

## **Palestine as a Model of Tolerance and Religious Brotherhood**

**Rasem S. M. Bisharat**

*A Ph.d Candidate at the Centre for West Asian Studies Jamia Millia Islamia*

---

**ABSTRACT:** In light of growing of the terrorism, the sectarian, ethnic and religious disturbances in the Middle East recently, which followed by the attacks against religious sects, such as Yazidism in Sinjar in northern Iraq, Christians in Mosul, and Churches in Egypt. A Palestine unique case in the Middle East comes to highlight the fact that it is the center of heavenly religions, the land of peace and coexistence, and it is the true model that humanity aspires to reach. This paper discusses the subject of religious tolerance in Palestine among the components of society, Muslims, Christians and Jewish Samaritans, by discussing the factors that contribute in the dissemination of the concept of tolerance, cooperation and coexistence, through the common denominators among all, whether they were cultural, historical or social. This was accompanied of sharing of concerns and hopes, led to build a solid ground for mutual respect and understanding that prevailed in Palestine for hundreds of years ago. This situation has been preceded before the laws and charters which developed by international organizations, such as the United Nations and UNESCO, where it has become a model to draw the hope for building a better future for all humanity.

**Key words:** Palestine, Israel, Muslims, Christians, tolerance, religious brotherhood.

-----  
Date of Submission: 29-09-2017

Date of acceptance: 06-10-2017  
-----

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Arab spring phenomenon has overrun the Arab region by the end of the first decade of the third millennium. It left behind deep changes that reached the political, religious and social aspects of the region. The most prominent was the rise of the Political Islam and its assumption of power in more than one Arab country. Egypt was one of the most important countries. The Muslim Brotherhood movement came at the forefront of Islamic movements that topped the political front. The political expectations of academic and political researchers in the region indicate the ease of access of this movement to power in any Arab country participating in the elections. The reasons for its easy victory were explained by the fact that this movement was trans-border and there is no patriotic or national movement that can compete and overcome it in the event of democratic and fair elections.

Beside the Muslim Brotherhood movement, the region has witnessed rapid growth of Salafi and Wahhabi radical movements. It has spread its branches and several cells in the area and the spread of al Qaeda in the region, especially in Iraq and Syria. The Islamic State in Iraq ISI, led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was emerged along with Al Nusra front, Ahrar Al Sham and the Sham Army in Syria. After Zarqawi's death, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi took over the leadership of the Islamic State organization. This organization had pledged Ayman al-Zawahiri and then separated from him to declare the formation of the Islamic state in Iraq and Syria ISIS. Later on, it took over the north of Iraq and Al Mosel in addition to the north of Syria. It announced Mosul as the capital of the organization in Iraq and the city of Raqqa, the capital of the organization in Syria. tens of thousands of fighters, who came from around the world, joined them. More than 80 percent of whom were from outside the region (estimated at between 50 and 120 thousand in 2011).

The emergence of extremist terrorist groups in the region was accompanied by the proliferation of concepts and ideas alien to the region, so that it has nothing to do with the culture and history of the region. As a result, there was the spread of the culture of atonement and denial of the other; which has been accompanied by the escalation of attacks on religious minorities, ethnic and ethnic living in the region for thousands of years, in coexistence and tolerance side by side with Sunni Muslims and Shiites. This led to the migration of many families to save their lives, leaving behind their property and homes to be taken over by those organizations.

After the control of Al Mosel and the north of Iraq by the ISIS, the organization sought to practice ethnic and religious cleansing in the areas under its control. This caused the displacement of entire villages of Yazidis and thousands of Christians from northern Iraq. The branch of the ISIS in Sinai carried out a series of bombings in Egypt targeting Christian churches, monasteries and Christian schools, as well as hotels and centers for Muslims and government institutions and also targeted the Egyptian army. Targeting was not limited to non-Muslim communities but there was the killing of Sunni and Shiite on identity in Iraq.

The culture of exclusion and negation of the other led to striking the concept of social and national fabric and civil coexistence in the areas controlled by the terrorist organizations and led to fueling the conflict between the communities and groups in the region. This contributed to the discharge of entire areas of the population and led to material and human losses and the deterioration of the economy in those countries along with the emigration of millions of Muslims, Christians, Yazidis and Kurds.

This paper argues that the cultural heritage of the Palestinian people, embodied in its current form, is the result of a long common history of 4,000 years, which led to the crystallization of a unique national identity, which had a great influence on the behavior and thinking of Palestinian society. These cultural backgrounds and national identity have been and remains the barrier that protects the state of religious tolerance between different religious and ethnic communities of the Palestinian people. As that, the Palestinian national identity has one historical and ethnic roots that have been embodied in the Palestinian land, interacted with its history, and acquired unique advantages that made it unique among the peoples of the region. The Zionist threat has contributed for more than a hundred years until today in consolidating the concept of common destiny in facing the common danger.

The study is based on the analytical historical method through analyzing the historical roots of the Palestinian people in all its components along with studying the factors and circumstances that unite these people in facing the common challenges, in addition to the participatory role in building the present and the future of these people and spreading the culture of opinion and the others' opinion. The study also depends on living models that reflect the real cohesion of the Palestinian people, which has created a unique situation for the world to learn about tolerance and religious brotherhood between Muslims and Christians in the Holy Land.

