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Women's Voice for Gaza: A Palestinian Christian Call for Justice and Life (extended version)

A Prophetic Word from Palestinian Christian Women

We, Palestinian Christian women from across historic Palestine— grandmothers, mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, and caregivers—raise our voices in anguish and determination as our people in Gaza face deliberate starvation. We speak from the depths of our faith and the fullness of our humanity, following in the footsteps of the prophetic voices of our ancestors in scripture who proclaimed God's justice in times of crisis.

This is our kairos moment—a time pregnant with divine possibility amid unspeakable suffering. The Greek word kairos speaks not of chronological time but of the right time, the decisive moment when God's justice breaks through human complacency. Like the South African Kairos document that called the church to witness against apartheid, and following the Palestine Kairos document that named our reality of occupation, we recognize this as a moment that demands prophetic response. As our people in Gaza face systematic starvation designed to eliminate Palestinian presence from the land, we cannot remain silent. This is not merely another crisis to be managed but a moment that requires decisive witness. The deliberate weaponization of hunger against children, the calculated destruction of life-sustaining infrastructure, the international community's willingness to watch genocide unfold in real time—this convergence compels us to speak. We write not because we have hope in human systems, but because this moment demands that we, as descendants of Mary who accompanied her crucified son, stand with the crucified ones of our time—even our own children. The God who fed the hungry and defended the oppressed calls us to bear witness when the powerful seek to erase the powerless. This is our kairos—our moment to choose between complicity and prophetic courage.

The Prophetic Tradition of Women

Like our matriarch Mary, mother of Jesus, we magnify the Lord who "has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty" (Luke 1:52-53). Mary's song was not merely a song but a radical proclamation of justice that recognized God's preference for the oppressed. As Palestinian women under occupation, we too sing of a world turned right-side up, where the hungry are fed and the powerful face accountability.

We stand in the tradition of Tabitha, known for her "good works and acts of charity" (Acts 9:36), who made garments for widows in her community. Her needle and thread created not just clothing but community and care. Like Tabitha, Palestinian women have for generations threaded our stories, geographies, and histories into fabric. Our traditional *Tatreez*^[1] embroidery is not merely decorative; it is narrative.

Each pattern in our embroidery speaks to our indigenous roots that connect us to this land since ancient times. When our villages were destroyed, our women carried these patterns in their memories. When our homes were taken, our embroidery preserved what our land looked like. When our histories were denied, our cross-stitch affirmed: we were here, we are here, we will remain here. This is our matriarchal oral tradition—passed from grandmother to mother to daughter—not in words alone but in patterns that even illiteracy, displacement, and violence cannot silence.

This embroidery tradition embodies *Sumud*^[2]. When we stitch, we practice *sumud*. When we preserve our patterns despite displacement, we practice *sumud*.

We remember Rizpah, who kept vigil over her sons' unburied bodies for months, refusing to let them be forgotten or dishonored (2 Samuel 21:10). When the powerful used her children's deaths for political expediency, she bore witness to their humanity through her faithful presence. Like Rizpah, Palestinian women today keep vigil over our losses, ensuring that neither our dead nor our living are erased from memory.

We honor Phoebe, the deacon whom Paul trusted to carry his letter to the Romans, calling her "a benefactor of many and of myself as well" (Romans 16:1-2). She crossed boundaries and served her community with courage. Like her, Palestinian Christian women continue to serve despite barriers erected to stop us.

Our prophetic role is not merely to lament but to call for transformation. As the Kairos document states, "The mission of the Church is prophetic, to speak the Word of God courageously, honestly and lovingly in the local context and in the midst of daily events" (Kairos Palestine, §3.4.1).

Our Reality

The reality in Gaza is one of "inhuman conditions, under permanent Israeli blockade and cut off from the other Palestinian territories" (Kairos Palestine, §1.1.1). Today, this reality has worsened beyond measure into what many human rights organizations and legal scholars recognize as genocide. Our children waste away from hunger, our elderly die without medicine, and our families seek shelter where there is none. The Israeli military blockade is not merely a siege—it is a calculated policy of starvation as a weapon of war.

As women, we bear multiple burdens. We comfort our children while hiding our own fears. We distribute meager food while our own stomachs ache. We maintain the rituals of life while surrounded by death.

The Unnamed and Unheard

In scripture, many women remain unnamed—"the woman at the well," "the Syrophenician woman," "the woman with the issue of blood." Though central to the narrative, they are often defined by their relationship to men, their afflictions, or their ethnicities rather than their names and full identities. Similarly, Palestinian women today are often rendered invisible or reduced to simplistic categories—victims, mourners, or simply "women and children"—a nameless collective whose individual stories, wisdom, and agency are erased.

The Bible contains countless unnamed women who worked in secondary and tertiary positions—servants, slaves, those who prepared food, carried water, and maintained households. Their essential labor made possible the stories that are centered in scripture, yet they remain in the background. Today, Palestinian women's essential work sustaining families under occupation and siege rarely makes headlines, though without it, survival would be impossible.

We must learn to read both scripture and current events "between the lines," recognizing that what is unwritten or unspoken often reveals power structures that devalue women's experiences. When we look at who gets to speak, who is named, and whose suffering is considered noteworthy, we see parallel patterns across millennia.

