

Dear EKD friends:

8 October 2022

Recently I became aware of what happened at the WCC General Assembly. It was sad to know that my Palestinian brothers and sisters were restricted from openly sharing their everyday experiences of living under the oppressive Israeli occupation for the last 55 years.

*An important question to ask is this: As followers of Jesus Christ, are we faithful to the truth or to people of power who want to silence the truth? In our experience with the government of Israel, Israel has no qualms with manipulating the truth in order to achieve its objective.

*In our experience, the three organizations, namely, B'Tselem (Jewish), Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International are reliable and trustworthy. They do their work with honesty, professionalism and scientific integrity.

*When the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu visited us in Jerusalem and witnessed the Israeli oppressive system, he told me that the racism he saw in Israel against the Palestinians, was much worse than apartheid in South Africa. Moreover, I find the statement of the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Thabo Makgoba who also visited us in Jerusalem and who experienced Apartheid firsthand in his homeland, is more trustworthy and credible than the deceptive propaganda of Israeli officials.

*Instead of debating whether the word "apartheid" applies to Israel or not, I would like to invite you as our brothers and sisters in Germany to come and see for yourselves. We want to ask you to be the judge. I am sure Sabeel as well as other organizations would be glad to show you around. But, please, don't be guided by the people of power, but let the spirit of Jesus Christ, our liberator who preached freedom for the poor and oppressed in the Nazareth Synagogue be your guide. And then you can decide whether our Palestinian brothers and sisters are living under an Israeli form of racism (*Hafrada*), apartheid or not. Even more than this, Sabeel, Jerusalem is willing to be guided by you on the West Bank including East Jerusalem so that you can show us if our experience of living under Israel's occupation is biased and inaccurate. We are ready to listen to you with open minds and hearts.

*Our Lord Jesus Christ said that he came to give us life, life abundant. As our friends, you are our partners in the work of justice, peace, and healing. Let us work together for the dignity and freedom for all of God's children in Palestine/Israel.

The Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek

Chair of Sabeel's General Assembly, Jerusalem