The paper tries to be guided by the philosopher Amartya Sen in warning against Israeli colonial policy in the occupied Palestinian territories, with regard to banditry and the promotion of sectarian strife, within the policy of divide and rule. That policy in which Britain was following during its colonial activity, especially in India, whereby Mahatma Gandhi confronted it. In that policy, the identity of people is determined based on religious ethnicity and giving priority to a particular group at the expense of other identities. This leads to the emergence of barriers between different ethnicities and leads to imbalance in the social fabric and coexistence between those ethnicities. It also leads to the domination of that particular group on other groups, which generates more divisions that cause other groups to seek secession and cause bloodshed.

## **II. THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

Historical facts confirm that most of the people currently living in the Fertile Crescent (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine) are Semitic peoples and that their original homeland was in the Arabian Peninsula. In the mid-19th century, Adolf Schrenberger asserted that the Semites were Arabs; including the Acadians who settled in Iraq in the fourth millennium BC, and the Canaanites who settled in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. That also includes the Arameans who settled in Syria, and the Ghassanis who settled in areas of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan. Besides, the last Semitic wave that emerged from the Arabian Peninsula was Arab Muslims (**Rabat, 2009**).

Ghassanis is an alliance of several Arab Christian tribes, the most famous of which is the Azzd, which believes in the one-nature doctrine of the Monophysite. They came to the region at the end of the third century AD, which resulted in a dispute with the Byzantine Empire which believes in the two natures of Christ. The dispute remained and it negatively affected the relations between the two parties. One of the most important results was the joining of the Christian Ghassanis army to the Arab Islamic Army in the Battle of Yarmouk in 636. The results of the battle came with the victory of the Arabs and the expulsion of the Byzantines from the entire region (**Madabiel, 2009, 25**).

When Arab Muslims came to the region, the majority of the country's population was Christian. Besides, the dominant language in the region was two languages: Aramaic (the language of Jesus Christ) and Arabic. When Muslim Arabs came to the area and expelled the Byzantines, the inhabitants accepted them as liberators rather than invaders. The policy of tolerance among Muslims led to the conversion of a large section of the population to the Islamic religion during the first Hijri century / the 7<sup>th</sup> AD (**Rabat, 2009**).

Blood tangle between Muslims and Christians in Palestine has greatly contributed to the consolidation of the concepts of tolerance and brotherhood over the past centuries. Many Palestinian families have been divided into Christian and Islamic religions, such as the Bisharat family in Nazareth (Christians), in Jerusalem and Nablus (Muslims), and dozens of other families.

Among the Arab families in Palestine, whose origins are Ghassanis, is the Khazen family, which has spread to several geographical areas, including Ein Arik, Bir Zeit and part of the population of Al Taiba (**Madabiel, 2009, 29**). The researcher Moflih Al Adwan confirms that the dynasty of Al Khazen family is spread in Al-Taiba, Bir Zeit, Jaffna, Ein Arik and Zababdah. He mentioned in his book "Tribes of Dababneh descendants of Ghassanis", that in the middle of the fourteenth century, the brothers Farah, Khalil, Saleh and Nimer, who are the sons of Solomon bin Nimr Al Khazen Al Ghassani, emigrated from Lebanon to eastern

Jordan. Then from Jordan, the brothers Farah and Nimer moved to Palestine and settled in Al Taiba and from their descendants came the Palestinian Christians of those towns (**Al-Adwan, 2014**).

The history of the residents of Beit Sahour on the location of the Church of the Fathers and the Grandfathers of the Orthodox Romans indicates that the city of Beit Sahour was almost devoid of population in the thirteenth century. In that century, Christian families began to consecutively move to it escaping from oppression and religious persecution in the areas where they lived. That includes the family of David, the grandfather of Al Qazha tribe that is attributed to the Christian state of Ghassanis, and that was in the first half of the seventeenth century AD, in 1630 (**The Church of the Fathers, 2012**).

It is also certain that the families of Al-Farahiyeh in the city of Bethlehem end in proportion to Ghassanis, since their grandfather Farah came from Wadi Musa in 600, which was part of the state of Ghassanis. Al-Farahna is composed of the following families: Nasser, Jaar, Twima, Jasir, Abu Ayyash, Al Jamal, Younis, Sakan, Doiri, Salibi, Salama, Al-Aamy, Zoghbi, Qattan, Hanania, Quraa, Salem, Aby Hamood, Abu Swadeh, Qazaqia, Mora, Miladah, Zabliah, Maria, Baloot, Asfora, Faqosa, Salman, Abu Al dennin, Harb, Muslim, Al Araj, Babon, Shehadeh, Sayeh, Hayhi, Jaddy, Saadi.

As for the Palestinian population, it is estimated that the total number is 14 million, including 2 million Palestinian Christians. The majority of the Palestinian people live in historic Palestine and the Arab countries surrounding Palestine, as for the rest, they are outside the Arab world. Palestinian laws guarantee all their historical rights and emphasize their attachment to their homeland no matter how long. Palestinian law defines the Palestinian as a person born to a Palestinian father. A Palestinian resident in Palestine or abroad, regardless of the circumstances of leaving the country, is a Palestinian citizen, and this applies to Christian Palestinians as it applies to Palestinian Muslims (**Laham, 2012**).

