

A Statement from the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center

Jerusalem, March 2026



“They shall beat their swords into ploughshares... nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” - Isaiah 2:4

We, the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, speak from Jerusalem, a city that has known occupation and the machinery of war for generations. We speak as Palestinian Christians who believe, without reservation, that **violence is never a solution**. International law, while imperfect, remains the only framework humanity has built to protect the weak from the strong. We aspire to governments that uphold it as a covenant, not a convenience.

We are under no illusions about the world we inhabit: an era of power-hungry corrupt leaders who govern by manufacturing hate and fear whether in Tehran, Tel Aviv, Washington, Riyadh, Ramallah, or elsewhere. We issue this statement condemning the illegal and avoidable war of the United States and Israel on Iran, and calling the peoples of this region and the world to a higher vision.

As Sabeel, we name the following realities:

- 1. A Covenant Broken.** Just hours before the bombs fell on February 28, 2026, Oman’s Foreign Minister announced a breakthrough that Iran had agreed to accept full IAEA verification and never stockpile enriched uranium. Peace was within reach. The strikes came anyway. This is not a strategy. It is the deliberate destruction of diplomacy. We name it for what it is: a moral failure of historic proportions.
- 2. An Illegal War.** The attacks violated the UN Charter, which prohibits force against another state without Security Council authorization or genuine self-defense. Iran was not attacking either state. In the US, the war also lacked Congressional authorization. The laws that protect the weak must apply equally to all. When great powers exempt themselves from the law, the message to every aspiring oppressor is clear: power is the only law that counts. We reject this with every fibre of our faith.
- 3. The Image of God Desecrated.** Children killed in strikes on schools. Patients killed in hospitals. Every life extinguished is the desecration of the imago Dei. Palestinian Christians do not need to be told what it means to see children under rubble, for we have lived it in Gaza. Any ideology or theology that denies God’s divine presence in all living creation must be confronted and eradicated.
- 4. War as Profit.** Liberation theology demands we ask who benefits. The first 100 hours of war cost an estimated \$3.7 billion. Arms manufacturers’ stocks rose. Oil surged past \$100 a barrel, devastating the world’s poorest nations who had no vote in this conflict. The poor pay in blood and bread while the wealthy count their returns. We call out this structural sin of colonialism that has created economies that rely on exploitation and the manufactured death of the Global South.

5. **A History of Catastrophe.** Iraq 2003 was sold as a war of liberation, yet it destroyed one of the world's oldest Christian communities and reduced its population from 1.5 million to under 300,000. Iran's revolution itself was partly a response to the CIA-backed coup of 1953. The seeds of Western military intervention in this region have yielded, with terrible consistency, chaos, extremism, and the erasure of its most ancient communities. We are that pattern's most enduring consequence. You cannot bomb your way to a stable Middle East.
6. **The Church Emptied.** Every major Western military intervention has been followed by the persecution of Middle Eastern Christians. When states collapse, extremism fills the void with minorities paying the first price. Western Christians praying over presidents launching these wars must reckon with what they are praying for: the destruction of their own sisters and brothers in the land where Jesus walked. The church here needs the West to listen, to stop, and, as Kairos Palestine declared, "to revisit theologies that support war, occupation, and injustice."
7. **Two Theologies.** This war reveals a clash at the deepest level between a theology of domination modeled after colonial power and a Palestinian liberation theology that is rooted in the Suffering Servant and modeled on a Christ executed by empire. Sabeel stands on the side of the cross, not the missile. We call on every church that has been silent to ask, «*Which theology are you living?*»

Therefore, we make the following call to action:

We do not end in despair. Sabeel means "a spring of water.» Springs do not stop flowing because the desert is wide. We have seen apartheid fall. We have seen dictatorships crumble when the people refused to be afraid. We believe the arc of history will bend again toward justice because ordinary people, not armies, are the ones who bend it.

To the peoples of this region — Iranians, Palestinians, Israelis, Lebanese, Syrians, Jordanians, Iraqis, Saudis, Kuwaitis, Omanis, Yemenis, Bahrainis, Egyptians - **we who are neighbours must unite in solidarity.** Our conflicts do not serve us. They serve the arms dealers and corrupt leaders who need external enemies to justify their power. When we fight, we give the greedy their markets and the tyrants their mandates. When we see each other's humanity, we take their power away.

To citizens with a vote, we ask you to **use it.** Vote for leaders with vision and integrity. Delegitimize the morally corrupt with your voice and refusal to be afraid.

To the church worldwide: **speak truth to power.** The prophets were not silent. Jesus was not silent. Neither should we be.

Justice will come. We will not stop working, praying, and speaking until we make it arrive.

Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians, committed to justice, peace, nonviolence, liberation, and reconciliation. In Arabic, Sabeel means "the way" and "a spring of water."