



Advocacy Outline - WCC Easter Initiative 2021

De-facto annexation is a reality today where Jesus walked 2000 years ago. With this Easter initiative we want to highlight the situation in the Holy Land – though the threat of formal annexation of occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank may have temporarily receded, occupation continues to profoundly and negatively impact the lives, livelihoods, and human rights of the Palestinian people. De-facto annexation* continues through land confiscation, settlement expansion, demolitions and the building of the separation barrier. To achieve real peace with justice for all people in Palestine and Israel, the occupation must end.

This is an ecumenical initiative intended to happen during Lent and the Western Easter and Eastern Easter Seasons. Starting from March 31 until May we will provide you with resources you can use anytime during this Easter Season.

We will have **4 geographically based stations** that are part of the Easter story and each will incorporate 3 components:

1. Biblical reflection
2. Feature story that relates to the same geographic area as the biblical narrative but focuses on current human rights injustice (demolition, separation barrier, displacement)
3. Advocacy action- each station has 3 steps you can take individually or as part of a community
 - a. Prayer
 - b. Creative Action
 - c. Advocate for a specific topic related to the location.

**"Though the precise boundary between situations of de jure and de facto annexation is subject to dispute, both are identically prohibited under international law. In essence, de jure annexation consists of a formalised declaration of sovereignty by a State over a given territory, or parts thereof, which is not recognised by the international community as forming part of that State's sovereign territory. By contrast, de facto annexation is the treating of territory as if it were part of the offending State's sovereign territory, though without any formal declaration by the offending State of such a status. This could be manifested in, for instance, extension of the offending State's domestic legislation into (parts of) the territory in question, or exploitation of the territory's land or natural resources without permission of the recognised sovereign power or in a manner exceeding what is allowed under international law." (Diakonia, Briefing note: Annexation under International Law and in the oPt Context (www.diakonia.se/globalassets/blocks-ihl-site/ihl-file-list/reporting/annexation-under-international-law-and-in-the-opt.pdf))*



Station 1: Road from Jericho to Jerusalem

At the time that Jesus traveled this road on his way to Jerusalem there were communities along the road. This is where the Good Samaritan story took place. Today it is home to a number of Bedouin communities threatened by Israeli settlement expansion and forced displacement. One of these is called Khan al-Ahmar (The Red Inn).

REFLECT: Bible studies:

1 - Jericho: <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/bible-studies/jericho-walking-in-the-footsteps-of-jesus>

2 - The road through the wilderness: <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/bible-studies/the-road-through-the-wilderness-walking-in-the-footsteps-of-jesus>

LEARN: Feature story - Will children ever have safe access to education in Khan Al-Ahmar? <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/will-children-ever-have-safe-access-to-education-in-khan-al-ahmar>

What you can do

PRAY: Gracious God, you are the God of peace, we pray for the people of the Holy Land that they will be able to live with peace and security in their own homes. May your peace reign throughout this land removing the fear that has gripped the lives of so many especially the children who are afraid that their schools will be demolished

FAST: We invite you to fast for one day, combining the Lenten tradition of fasting for spiritual purposes with fasting as a form of opposition to injustice. Don't eat for the day, but meditate and pray in solidarity with the people of Khan al Ahmar. Share your action on social media: #FastingForChange #KhanAlAhmar #NoToAnnexation

ADVOCATE: Demolitions and forced displacement can lead to de-facto annexation by enabling land confiscation and settlement expansion. Please get in touch with your elected representatives/church leaders and urge them to take meaningful action to stop the occupation and de-facto annexation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, thereby keeping hope for a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict alive.

Additional Information

Talking points:

- About 25% of the West Bank has been declared Israeli state land since 1967. Of the area that has been allocated to be used for building etc., 99.8% have been assigned to settlements (<http://peacenow.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Lands-Allocated-to-Palestinians-1.pdf>).
- Almost 3,500 housing units and public buildings in settlements have been built on Palestinian private land (<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-revealed-3-500-settlement-homes-built-on-private-palestinian-land-1.5445036>).
- In many cases, Palestinians have no or limited access to their land in the area of or around settlements (<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/restricted-access-farming-land-taken-over-settlers-despite-legal-rulings-israeli-courts>).
- Despite the pandemic, 2020 marked a 4 year high in demolitions and displacement (849 structures demolished, 996 persons displaced) (https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/demolition_monthly_report_december_2020.pdf).



- Around 13,000 demolition orders for Palestinian buildings are pending implementation in area C of the West Bank (<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/new-legislation-impedes-challenges-demolitions-and-seizures-west-bank>).
- On average 97% of Palestinian building applications in area C are rejected (<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/west-bank-palestinians-risk-forcible-transfer>).