Although there are no official statistics on the number of Palestinians outside the area, the above figures are estimated. Chile, for example, has a Palestinian community of 400,000, 95% of whom are Christians from Bethlehem, Beit Sahour and Beit Jala. In Brazil, the number is more than 60,000, including one Palestinian family, the Asfora family, whose members numbered 5,000 in 2002 (**Asfora, 2002**). Hissa Hazin (**Hazin**), a Brazilian of Palestinian descent from Bethlehem, described the history of his family's migration in the early 20th century. He clarified the reasons for Palestinian immigration at the time, saying that it began after the visit of Emperor Pedro II of the Holy Land and encourage the Arabs to migrate to Brazil. After the emperor's meeting with the Christian clergy in Bethlehem, clerics thought of sending envoys to raise funds for churches in Palestine that were living in difficult economic conditions. It was the same that pushed the Palestinians to emigrate during the First World War and Palestine under British Mandate, which was limiting the Palestinian people for the establishment of the Jewish national homeland in Palestine. The researcher added that the situation in Palestine reflected on the Palestinian immigrants in that period and made them not look back, in reference to the lack of desire to return to Palestine.

### **III. THE IMPACT OF ISRAELI OCCUPATION ON THE PALESTINIANS**

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 led to the displacement of about 700,000 Palestinians from their towns and villages then made them refugees. The population of Palestine before the first Arab-Israeli war and the establishment of the State of Israel, was one million nine hundred and eighty thousand, of whom 145,000 were Christians, or 7.6% of the total population. After the war and the establishment of the State of Israel, only 34,000 Christians remained in the territories on which Israel was established, and 60 thousand, or 41.3% of the Palestinian Christians, became refugees outside Palestine, while 51,000 Palestinian Christians, who lived outside the lands on which Israel was established, were not affected. Those are the residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Which indicates that the establishment of the State of Israel was the main factor, which led to a decrease in the proportion of Palestinian Christians and reached 2.4%. The high proportion of Christian refugees is due to the fact that the western neighborhoods of Jerusalem, which were predominantly Christian Palestinians, were occupied by the Israelis in the war between 1947 and 1949, and that 34% of the land they occupied in Western Jerusalem was owned by Christian churches (**Mouzahem, 2012**).

After Israel occupied the Palestinian and Arab territories in 1967, Israeli policies have contributed in reducing the number of Palestinians in general and Christian Palestinians in particular in the Palestinian territories. This in fact was meant to push them out of the country, whether from Israel, Jerusalem or the rest of the West Bank so that they control their land and property, And place it under the control of a government department called "Department of Absentees' Property", which is rented by the department for a hundred years for Israeli tenants. The targeting of Christian Palestinians is due to two reasons:

The first is political: it is represented by Israel's attempts to pass the Jewish state project by saying that Palestine is Islamic and that there are only Muslims. Israel has the right to demand that it be Jewish, in order to deprive a non-Jew of his rights in Israel and seize his property and expel him from the country because he is not a Jew.

Second: The historic lands of Palestine were mostly registered in the name of the Islamic Waqf or the ecclesiastical endowment supervised by the Church. Israel's policy is to confiscate Palestinian land for the construction of Israeli settlements, so it is easy to control Christian property if the Christian presence ends. Israel has taken control of many lands belonging to the Palestinian Church, including the land on which the Israeli parliament is based (The Knesset). The Old City of Jerusalem was one of the most heavily harassed areas in Israel. In 1967, the year in which Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the population of the Old City of Jerusalem was 70,000, 40% were Christians. After the occupation of the city, numbers started to decrease reaching 1.5% today (**Joeyhan, 2017**).

Palestinian journalist Saqr Abu Fakhr, in a study entitled "Christians of the Holy Land: Hidden Objects or Witnesses?" Published in an appendix to the Lebanese newspaper Al-Safir in October 2011, warned of the danger on Christian Palestinians as a result of emigration, and warned that the Holy Land would become in decades without Christians. He said in his study that there is a humanitarian, civilizational and political disaster that is undoubtedly coming to Palestine. This catastrophe is that the land of Christ and the land of the first Christianity, before Antioch, will become in the next four decades almost exclusively without Christians except what remains from the sheiks in their caverns, the priests in their monastery and the priests in their churches. Most likely and during the next 20 years, no Christian will remain in Bethlehem, the city of the birth of Christ, if immigration rates continue to be the same (**Mouzahem, 2012**).

The Palestinian Leadership has noticed this danger and started several years ago to limit this immigration, whether for Muslims or Christians, and in particular Christian migration. The Palestinian leadership considered that the increase in migration was leading to the loss of Palestine to its unique and distinctive identity which it had experienced for thousands of years, which represented the existence of a diverse social, religious and cultural fabric. As a result, the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, announced the formation of the Supreme Presidential Committee in PLO for the follow-up of the affairs of the Churches. The PLO is the highest political authority in the State of Palestine.

