

World Refugee Day 2022 and the Right of Return
From Rev. Loren McGrail, Palestine Israel Network of the United Church of Christ
(insert for bulletin or newsletter)

There are currently 68.5 million people around the world who have been forced from their homes. 5.6 million are Palestinians, the longest standing refugee population in the world.

Nearly a million Palestinians were made refugees following the establishment of Israel on the ruins of historic Palestine. This is called the time of the great catastrophe or the Nakba. In 1967 thousands more became internally displaced during the Israeli war and occupation of Jerusalem. It is for this reason, that Palestinians say that they struggle against an ongoing Nakba.

It is for all of these reasons including that Jesus and his family were refugees when they escaped the terror of Herod, that the Palestine Israel Network of the United Church of Christ in its Declaration for a Just Peace Between Palestine and Israel, a resolution of Witness passed by the 2021 General Synod, affirms “the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes if they so choose or to be compensated for their loss of property, consistent with UN General Assembly 228 resolution 194 (1948)”.

Right of Return means the right to freely leave or return to a place of origin or habitual residence; the right not to be displaced or dispossessed. Israel has granted the Right of Return to Jews throughout the world so they can come to Israel as a return to “their homeland” while denying this right to Palestinians to do the same. It has been 74 years and not one single Palestinian refugee has been granted their right of return.

On this World Refugee Day 2022, we ask that you support whole heartedly the right of Palestinians to return to their homes or villages, or to be compensated. In addition, we ask that you stand against any nation or group that denies this fundamental human right guaranteed by international law. Until this day comes, we ask that you continue to demand that our country support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) that supports Palestinian refugees throughout the world.

There will be no peace, without justice, which must include the Right of Return for Palestinians.

Prayer

*Jesus, our refuge and a refugee yourself,
we seek your strength in keeping our promise
to be faithful to our Palestinian siblings
holding fast to their right to return
to their homeland, their homes, and families.
Embolden us to end this ongoing Nakba,
to say ‘No more expulsions’ or home demolitions.
Help us be steadfast in our accompaniment,
our outcry, and our advocacy.
We pray this in the name of your wounded and resurrected self. Amen.*