Useful Links:

About demolitions:

<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/west-bank-demolitions-and-displacement-february-2021>

<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/peak-demolitions-and-confiscations-amidst-increasing-denial-right-justice>

About forcible transfer of Bedouin communities: https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/ocha_opt_communities_jerusalem_factsheet_september_2014_english.pdf

About disapproval of Palestinian building permits vs. Israeli settlements: <https://peacenow.org.il/en/approvals-for-palestinians-in-area-c-2009-2020>

About Khan al-Ahmar: <https://blog.eappi.org/2018/07/20/khan-al-ahmar-bedouin-community-strives-for-justice-amid-grave-daily-challenges/>



Station 2: Bethany and Jabal al Baba

From Bethany Jesus rode to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Today the village is divided by the separation barrier. Communities at the outskirts of East Jerusalem lost the ability to access the city and relevant services (education, health care, etc.). This is the location where Lazarus was resurrected.

REFLECT: Bible study - Bethany: The last homely house: <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/bible-studies/bethany-the-last-homely-house-walking-in-the-footsteps-of-jesus>

LEARN: Feature story - Bedouins of Pope's Hill fight eviction <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/bedouins-of-popes-hill-fight- eviction>

What you can do

PRAY: Loving God, you have created us as one humanity. We come before you mindful of the barriers that exist that divide and keep your people alienated from each other. May the power of your love bring down the walls of separation, so that in working together we may find political solutions that support justice and everybody's right to movement and access to services.

INVITE: Invite someone who has opposing views regarding the situation in Palestine and Israel into a conversation about annexation. Take this as a chance to start a conversation with a colleague, family member or friend. As a starting point, you can share the feature story with the person and invite the person into trying to see the situation through that person's eyes.

ADVOCATE: The building of the separation barrier has led to a situation of de-facto annexation in areas of the West Bank that are situated between the barrier and the Green line, and severely impacts Palestinian communities on both sides of the barrier. Please get in touch with your elected representatives/ church leaders and urge them to take meaningful action to stop the occupation and de-facto annexation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, thereby keeping hope for a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict alive.

Talking points:

- The route of Israel's separation barrier leads to a situation of de facto annexation of almost 10% of the West Bank, including numerous settlements in the so-called 'Seam Zone' between the Green Line and the separation barrier. Around 11,000 Palestinians need special permits to live in their own homes in this zone and to be able to access the rest of the West Bank through checkpoints (https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/ocha_opt_barrier_factsheet_july_2013_english.pdf).
- Palestinian access to land and olive groves in the Seam Zone has been significantly reduced by the Israeli authorities. According to UNOCHA, of 74 agricultural checkpoints that farmers have to cross to reach their trees, 53 only open during harvest time (<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/record-yield-reported-2019-olive-harvest>). As a result, it is not possible for the farmers to take care of the trees all year round, which leads to a significant drop in yield.
- In addition, Palestinians can only cross the agricultural checkpoints with a permit. In 2019, 73% of permit applications were rejected (<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/2020-olive-harvest-season-low-yield-amidst-access-restrictions-and-settler-violence>).
- In East Jerusalem the separation barrier doesn't separate Israeli and Palestinian neighbourhoods along the Green Line, but rather Palestinian neighbourhoods from each other and from Palestinian suburbs around Jerusalem. 80.000 East Jerusalem Palestinians live in neighbourhoods that today are separated by the wall from the city, which in many cases led to the separation from family and friends,



their places of work, education and worship (<https://www.ir-amim.org.il/en/issue/separation-barrier>).

Useful links:

Maps of the separation barrier: <https://www.ochaopt.org/atlas2019/wbclosure.html>

About the separation barrier in Jerusalem: <https://www.ir-amim.org.il/en/issue/separation-barrier>

About the separation barrier in general: <https://www.ochaopt.org/theme/west-bank-barrier>

About movement restrictions in the West Bank: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/longstanding-access-restrictions-continue-undermine-living-conditions-west-bank-palestinians>



Station 3: The Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem

The Mount of Olives, in East Jerusalem, is where Jesus wept over Jerusalem. From the gardens of the Mount of Olives Jesus was arrested. Today in East Jerusalem many Palestinian families face settlement expansion, demolitions, and evictions.

REFLECT: Bible study - The Mount of Olives: <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/bible-studies/the-mount-of-olives-walking-in-the-footsteps-of-jesus>

LEARN: Feature story - East Jerusalem: Denied citizenship and the vote <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/east-jerusalem-denied-citizenship-and-the-vote>

What you can do

PRAY: God of justice and peace we come praying for just peace in the Holy Land. We pray for the end of occupation, for reconciliation and for conflict resolution in every sphere of the lives of your people. We pray with Jesus Christ on the Mount of Olives that your peace will be realized. May those who have lost their homes be enabled to build secure homes in their own land and to live in safety and without fear.