#### **IV. IDENTITY, DESTINY AND UNDIVIDED NATIONAL INTEREST**

The Palestinians; Muslims and Christians, were alerted to the danger that surrounds Palestine as a result of the British Mandate in 1918, which issued the Balfour Declaration of 1917 regarding the establishment of a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine and made one of the objectives of the Mandate is to implement the promise of Palestine to receive Jews and establish a state for them at the cost of its Palestinian people. The beginning of the Palestinian struggle united Muslims and Christians and formed the Christian Islamic Association in 1918. It opened branches in all the cities and regions of Palestine to resist the Zionist threat and the British occupation and to demand the independence of Palestine. The associations have contributed in unifying the national front, directing national action in the pursuit of independence and confronting Zionism, and has worked to thwart conferences held outside the national consensus, such as the second missionary conference held in Jerusalem in 1928 and was boycotted and failed by Christian Palestinians.

The struggle was not only on the political side, but also on the military side. Anton Jamil Dawood, born to a Palestinian family from Bethlehem that reside in Bogota, the capital of Colombia, returned to Palestine in 1936 and joined the Palestinian revolution. In 1947, he blew up the Jewish Agency in West Jerusalem. Anton remained a fighter alongside Abdul Qadir al-Husseini until the end of the war. Then, he left Palestine and returned to Latin America. There, he joined Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. He was in charge of guerrilla training, then joined Guevara in Bolivia, then visited China and Vietnam, returned to Palestine and joined the Popular Front for the liberation of Palestine until he died in Kuwait in 1969.

The Palestinian woman did not distance herself from the struggle for the independence of Palestine. There was the joint struggle of the Palestinian women; Christian and Muslim, took place side by side in all stages of struggle and resistance. The National Feminist Movement organized its fronts through the formation of women's associations. The most famous of these was the Women's Renaissance Association in Jerusalem, founded in 1929 and co-founded by Muslim and Christian women, one of them was Mateel Mognem, 1900-1987. She is a political activist and author of 'The Arab Women and the Palestine Problem'. She is the wife of Elias Mognem, secretary of the Seventh Palestinian National Congress, which was held in 1928. The magnificence of the Palestinian feminist struggle and religious tolerance in Palestine was manifested in the feminist demonstration led by Mateel Mognem and Tarab Abdel Hadi on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1933, which coincided with Friday, the Muslim holy day. The march was against the British colonial policy and the march took place inside the Old City of Jerusalem to Al-Aqsa Mosque. Then Mateel Mognem, who was Christian, gave a sermon at the pulpit of Omar Mosque. Then the march went to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and Tarab Abdul Hadi, a Muslim woman, gave a sermon before the crowds of Christian believers in front of the Holy Sepulcher (**Yassin, 137**).

During the first Palestinian intifada, which began in late 1987, and was a popular uprising in which the Palestinian people participated in various political, religious and social spectrums, the Intifada witnessed a series

of statements by the heads of the Christian communities in Jerusalem between January 1988 and January 1992, participating in strikes, boycotting, the closure of churches and shrines, and the ringing of bells on certain occasions, and the city of Beit Sahour led the first civil disobedience against Israel.

There is no doubt that what Amartya Sen (2005, 16), who has Nobel Laureate in economics, poses; applies to the reality of the Palestinian people. He emphasized that the sense of identity of any group of people can make an important contribution to make the relationship with others strong and warm, starting with neighbors and members of the group or citizens themselves from the people of the homeland. As well as the common identity that makes the life of the community go better. This intersects with what Dr Hanna Issa, Secretary General of the Christian Islamic Organization for the Support of Jerusalem and Holy Sites (Issa, 2014), believes in. He emphasizes a series of facts that characterize the Muslim-Christian encounter in the East in general and in Palestine in particular. He also points out that the presence of Christian holy sites and the recognition of Islam through the age-old pledge given by Caliph Omar Ibn Al-Khattab to Patriarch Seferonius at the liberation of Jerusalem in 638 AD is an affirmation of the rights and places of worship of Christians. This is the clearest example of how Islam recognizes the Christian Holy Places. In addition to that, there is the presence of Christians in shared places in cities and villages with other citizens share their lives with their sufferings and hopes in a common history and destiny, along with the contributions of Palestinian Christian institutions in the fields of education, health and various services regardless of the religious background of those affected by these contributions. Palestinian Christians with their national and religious roots. All of these factors contributed in the creation of a single national identity for all the Palestinian people, reflected positively on a long life full of understanding, tolerance and brotherhood. This makes the Palestinians, Muslims and Christians, rejecting Christians as a minority, but as an authentic part of this people.

Christian Palestinians, like their Palestinian Muslim brothers, welcomed the Oslo accords signed between Israel and the PLO in September 1993. During the visit of the late President Yasser Arafat to the city of Bethlehem, he received a huge public reception. Archbishop Samir Qafaiti likened the arrival of President Arafat to the city by the arrival of Caliph Omar ibn al-Khattab, whom he described as the most honest and far-sighted caliphate, who respected the situation of the Christians in Jerusalem (Dumber, 2001, 10).

