

ORAL STATEMENT

Item 7 – General Debate

Human Rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

UN Human Rights Council
Forty-sixth session, 22 February – 23 March 2021

Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches

Mme President,

We are gravely concerned about the situation for people in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the context of the response to Covid-19.

In the most advanced Covid-19 vaccination programme in the world, with almost 100,000 vaccinations being administered each day, a reported 44.7% of Israelis have now been fully vaccinated. This coverage also extends to those living in illegal settlements in the West Bank.

In the Occupied Territories, there have been almost 210,000 confirmed coronavirus cases and over 2,200 deaths. The population density and high levels of poverty exacerbate infections despite the imposition of curfews and closures. But the on-going military occupation has resulted in a situation in which the Palestinian authorities do not have adequate means to purchase and administer vaccines or to address the impact of Covid-19.

Israel has committed to provide a total of 5,000 vaccine doses to the Palestinian Authority, and to vaccinate the estimated 100,000 Palestinians who work in Israel or in the settlements. But the disparity remains stark.

Under international humanitarian and human rights law, the responsibility for ensuring access to vaccines in occupied territory rests with the occupying power. We therefore call on Israel to fulfil its obligations under international law and to ensure equitable access to coronavirus vaccines for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories.

We call again for an end to the occupation, and a just peace for both Palestinians and Israelis.

Thank you Mme President