SHARE A MEAL: Share a meal with someone (virtually or in-person depending on local restrictions) and have a conversation about the feature story and the related issues. If possible use this Maamoul recipe which is used by Palestinians during religious holiday seasons: <https://palestineinadish.com/recipes/desserts/kaek-and-maamoul-easter-cookies/>

ADVOCATE: East-Jerusalem and surrounding villages were annexed to the state of Israel in 1967 (officially 1980). This annexation has not been recognized by the vast majority of the international community as it contradicts international law. Settlement expansion, demolitions and evictions continue to impact the Palestinian population of occupied East-Jerusalem. Please get in touch with your elected representatives/church leaders and urge them to take meaningful action to stop the occupation and de-facto annexation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, thereby keeping hope for a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict alive.

Talking points:

- The annexation of East Jerusalem and surrounding villages to the municipality of Jerusalem has not been recognized by the vast majority of the international community (UN Security Council Resolution 478 [https://undocs.org/S/RES/478\(1980\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/478(1980))).
- There are 13 Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem with a population of over 225.000 people (<https://peacenow.org.il/en/settlements-watch/settlements-data/jerusalem>).
- Appr. 970 Palestinians in East-Jerusalem are threatened by forced eviction due to settler-led court cases (<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/palestinian-family-evicted-its-home-east-jerusalem>).
- "Since the beginning of 2020 to the present day, judgments have been given in 14 eviction claims of settlers against families in the Batan Al-Hawa in Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah. In the rulings, the Magistrate's Court ordered the evacuation of 36 families with 165 people, including dozens of children. (...) If the government does not stop the move, we might see massive evictions of families in the coming months. " (<https://peacenow.org.il/en/sheikh-jarrah-appeal-rejected-020321> , 4.3.)

Useful links:

About evictions related to settlement expansion in East Jerusalem: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/palestinian-family-evicted-its-home-east-jerusalem>



<https://peacenow.org.il/en/settlement-under-the-guise-of-tourism-the-elad-settler-organization-in-silwan>

PeaceNow video briefing on settlements in East Jerusalem (January 2021): <https://peacenow.org.il/en/video-briefing-on-the-settlements-inside-palestinian-neighborhoods-in-east-jerusalem>

About demolitions in East Jerusalem: <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/peak-demolitions-and-confiscations-amidst-increasing-denial-right-justice>



Station 4: Holy Sepulcher

The Holy Sepulcher is said to be the place where Jesus' empty tomb and the 3 crosses were located 2000 years ago. The ancient stones of the building remain an important symbol for the local Palestinian Christian community as well as Christians worldwide.

REFLECT: Bible study - Jerusalem: <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/bible-studies/jerusalem-walking-in-the-footsteps-of-jesus>

LEARN: Feature story - Easter brings uncertainty for Palestinians who want to worship at Holy Sepulchre: <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/easter-brings-uncertainty-for-palestinians-who-want-to-worship-at-holy-sepulchre>

What you can do

PRAY: Holy God, in you there is no darkness and from you radiates Holy Light which lightens all the world. We give thanks for the light of the resurrection which we have received by faith as we proclaim to the world 'the Lord is risen indeed.' May that resurrection light eliminate the veil of darkness that still exists in our world today. May that resurrection permeate the entire city of Jerusalem. May this city of two people and three religions be like a beacon of eternal hope that shines its holy light throughout the Holy Land and beyond into our world.

Reach out to your congregation and invite them to use and share both the WCC Easter Message (released before Western Easter) and the Easter Message from the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem (released before Eastern Easter).

SPREAD LIGHT: Light a candle on Easter in reference to the Holy Fire of the Resurrection and post a picture on social media: #EasterLight #PeaceAndJustice #NoToAnnexation.

ADVOCATE: Churches, local and as well as Palestinian and Israelis NGOs, individuals on the ground and worldwide work to achieve an end of occupation and de-facto annexation. Support them by getting in touch with your elected representatives/church leaders. Urge them take meaningful action to stop the occupation and de-facto annexation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, thereby keeping hope for a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict alive.

Talking points:

- Jerusalem as an International City for two people and three religions. By the words of the Churches in Jerusalem: Jerusalem, holy city, heritage of humanity, city of two peoples and three religions, has a unique character that distinguishes her from all the other cities of the world; a character which surpasses any local political sovereignty.

- "Jerusalem is too precious to be dependent solely on municipal or national political authorities" (cf. Memorandum, 1994)

- Ethical Christian tourism (thousands of Christians from around the world visit the Holy Sepulchre on Easter without awareness of how Palestinian Christians live in the Holy land)

Useful links:

Statement by the Patriarchs and Heads of local Christian Churches regarding the status of Jerusalem:

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/status-of-jerusalem-patriarchs-and-heads-of-the-local-christian-churches-in-jerusalem-2006>

Alternative Tourism Group: <http://atg.ps/>

Code of conduct for tourism in the Holy Land: http://www.atg.ps/pdf/code_of_conduct.pdf

