

## A PLEA FROM ANGLICAN FRIENDS OF ISRAEL

**We who are faithful Anglicans, Clergy and laity, Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical, urge Synod members to REJECT the current motion calling upon the Church of England to “adopt” the Ecumenical Accompaniers Programme in Palestine and Israel. (EAPPI)**

As on many issues, members of the Anglican Church hold a wide variety of views on conflict in the Holy Land - as friends of Israel, as friends of Palestine, as friends of Peace. As a church we should be extremely careful to maintain an environment within our Communion where people of different viewpoints can make a contribution towards Peace and Reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Arabs.

### **Why is EAPPI's a dogmatic and extreme view?**

The ideal of international observers accompanying vulnerable Israeli and Palestinian civilians to monitor and where possible ease the impact of Conflict on their lives is admirable.

However, the way the EAPPI programme has been implemented and the uses to which it is put is far from admirable!

Accompaniers often spend **less than one day** in Sderot, an Israeli town of 24,000 inhabitants which has taken the brunt of over {8,000} rocket attacks from Gaza.

Entire communities in Israel's southern cities have to live within 15 seconds of a bomb shelter - that is the maximum time given of an impending missile strike. Bomb shelters exist in every school, nursery and hospital - even at bus stops. Missile and rocket attacks happen on almost a daily basis.

The decade-long bombardment by extremist groups in Gaza, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, has paralysed economic life, traumatised children and led to thousands of Israelis moving to other parts of the country.

It is an obscene reflection of our commitment as Christians to bear witness and ease the suffering of civilian populations of all faiths in this conflict that EAPPI's engagement with the people of Sderot is so minimal as to amount to no more than a token gesture.

### **What is EAPPI's approach?**

EAPPI focuses almost entirely on the "evils of Israeli occupation". This is presented as the **exclusive cause** of oppression and injustice in the region. This is an entirely partial reading of the complex causes of conflict and our Church should not endorse- even indirectly - what is clearly an incomplete and one-sided analysis.

Sadly, when many Palestinian groups call for the end of the Occupation they mean the destruction of Israel:

*"... We do not recognise the Israeli enemy, nor his right to be our neighbour, not to stay on the land, nor his ownership of any inch of land....."- Mahmoud al-Zahar, Hamas 'foreign minister', from an interview with Palestinian TV, reported by Newsday.*

*"We want all of Palestine from the Mediterranean sea, to the Jordan river" – Mahmoud al-Zahar, Hamas leader and "foreign minister", quoted in London-based Al-Hayat.*

(Hamas is reputed to be the largest Palestinian political party).

If the Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is the main or only cause of conflict, why was Israel invaded by surrounding Arab countries, threatened with elimination and its civilians the victim of endless terrorist attacks BEFORE THAT OCCUPATION OCCURRED IN 1967?

*The PLO was formed in 1964 with the principal aim of destroying Israel - three years BEFORE the occupation.*

Why today in this country do supporters of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign {-many of whom are EAPPI supporters} demand one Palestinian Arab state from the Jordan river to the Mediterranean Sea.

*"From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free"*

EAPPI ignores the THREAT TO ISRAEL'S existence from the Islamic Republic of Iran which is an aspiring nuclear power, and its acolytes, Hamas and Hezbollah, which operate on Israel's borders - suicide bombers, rocket bombardment on civilians, aspirations to commit genocide against Israelis and Jews everywhere are downplayed in EAPPI analysis to an unacceptable extent.

EAPPI ignores the impact of Islamic extremism on Christian communities, blaming all injustice on Israeli occupation. *Israel is the only country in the Middle East with a growing Christian community.* Surely we should be bringing Palestinian Christians and Israel TOGETHER, not driving a wedge between them.

If Peace and Justice is solely about the withdrawal of Israeli soldiers and checkpoints, why was Israel's withdrawal from Gaza followed by importation of Iranian missiles, an intensified bombardment of Israeli civilians and an unjust, repressive regime in Gaza itself?

If our position is that of EAPPI, that the Occupation must end now, are we really saying that the Golan Heights, strategically dominating northern Israel, should be returned immediately to the SYRIAN REGIME IN DAMASCUS, which is currently slaughtering its own citizens?

**EAPPI's exclusive focus on the "evils of Israeli occupation" as the fundamental cause of conflict and injustice in the region, is at best naive. At worse it comprises a wilful part of the deliberate denigration of Israel's legitimate security concerns, the integrity of her entire Defense Forces-a people's army- and the demonisation of Israel itself.**

## **THE CULTURE OF INCITEMENT AGAINST JEWS AND CHRISTIANS IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES**

**We are concerned that EAPPI simply ignores the culture of hatred and incitement in the Palestinian authority, its schools and official media (such as this [http://palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=157&doc\\_id=6957](http://palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=157&doc_id=6957))**

## **PROTECTING CIVIL RIGHTS**

**The Supreme Court of Israel stands ready to protect the civil rights of Palestinians if they are unfairly treated by Israeli actions and will order compensation and the rectification of injustice, including rerouting of the security fence.**

**There is thus ALREADY a peaceful and effective alternative to boycotts and demonization. The work of the Israel Defense Force Humanitarian Officers should be welcomed and supported**

## PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Israeli Government and a majority of Israelis accept a Palestinian State *as part of a comprehensive Peace agreement with the Palestinians. Israel without the West Bank is only 9 miles wide. Israel is fully entitled to expect the establishment of a Palestinian state to be accompanied by cast iron security guarantees.*

*The complexity of this political situation and the pressures which Israel faces is entirely ignored by EAPPI. EAPPI volunteers are required to make presentations on their return to the UK. They do so equipped with only one narrative and promote an extremely narrow point of view. We do not believe this serves well the interests of ordinary Palestinians. We believe its partiality is of deep concern to the Jewish community in the UK.*

*The one-sided narrative of EAPPI is undermining the confidence of the British Jewish community in inter faith dialogue. We need to address the very real concerns of the British Jewish community regarding the EAPPI programme. We must also remember that disparaging the Jewish claim to a sovereign homeland in Israel is to undermine our own Christian connection with the Land.*

*Many ordinary Anglicans want to play a part in creating an environment for Peace in the Middle East, but that doesn't require the Church to take sides, as EAPPI does. Instead our Church should encourage all in building bridges between Jews and Arabs, whether they are friends of the Palestinians, friends of the Israelis or friends of both. There are ample opportunities for this-wonderful programmes such as "Save a Child's Heart", One Voice, Rotary and the Abraham Fund. A motion supporting EAPPI is unnecessary, counter productive and deeply divisive in our Church and damaging in our relations with other faiths. Demonization of Israeli democracy as an "apartheid system" and glib talk of "stolen land" are something which, as Christians, we must reject, for these are falsehoods. In the Middle East, careless talk costs lives.*