Going back to Sen (170), he believes that identifying people on the basis of religious ethnicity and giving priority to a group above all other identities is a disaster that has catastrophic consequences. Israel, as an occupying power of the Palestinian territories and controlling the lives of the Palestinians, has tried to play this option by trying to break the Palestinian social fabric and incite sectarian and religious tensions between Muslims and Christians in Palestine in general and in Jerusalem in particular since the first occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967. It followed the approach of Britain's colonization of India in its divide-and-rule policy. The result was the split of the Indian subcontinent into three states in 1948 after a civil war that killed tens of thousands, destroyed thousands of homes and scattered millions of Muslims and Hindus.

Since 1967, Israel has begun a special policy towards Palestinian Christians, with two main objectives: the first is to spread discrimination between Palestinian Christians and Muslims in order to block any possibility of a Muslim-Christian religious alliance that would strengthen the Palestinian national leadership particularly in Jerusalem that is targeted by Israel. Besides, working to thwart any attempt to establish a united Christian front against the Israeli policies in Jerusalem, the result of which is to weaken an important sector of the Palestinian people that would weaken the Palestinian resistance to Israeli policies. The second objective is to ensure the success of the Israeli government's efforts to acquire or lease all that can be obtained from the lands of the churches. Besides, raising the dispute between the Christian community and its non-Palestinian religious leaders (Dumber, 2001, 4-5).

When the Israeli efforts failed because of the awareness of the Palestinian people of Muslims and Christians of the seriousness of the Israeli plans on the ground and man, they resorted to other methods to incite the Palestinian people. The Israel Today newspaper (Edar, 2015), which is close to the Israeli right, is inciting the Palestinians, directing its media address to the Pope and the West, and promoting the recognition by the Vatican and the West of the Palestinian state that the Palestinians will rape and kill the Christians. Besides, in a letter published by the Israeli journalist Darour Adar in the newspaper, he addressed to His Holiness Pope Francis, calling on him not to recognize the state of Palestine, saying that this state will fight the Christian people in the region.

## V. PARTNERSHIP IN BUILDING THE HOMELAND

Christians and Muslims in Palestine refuse to have any culture different from each other. Everyone adopted a single identity by connecting Palestine and its culture to an Arab national, where the religious factor is a factor of support and unity not a factor of division. None of the parties thought of being dragged behind the cultural task that promotes creed, denomination or sect at the expense of the homeland, the country and the state. They do not go beyond the framework of the institution and the law. Therefore, the cultural disease, as researcher Ali Harb says (2010, 24), leads to influx of disputes between sects and groups. As a result, history

has not recorded any dispute or controversy resulting from the difference of religion on the contrary, Palestine, for centuries, has been the shelter for any persecuted person because of his religion or ethnicity. Palestine has embraced Qaoq, Qafjak, Armen and Circassians as well as many Christian families that were brought to Palestine centuries ago to escape from Religious persecution in its regions as previously reported.

Christians are an integral part of the Palestinian Arab society, an important element in its history, which contributed to the making of its events and constituted an important element in its struggle and heritage. The churches considered themselves part of the Palestinian Arab environment, and their educational, health, social and economic contributions served the Palestinian society without distinction between Muslims and Christians. It also has been credited with developing health and education in the Palestinian territories since the mid of the 19th century, when it began to build modern hospitals and schools that did not differentiate between Palestinians in providing services.

Father Attallah Hanna, Archbishop of Sebastia of the Greek Orthodox, confirms on more than one occasion that the Palestinian Christians suffered as the entire Palestinian people suffered (**Hanna, 2017**). They also has experienced pain as same as the entire Palestinian people went through. He noted that Palestinian Christians have their presence in cultural, intellectual, human, social and national life. Besides, they will not and will never abandon their message, their presence and their duty towards their homeland and the just cause of their people.

Researcher Dima Ayad reports that 45% of institutional work in Palestine is a work of Christian institutions. These institutions provided job opportunities for some 22,000 Palestinian families, including 15,000 Muslim families and seven Christian families. In addition to the relief and charitable services that the Church is constantly doing to the Palestinian society, which indicates the role of Christian Palestinians in fighting poverty and promoting equality among the sons of one people (**Ayyad, 2016**).

Additionally, Bishop Suhail Douani, Archbishop of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East, assures that the Palestinian Church provides educational and health services to 30 institutions without distinction of religion or sex. He believes that the Palestinians must work hard to enhance joint Islamic-Christian coexistence and improve the interfaith dialogue so that this country becomes a role model throughout the globe (**Joeyhan, 2017**).

The issue of partnership did not stop at the economic and social partnership, but went beyond political participation and peaceful struggle for the liberation of Palestine from the Israeli occupation. The Kairus Palestine document, launched by 15 members of the various Palestinian ecclesiastical communities on December 11, 2009, was a Palestinian initiative that was directed to the Western world in general and to the Western Churches in particular. It carried the name of "The Moment of Truth: The Word of Faith, Hope and Love in The Heart of The Palestinian Suffering".

The document ensured that the presence of Christians and Palestinian Muslims on the land of Palestine was not an emergency, but it is deeply striking at the roots of the history and geography of this land, such as the connection of any people to its land on which it lives. Besides, an injustice occurred when the Palestinian people were forced to abandon from their land when the West wanted to compensate the Jews for what the European countries committed against them. The compensation came at the expense of the Palestinian people and their land. The West tried to correct that injustice but it resulted with a new injustice on the Palestinian people (**Bryant, 2013, 29**).

