every day, each of these precious. So, on our card, we have placed our Holy Family nativity in the middle of a bombed city, not far from the birthplace of Jesus Christ, Peacemaker.

With love and Christmas blessings,

*Marissa Dowling*

[www.catholicworker.org.nz](http://www.catholicworker.org.nz)

Leading articles and  
past editions  
*The Common Good*  
Restorative Justice  
Other theological issues

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Read *The Common Good* online at [catholicworker.org.nz](http://catholicworker.org.nz)

### ***The Common Good***

Te Wairua Maranga Trust  
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Christchurch 8244  
New Zealand



### **Genocide in Gaza**

We need to be honest about what we can see with our own eyes. This is not a war against Hamas, but a US-Israeli operation to displace and force out the population of Gaza in the same way the violent illegal settlers in the West Bank are driving out the local Palestinians. Neighbourhood after neighbourhood is flattened in Gaza in the same way Israel cleared Palestinian villages in 1948. It is an act of genocide that is endangering the lives of Palestinians and Israeli hostages too, and we have a duty to stand up to it.

Iranian *Donna Miles*, *The Press*, 18 December 2023