The Unchilding of Our Children^[3]

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs" (Matthew 19:14). Yet today, more than 14,000 children in Gaza face death from malnutrition and disease. Their childhood has been stolen—not just through violence, but through the deliberate withholding of food, water, and medicine.

Beyond "Women and Children"

We reject the narrative that categorizes only "women and children" as innocent victims. This framing dehumanizes Palestinian men, implying they are legitimate targets, and serves to normalize what constitutes genocide against our entire people. All Palestinians—regardless of gender or age—deserve protection under international law. Our Muslim sisters also cradle hungry children, search for medicine, and mourn the dead. While we speak from our Christian faith, our suffering and our hope for justice are shared. All are made in God's image. All hunger. All bleed. All die when food and medicine are denied.

The Empowering Tradition of Palestinian Women's Nonviolent Resistance

As Palestinian Christian women, we stand in a long and powerful tradition of nonviolent resistance that has given us agency even in the most dehumanizing circumstances. While the world may see only our victimhood, we know ourselves as agents of change and preservers of life and culture.

From the women who organized the first intifada through neighborhood committees, to those who planted olive trees on confiscated lands, to those who documented human rights abuses, to those who created cooperatives that sustained communities under siege—Palestinian women have always found creative ways to resist oppression while affirming life.

We continue this tradition today. When we create therapy programs for traumatized children, we resist. When we document the destruction of our neighborhoods, we resist. When we hold classes in bombed schools, we resist. When we preserve seeds from our ancestral plants, we resist. When we tell our stories through art, music, poetry, and embroidery, we resist.

This nonviolent resistance is not passive but profoundly active. It demonstrates what the Kairos document calls "creative resistance" that "must find human ways that engage the humanity of the enemy" (Kairos Palestine, §4.2.3). Our resistance confronts injustice not by mirroring its violence but by asserting our full humanity and affirming life in all its forms.

When we resist nonviolently, we claim our agency. We refuse to be mere recipients of violence or objects of pity. Instead, we become subjects of our own liberation story, participating in God's redemptive work in history just as Miriam led the women in songs of liberation (Exodus 15:20-21) and just as the women were the first to proclaim Christ's resurrection.

This tradition gives us strength today as we witness the starvation of our people in Gaza. It reminds us that even in the darkest circumstances, we retain the God-given power to act with courage, creativity, and moral clarity. This resistance is our *sumud* - not merely our survival but refusing to surrender our humanity to conditions designed to strip it away.

Our Call to Action

Scripture is clear: "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house?" (Isaiah 58:6-7)

We call upon women of all nations, faiths, and walks of life to join us in demanding an immediate end to the starvation of Gaza. To parents and caregivers who understand what it means to feed a hungry child, to faith leaders who preach compassion, to journalists who bear witness to suffering, to healthcare workers who heal the broken, to political leaders who shape policy, to theologians who interpret sacred texts, and to all people of conscience—we ask you to use whatever power and platform you possess to stop this deliberate crime against humanity.

The deliberate withholding of food, water, and medicine from a civilian population constitutes a war crime under international law and an act of genocide, yet it continues with impunity. This is not a natural disaster but a human-made catastrophe that can be stopped today if there is the political will to do so. As Palestinian women, we call on people worldwide to amplify our voices, knowing that when communities stand together against violence and injustice, transformative change becomes possible.

We affirm that "resistance is a right and a duty for the Christian. But it is resistance with love as its logic. It is thus a creative resistance for it must find human ways that engage the humanity of the enemy" (Kairos Palestine, §4.2.3). Our resistance includes the daily acts of creating and sustaining life amidst destruction—an act of defiance that says we will not be eliminated, we will not be silenced, we will live to see justice realized in our land.

Our Commitment

We commit ourselves to naming what has been unnamed, to speaking what has been unspoken, and to revealing what has been hidden. As Palestinian Christian women, we stand at this intersection of gender, ethnicity, religion, and colonization, offering a unique perspective that the world desperately needs to hear.

Like Tabitha's garments displayed to Peter as evidence of a life that mattered, each piece of Palestinian embroidery testifies: our lives matter, our stories matter, our traditions will not die. Our needles pierce fabric as our words now pierce silence. Both acts—stitching and speaking—declare that Palestinian women will continue to create life and meaning even as systems of death surround us.

Our Hope

As Palestinian Christian women, our *sumud* and "our hope remains strong, because it is from God. God alone is good, almighty and loving and His goodness will one day be victorious over the evil in which we find ourselves" (Kairos Palestine, §3.1).

With those who signed the Call to Repentance, "In the absence of all hope, we cry out our cry of hope. We believe in God, good and just. We believe that God's goodness will finally triumph over the evil of hate and of death that still persist in our land" (Kairos Palestine, §10).

Until that day comes, we will not be silent. We will speak truth. We will demand justice. We will work for peace. And we will never stop insisting that our children—all our children—deserve to live.

**Signed,
Palestinian Christian Women from across historic Palestine;
The named and the unnamed, the heard and the unheard, the visible and the invisible**

^[1] *Tatreez* is traditional Palestinian embroidery that carries cultural, regional, and personal significance through its patterns and motifs.

^[2] *Sumud* (Arabic: صمود) is a central concept in Palestinian culture meaning steadfastness, perseverance, and resilience in the face of oppression.

^[3] The concept of "unchildling" is developed by Palestinian scholar Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian to describe how colonial violence systematically strips children of their childhood.