The document represents a declaration to the world that the Israeli occupation is a sin against God and against human because it deprives the Palestinian person of his fundamental human rights granted by God. It also opposes any theology that claims to rely on the Bible, creed or history to justify the occupation and considers it outside the teachings of the Church simply because it calls for violence and holy war in the name of God and subject religion to immediate human interests. It is also distorting its image in the human being at the same time under political injustice and theological injustice. Accordingly, this paper sends a message to the world to end this occupation and invite him to boycott Israel and withdraw investment and impose an economic embargo on it until it ends its occupation of Palestine (**World Council of Churches, 2011, 120-121**).

## **VI. THE ROLE OF PALESTINIAN LAW IN PROTECTING THE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS FABRIC IN PALESTINE**

The Palestinian National Charter (**Palestinian National Council**), adopted by the Palestinian National Council at the session held on July 10-17, 1968, considered the Palestinian people as a single and indistinguishable element between a Muslim and a Christian, and also described the Palestinian people in the articles of the Charter as "the Palestinian Arab people." Besides, article 10 of the Charter called for unifying the energies of the people and mobilizing their forces for the battle of liberation. "The guerilla action requires the mobilization of all the Palestinian and Palestinian energies and their organization and its involvement in the Palestinian armed revolution and the achievement of national cohesion among the various groups of the Palestinian people. This is to ensure the continuation of the revolution and its rise and victory.

The Palestinian leader, who was the second man in the Palestine Liberation Organization, Salah Khalaf “Abu Iyad” assured that the Palestinian people live in a national movement that does not differentiate between religions or the Palestinian people. All worship God and believe in him. As a result, the Declaration of Independence, adopted by the Palestinian National Council at the Algiers session on November 15, 1988, affirms that “the State of Palestine belongs to the Palestinians wherever they are. They develop their national and cultural identity and enjoy full equality of rights, safeguarding their religious and political beliefs and their human dignity. This is through a parliamentary democratic system based on freedom of opinion, freedom of party formation, majority care for minority rights, minority respect decisions of the majority, social justice, equality and non-discrimination in public rights on the basis of race, religion, color or between women and men, of the rule of law and the independent judiciary and on the basis of the full fulfillment of the spiritual and civilized heritage of Palestine in tolerance and tolerant coexistence between religions over the centuries **(Palestinian National Council, 1988)**.”

Upon the establishment of the first national authority for the Palestinian people, legislation and laws were issued which guaranteed all their rights and guaranteed religious freedom and freedom of belief for all the Palestinian people. The Basic Law on Rights and Freedoms was ratified in Ramallah on May 29, 2002. The second section of the Basic Law on Rights and Freedoms states that Palestinians are equal before the law and the judiciary, and that no discrimination is made on grounds of race, sex, color, religion, political opinion or disability (Article 9) . Article 18 guarantees the freedom of belief, worship and the exercise of religious rites to ensure the law, provided that it does not disturb public order or public morals **(The Palestinian National Authority, 2002)**.

As for the position of the Islamic Resistance Movement “*Hammas*” **(Al-Dajni, 2016)**, the head of its political bureau Khaled Meshal said that the literature of the movement recognizes the Christian Palestinians as a fundamental component of the Palestinian people and an active part of the homeland. He also affirms that in the *Hammas* movement, “we deal with the Christian brothers as a basic component of the people and the homeland, and as an active part in the struggle against the occupation, away from the calculations that this is a Muslim and this is a Christian, we are partners in the homeland, and everyone has rights and duties.”

## **VII. LIVING MODELS ON TOLERANCE AND BROTHERHOOD IN PALESTINE**

The written laws were not a dead letter but rather the reality of the Palestinian people, including the state of great cohesion between the different sects and spectrums. There was a variation forms of such cohesion, cooperation and co-existence between the Palestinians, Muslims and Christians. This research cannot count all the examples because it needs volumes, as every day, when the sun rises on Palestine, is an example. Here we will quote some to indicate that tolerance:

An example of the establishment of the Supreme Presidential Committee for Church Affairs in Palestine, which was established by a presidential decree issued by the Head of State of Palestine on May 23, 2012, is the closest translation of the truth of internal Palestinian feelings and cohesion. The preamble of the establishment expressed this by saying **(Amira, n.d)**:

“In the State of Palestine, we who seek an immediate end to the Israeli occupation, we are proud of our rich social fabric based on equality in citizenship and rights, non-discrimination on religious grounds or any kind of discriminatory policy. We affirm that maintaining and developing Christian existence as a genuine social and popular element in our society is a key factor for the achievement of our full legitimate national rights as set forth in resolutions endorsed by the international community. The maintaining and strengthening of the Palestinian Christian presence in Palestine is part of our role played by the High Committee for Presidential Churches in Palestine, which was established by a decision of President Mahmoud Abbas on 23/5/2012. This is what we have embodied and will continue to do in order to achieve the goals of our people.”

