



Saturday 17 May 2025

**An opening message
to the churches**

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

Welcome to CONFESS, a new movement for Christians of all backgrounds and cultures, which has come into existence at a very dark moment of human history, in order to do our utmost, under God, to make a difference.

A month ago, 9 April 2025, saw the 80th anniversary of the martyrdom of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, founding member of the Confessing Church, which stood up to the evil of the Nazi regime at a time when the freedom of Europe was in jeopardy and Jewish people were being exterminated on a grotesque and industrial scale.

As we commemorated Bonhoeffer, it occurred to me that we are now over 18 months into the worst crime of the twenty-first century, and it struck me that the Church needs to be, and do, more. *Much more*. We must, now, follow in the steps of Bonhoeffer, and other courageous prophets, by acting and speaking against the current atrocities taking place in the land of Jesus himself.

And so it was, two days ago, 15 May 2025, that we launched CONFESS. That day marked the 77th anniversary of the *Nakba* (Arabic for 'catastrophe'). There can be no better description of this than the one found on Wikipedia: "*The ethnic cleansing of Palestinian Arabs through their violent displacement and dispossession of land, property, and belongings, along with the destruction of their society and the suppression of their culture, identity, political rights, and national aspirations.*" This catastrophe has continued virtually unabated to the present day, and has intensified exponentially over the last 20 months, to the extent that the International Court of Justice is currently examining the evidence of genocide, and the blockade on food and aid means that an entire population is on the brink of starvation

As I write, the death toll in Gaza since October 2023 stands at over 55,000, with over 80% of these deaths being civilians, including women, children, journalists, aid workers, and medical workers. Hundreds more are being killed in the occupied West Bank, by a malign coalition of the military and far-right settlers. In the last three days alone, hundreds of civilians, including many women and children, have been killed in airstrikes, including on yet another hospital. Back in April (on Palm Sunday), Israel bombed the Anglican-run Al-Ahli hospital. There are now virtually no health facilities left in the whole of Gaza.

This ruthless onslaught has long-since stopped having anything to do with self-defence, if it ever did. Israeli government's express policy is to eviscerate Gaza and bring an end to all Palestinian life there, whether by forcible transfer or death. Even leading Israeli legal scholars are calling this a "*textbook case*" of genocide.

When faced with our new movement, some will question our focus. Why are some Christians seemingly "*obsessed*" with Palestine, often to the exclusion of the world's other conflict zones and

humanitarian disasters? Aren't we fuelling antisemitism (consciously or otherwise) by drawing parallels between the need for a Confessing Church in Germany during the Second World War, and the need for a modern-day equivalent now?

Categorically - no. Whilst the question of Israel is certainly a complex one for the church, and one that CONFESS is committed to exploring, the current behaviour of the Israeli government and military is as uncomplex as it gets. And whilst the Israeli government and its cheerleaders continue to bemoan what it claims is disproportionate attention in the media, in reality the opposite is the case. Western media often sells Israel a pass, manipulating reality with disingenuous language, and even justifying the continued atrocities. Whilst other governments have begun to impose sanctions on Israel, our own government continues to enable these horrors through the provision of arms and intelligence support and through continued economic trade. In truth, it is not just the rapidity and scale of the atrocities which sets this situation apart from other contemporary disasters, it is this wide-eyed complicity by our own governments, facilitated by the ignorance and apathy of ordinary people (including in our churches).

So, CONFESS is for Christians who have simply had enough. It is a gathering place for those who want to make sure they are on the right side of history, and – more – to impact history in a small way. On the website, you will find links to resources, ideas for action, and thoughtful articles to share, all with a view to influencing what happens in the days and months ahead.

As we raise our voices against what is currently taking place in Gaza, and indeed the West Bank, we must – of course – maintain a “firewall” against any insidious forms of antisemitism. The fifth of our Five Tenets reminds us of *“the dignity of every human being, made in the image of God, and stands square against racism and discrimination of every kind”*, and to remain *“alert to any language or action that seeks to perpetuate cycles of hatred, dehumanisation or violence.”* And just as the vicious racism of the current Israeli regime does no service to Israel or to the Jewish community worldwide, so any lazy language that allows “Israel” to be conflated with “the Jews”, or any anti-Jewish tropes are not only abhorrent *per se*, but only serve to degrade and undermine the cause of Palestinian rights and freedoms.

The bottom line, brothers and sisters, is this. The current atrocities which we are seeing day-by-day in Palestine, are precisely that. They are *seen*. They are *livestreamed*. They are even boasted about by the perpetrators, who have long forgotten their own humanity in the rabid drive to eradicate the “other.”

It is time to speak and to act. God save us from any more toothless “statements” from church leaders aimed into the ether; from anodyne prayers for peace, with their dangerous language of false-equivalence; and from the culpable ignorance which insists that this all began in autumn 2023.

Finally, pray. Pray for swift justice for the people of Palestine. Thank God for their unparalleled courage and dignity. Thank God for the courage of Israeli dissenters. Pray that hearts darkened by evil will soften. Pray for yourselves, for the strength to act and the wisdom to orientate with the grain of God's kingdom, just as Dietrich Bonhoeffer did 80 years ago:

*“O God, early in the morning I cry to you.
...I cannot do this alone.
In me there is darkness,
But with you there is light;
...enable me to live now
that I may answer before you and before men.”*