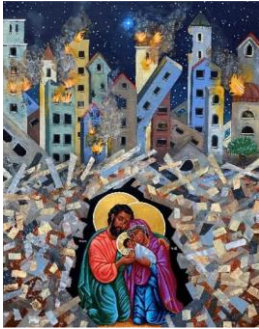


## Position on Palestine, Wellington Archdiocesan Catholic Commission for Ecology Justice and Peace, March 2026



*"I will grant peace in the land and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid. I will remove wild beasts from the land and the sword will not pass through your country." Leviticus 26:6.*

*Christ in the Rubble Kelly Latimore*

### **General background:**

The area that Christians call the Holy Land - which includes historic Palestine - is of immense importance to us Christians because it is there Jesus Christ walked and because the biblical accounts of God's involvement in human history are centred there.

As the Wellington Archdiocesan Catholic Commission for Ecology, Justice and Peace we understand God's deepest desire for all peoples is a peaceful, just world. Catholic Social Teaching (CST) draws on the Hebrew scriptures, the teaching of Jesus Christ, and study of social dynamics. As such, it is a framework for proposing and evaluating social, economic and political systems. We have used it to measure the situation in the Holy Land, drawing on the diplomatic positions of the Holy See (permanent observer status at the UN), recent popes and Christian voices within the Holy Land.

The Holy See has long supported a two-state solution in the Holy Land, based on the 1947 United Nations (UN) partition plan. That plan included an international status for Jerusalem and Bethlehem, recognising this area's importance to Jews, Christians and Muslims to ensure freedom of worship and access to holy places. The Holy See proposes the borders of the two states be based on the borders of Israel and the Palestinian territories from 1948 till the 1967 war during which the Palestinian territories were militarily occupied by Israel.

### **Current situation:**

This position is part of an international consensus based on UN processes and international law. However, the possibility of a viable Palestinian state in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza has been rapidly reduced by various actions of the Israeli state. As of March 2026, international attention has lessened because of the attacks on Iran by the United States and Israel.

In Gaza genocidal practices—killing of civilians and children, continue. Destruction of schools, hospitals, water services and agricultural land are all clearly documented. The October 2025 'ceasefire' has not stopped the killing of Palestinians and the area available to the population has continued to shrink due to the expansion of "buffer zones". Israel still controls all access into and out of Gaza.

In the West Bank and East Jerusalem there are still land confiscations, house demolitions, and ethnic cleansing by Israeli settlers. Attacks by Israelis on Palestinian residents often go unpunished, and the Israeli state actively colludes in illegal settlements. Following the October 7 2023 raids by Hamas on Israel from Gaza these practices in the West Bank have increased.

The Holy See began formal diplomatic relations with Israel in 1993 following the Oslo Accords. In 2000 it established a Basic Agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and recognised the Palestinian state in 2015. Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, Francis and Leo XIV have all reaffirmed these positions, most recently via Archbishop Caccia, the Holy See's Permanent Observer to the UN (30/7/2025). Palestinians are not homogenous in religious belief or practices: Palestinian Christians, a small minority, share the sufferings of their people, including restrictions on religious practice and access to holy sites.

### **Commission's position:**

As a Commission, we reject Zionism as an exclusivist and violent ideology and practice, including as legislated by the state of Israel. We particularly reject Christian Zionism as making an ahistoric and unjustified misuse of the scriptures to justify the expulsion of the Palestinian people from their land and their destruction.

As a Commission we support New Zealand recognising Palestine as a state. We do so because we know of the history of exclusion of Palestinians from their land and because of the existing presence of modern Israel in historic Palestine. We quoted above the Hebrew scriptures, precious also to us, because we believe all people have the right to live in dignity and in peace, whoever they are, wherever they come from.

We consider that even though the form of a Palestinian state (institutions, political system, etc) has yet to be defined by its people, this recognition will enable more just treatment of the Palestinian people and more accountability by all involved. We also consider that developing a viable Palestinian state will diminish support for groups seeking to act militarily against Israel.

The ultimate goal is not only a Palestinian state but a just and lasting peace and equality for all who dwell in the Holy Land. This could also lead to a single, secular state in historic Palestine with equal rights for all peoples there. We recognise the historic marginalisation of Jewish people in many places and far too often over the centuries by Christians. We recognise that many Jewish people live a collective historic trauma, especially because of the Holocaust. We also know that many Israelis, and many Jews outside Israel, oppose the current war practices of Israel's government. Nothing justifies war, attacks on civilians, or ethnic cleansing.

We declare our hope that the New Zealand government will act with courage in recognising a Palestinian state. We consider this would be a small step towards a recognition of the Palestinian people's right to exist. We reject anti-Jewish prejudice. We know that criticism of Israel is not *per se* anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic. We also reject Islamophobia. We encourage assistance to the Palestinian people. Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand and the wider Caritas network are excellent means for this. We encourage Catholics to be active in supporting the Palestinian people by the various non-violent means and organisations available, including the Boycott, Divest and Sanctions movement. We encourage Catholics to learn from the indigenous Palestinian Christians who have maintained a continuous presence in the Holy Land for over 2,000 years, to support them to keep their presence alive, and to visit them by means of pilgrimages when safe to do so.