In more than one occasion, Muslim and Christian clerics emphasize the Muslim-Christian brotherhood in Palestine. Every year, the Palestinian churches set up cafeterias for Muslim fasting people in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and other towns and villages. The most famous of these is the work of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem in which the men of the Christian and Islamic religion participate; in addition to Islamic and Christian political leaders.

Sheikh Azzam Al Khateeb, the preacher and director of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, always affirms that the Christian and Muslim Palestinians in this Holy Land live in brotherhood, which is not only a slogan but a true practice of sincere and authentic love that is evident in the details of daily life especially in Eids and events. This indicates the depth of the connection, love and cohesion, which is considered as pride that distinguishes Palestinian people from the rest of the nations in the world **(Joeyhan, 2017)**.

Additionally, Bishop Atallah Hanna **(Hanna, 2017)**, Archbishop of Sebastia of the Greek Orthodox, asserts that Palestine is a distinctive model in national unity and Muslim-Christian brotherhood. No power or party will be able to undermine Palestinian unity and brotherhood, which converge in the defense of Jerusalem, the homeland and the just cause that is the one Palestinian people cause; both Christians and Muslims.

During the political clashes between Fatah and Hamas, Fatah Central Committee member Jibril Rajoub said about two years ago that the "Merry Christmas" group, a reference to Christian Palestinians, had voted in the last elections for Hamas. These statements, which Rajoub apologized for, raised the surprise of the Palestinian society and its rejection of Muslims before the Christians. It also demanded Rajoub to apologize for them (Al-Dajni, 2016).

In the recent war on Gaza in 2014, Israeli warplanes bombarded several mosques under the pretext of weapons inside. Monsignor Manuel Musallam, patron of the Latin Church in Gaza (Al Jazeera, 2014), called upon Muslims to call for pray from churches. "If they bombard your mosques, you can call for prayer from our mosques," he said.

The recent events in Jerusalem and the surroundings of Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Old City were the best example of Palestinian Christian-Muslim unity. Christian Palestinians expressed solidarity with their Muslim brothers in the face of the Israeli measures that targeted the Al-Aqsa Mosque. They assured that Al-Aqsa Mosque is Palestinian before it is Islamic and that churches are also Palestinian before they are Christian. Therefore, Christian Palestinians participated in sit-ins condemning Israeli actions in various Palestinian areas and stood by Muslims at the gates of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. For instance, in the sit-in held on the courts of the Church of Nativity in support for Al-Aqsa Mosque, people raised the Palestinian flags and slogans condemning the Israeli actions, which were described as "arbitrary and racist occupation against the Al-Aqsa mosque and against our people in the city of Jerusalem." People also raised other slogans emphasize the unity of the Palestinian people's destiny for Christians and Muslims and the Islamic and Christian tolerance between the people of the one nation. The speakers at the sit-in addressed a message to the world in front of the Church of the Nativity, affirming that the Christians and Muslims of Palestine stand united in the face and arrogance of the occupation and its aggression against the Islamic and Christian holy sites in the city of Jerusalem (Radio Bethlehem 2000, 2017).

#### VIII. CONCLUSION

Israel, the state occupying the Palestinian territories, sought to strip Christian Palestinians of their Arabism by pretending that the origins of Christians in Palestine had nothing to do with the Arabs, and that they were returning to Aramaic origins. This research proves that the Israeli claim is incorrect, and that Palestinian Muslims and Christians share the same historical and ethnic roots, and that they are of the same ethnic origin as the Arab supremacist. The historical facts confirm that most of the people currently living in the Fertile Crescent (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine), including the Arameans, are all Semitic peoples, whom their original homeland in the Arabian Peninsula.

The paper concluded that Palestine is living in an unprecedented state of tolerance and fraternity, which was formed by several factors. The most important of these was the blood-mixing between the Palestinian people, the common history of centuries, and the partnership in building the country side by side with Muslims and Christians. These factors have reinforced the concepts of tolerance and brotherhood and have protected the social fabric throughout history, especially in light of the emergence of a foreign culture that has been sweeping the Middle East for a decade, represented by extremism and attempts to oust the other.

The laws and awareness of the Palestinian political leadership, as well as the conscious role of Palestinian national and religious institutions, have contributed to the creation of a barrier to the future that protects the religious tolerance of the various religious and ethnic communities of the Palestinian people. In addition to that is the formation of the Palestinian national identity in order to face of the Zionist threat for more than a hundred years until today has worked to consolidate the concept of common destiny in facing the common danger that targets all Palestinians and does not differentiate between Christians and Muslims.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Edmond Rabbat, "Christians in the East before Islam." *Maabar*, Special Issue, February 2009. Web. <[http://www.maaber.org/issue\\_february09/spotlights2.htm](http://www.maaber.org/issue_february09/spotlights2.htm)>
- [2] Peter Madabiel, *Bir Zeit History of the site and its Latin patronage*. trans. Father Aziz Halawa, review Dr. Peter Madros, Professor Moussa Alloush, and Dr. Hala Keila (Bir Zeit: 2009)
- [3] Mufleh Al - Adwan, "The descendants of Ghassanis." *Al - Rai newspaper*, Jordan, accessed June 17, 2014. < <http://alrai.com/article/653753.html>>
- [4] The Church of the Fathers for the Roman Orthodox. "History of the inhabitants of Beit Sahour". 2012. <http://www.beitsahourchurch.ps/aboutbeitsahourandchurch/beit-sahour/beitsahourresidents>
- [5] Nasser Laham, "The number of Palestinian Christians is 2 million, not 200 thousands." *Ma'an News Agency*, Bethlehem, Dec, 26, 2012. <http://maannews.net/Content.aspx?id=550556>
- [6] João SalesAsfora, *Palestinos: a saga de seus descendentes* (Recife: Indústria Gráfica e Editora Primeira Edição, 2002)

