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**Statement to be read out in Bethlehem on 11 December 2009**

My dear Palestinian brothers and sisters, and friends gathered at the launch of the Palestinian Kairos document

We are reminded by Holy Scripture that "when one part of the Body suffers, we all suffer". Solidarity with you in your suffering is therefore not a theoretical matter for those of us in the Church, but is a concrete expression of the deep unity we have in Christ Jesus, in his body. Even though we are many miles apart, we are one with each other through Christ Jesus our Lord and nothing can separate us from each other and from his love. During our struggle in South Africa we were assured of your solidarity and we now stand with you not only in your hour of pain and suffering but also in this moment of victory.

Despite your suffering under the illegal occupation, you are coming together to say, quite tremendously, that your faith, hope and love compels you to keep on keeping on knowing that the God of the Bible is on your side and will bring you the freedom and the justice you long for. You are also coming together to affirm your common humanity with your Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters, and our common Abrahamic bond. I can only commend this and wish you well as you continue to build friendships across whatever walls may be constructed. This example that you are setting will inspire people across the world to do the same and to move away from conflict in the name of religion

This is a special time for you, and especially now as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. His birth brought the solidarity and the unity of our "God with us" in a very real and concrete way. From the time of his birth the special link of humanity to God - and even the divinization of our humanity - can now no longer be questioned. How sad then that your humanity is being trodden underfoot so viciously by forces opposed to goodness and humanity? But you are victorious because goodness will always be stronger than evil and death.

You are in my prayers as you launch this very special document. It is filled with grace, where it could have been filled with anger. It is filled with profound and prophetic words and, our God who neither slumbers nor sleeps, will hear your cry and will be your Emmanuel. With that assurance, I wish you all God's blessing during your launch and during your celebrations of the birth of Christ.

Archbishop-emeritus Desmond Mpilo Tutu  
11 December 2009