



WCC general secretary meets with Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas

On 26 February, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas formally received the general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit for a meeting to discuss just peace in Palestine and Israel. Abbas is scheduled for a speech at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, in the beginning of the week.

The Palestinian president expressed to the WCC general secretary the importance of the activities of the WCC in the Holy Land in accompanying Christians and local churches. Abbas said he calls upon local and foreign churches to pay attention to the message of Palestinian Christians and to encourage all nonviolent acts to bring peace and justice to Palestine.

“Our role is to give Christian witness to the world and work for justice and peace,” said Tveit as he described the WCC’s peace and reconciliation initiatives in the Middle East and beyond.

Tveit noted: “We believe peace can be achieved only together with the other. We are called as a fellowship of churches to support the process of just peace.” He added “We believe and see that the local churches can and do play a role in promoting peace and justice on both sides of the conflict. It is important to strengthen the church and the Christian presence in the area, so that it can be a strong witness of peace.”

“No people should be denied their rights and, certainly, no people should be denied their rights for generations. The unresolved conflict in Israel and Palestine is primarily about justice, and until the requirement of justice is met, peace cannot be established”, he added “as Israel’s occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza nears the 50-year mark, generations have been suffering under this reality.”

Tveit said at the meeting “Israel since 1948 has been recognized by the UN as a state, and the WCC has since then done the same, continuing to uphold the decision to recognize two states. The WCC General Assembly in 1948 has stated that anti-Semitism is a sin against God.”

The WCC has supported the UN resolutions that claim that there should be an Israeli and Palestinian state and that both should be independent and legitimate.

Tveit concluded: “We ought to insist on the duty to guarantee human rights and the need for peace and decent living conditions for all. This is the moral value of justice and peace that we all need to commit to. Both parties would be blessed by a lasting solution, and it would be an important contribution to world peace.”

Through the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), the WCC continues to provide, since 2002, a sense of peaceful security for children on their daily walk to school. Results of a wide-ranging evaluation of EAPPI were presented during 2016, and efforts to strengthen the peacemaking programme will continue through 2017 based on the evaluation’s findings.

Tveit also presented WCC’s plans for 2017, including a special consultation on advocacy strategies for just peace in Israel and Palestine in March in Geneva, Prayer initiatives for just peace in June and the World Week of Peace in Palestine and Israel on 17-24 September.

The World Council of Churches has also asked for a meeting with the President of Israel to discuss just peace in Israel and Palestine.

Related links:

Member churches in the Middle East

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/middle-east>

Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel

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