- [7] Hissa Hazin, "A Família Palestina Que Imigrou Para o Recife". *SCRIBD*, no date. <https://www.scribd.com/document/322228354/A-Familia-Palestina-Que-Imigrou-Para-o-Recife>
- [8] Haytham Mouzahem, "Christians in Palestine between migration and displacement". *dr-haytham Mouzahem blogspot*, December 23, 2012, [http://dr-haythammouzahem.blogspot.in/2012/12/blog-post\\_23.html](http://dr-haythammouzahem.blogspot.in/2012/12/blog-post_23.html)
- [9] Diyala Joeyhan, "Ramadan iftar at the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem." *Al Haya Al Jadida*. Al-Birah Palestine. 8/6/2017. [http://www.alhaya.ps/ar\\_page.php?id=2c5b1ddy46510557Y2c5b1dd](http://www.alhaya.ps/ar_page.php?id=2c5b1ddy46510557Y2c5b1dd)
- [10] Abdul Qader Yassin, *Palestinian Women's Movement* (Cairo: Jazirat Al Ward Library, n.d.)
- [11] Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. Translated to Arabic by Sahar Tawfiq (Kuwait: Alam Al-Marifa, 2005)
- [12] Hanna Issa, "Palestinian Christian Presence: History and Geography." *Palestine Agency* 24, 12 May 2014. <http://www.pal24.net/ar/news/29280.html>
- [13] Michael Dumber, "The Position of the Christian Churches in Jerusalem in Facing of the Occupation." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Volume 12, Issue 47 Summer 2001.
- [14] Darour Edar, "Israel Today" Newspaper Says: Palestinians Will Rape and Kill Christians in case Palestinian Statehood is Established". *Israel Hayom (Israel Today)*, accessed September 1, 2015. <http://digital-edition.israelhayom.co.il/Olive/ODE/Israel/Default.aspx?href=ITD%2F2015%2F05%2F17>
- [15] Ali Harb, *Interests and destinies: the industry of shared life* (Beirut, Arab Science Publishers, 2010)
- [16] Attalah Hanna, "Christians in Palestine are not minorities in their homelands." *Dunia al-Watan*, 6 July 2017. <http://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2017/06/07/1057697.html#ixzz4phwlvHAI>
- [17] Demeh Rishmawi Ayyad, "Study: Resistance and Living ... The role of the Christian Palestinian in struggle and human development". *Islamist movements*, December 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 . <http://www.islamist-movements.com/38204>
- [18] Barry E. Bryant, " Wesleyan Communities and the World Beyond Christianity "Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth for Methodists?". *Wordpress*, IL USA: United Methodist and Wesleyan Studies, 2013, 29. <https://oimts.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/2013-3-bryant.pdf>
- [19] World Council of Churches. "Ecumenical Chronicle." *The Ecumenical Review*, Volume 63, Issue 1, Version of Record online, 120 – 121, Web. March 22, 2011. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1758-6623.2010.00100.x/pdf>
- [20] Palestinian National Council. "Palestinian Declaration of Independence ". *Algiers, November 15, 1988, Al-bab.com, August 4, 2015*. <http://al-bab.com/albab-orig/albab/arab/docs/pal/pal3.htm>
- [21] Palestinian National Council. "Palestinian National Charter". *Palestine in arabic*, 1968. [http://www.palestineinarabic.com/Docs/other\\_doc/Palestinian\\_National\\_Charter\\_1968\\_A.pdf](http://www.palestineinarabic.com/Docs/other_doc/Palestinian_National_Charter_1968_A.pdf)
- [22] The Palestinian National Authority. "The Basic Law". *The Palestinian Chronicle*, excellent number, Dar al-Fatwa and Legislation at the Ministry of Justice, Gaza, July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2002.
- [23] Husam Al-Dajni, "Why Christians Vote for Hamas". *Noon Post*, accessed September 8, 2016. <http://www.noonpost.org/content/13826>
- [24] Hanna Amira, "Statement by the Chairman of the Committee". *Supreme Presidential Committee for Church Affairs*. <http://www.hcc-plo.ps/?q=en/content/op-ed>
- [25] Manuel Musalam, "Interview with Monsignor Manuel Musalam". *Al Jazeera*. 26 July 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jdyOmpoca54>
- [26] Radio Bethlehem 2000. "A Solidarity Stance with Al Aqsa in Bethlehem". *Radio Bethlehem 2000*, July 23, 2017 <http://www.rb2000.ps/>

Rasem S. M. Bisharat. "Palestine as a Model of Tolerance and Religious Brotherhood." *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* , vol. 22, no. 10, 2017, pp. 13–21.