

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Except from The Presbyterian Church in Canada Acts & Proceedings 2021, pp. 329-360

To the Venerable, the 146th General Assembly:

This report brings forward the International Affairs Committee's interim report prepared in 2020 that includes content regarding human trafficking, the degradation of global biodiversity and the impact of violence on children and families in Palestine and Israel. The committee has included new information about the impacts of human migration, highlighting situations where systemic injustices, environmental stresses and the COVID-19 pandemic render people more vulnerable to human rights abuses.

The committee's mandate is to bring important international issues of justice to the church's attention and to provide recommendations for how the church should respond even if it is hard or impossible in some cases to completely opt out of these systems of exploitation. The report for this year has urgency to it. Some of the recommendations have elements of a personal call – to give things up in humbleness. Others have a call for advocacy, asking governments to change policies or stand up for human rights. The consolidated report includes sections on the following:

- Human Migration and A Look at Migrant Workers in Canada
- Human Trafficking
- A Global Crisis: The Loss of Biological Diversity
- Climate-Induced Displacement
- Palestinian Migration
- Effects of the Israeli Occupation on Children and Families in Palestine and Israel

HUMAN MIGRATION: OVERVIEW AND VISION AND WHY THE CHURCH SHOULD CARE

Humanity has been on the move since homo sapiens emerged from Africa, long before God called Abram and Sarai out of Ur to find a new land, long before a wandering Aramean was the ancestor of the Hebrew people. The right to move is as much a part of being human as the right to belong to a place and is enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights.¹

The rich man in his castle,
the poor man at his gate,
God made them high and lowly,
and ordered their estate.
– a verse from *All Things Bright and Beautiful*,
by Mrs. Cecil Frances Alexander, in 1848²

This is a verse from a well-known children's hymn, written when Britain was in the "full flower" of its empire³ and exerted control over much of the global economy. This verse, which portrays the disparity between rich and poor as God's will, was edited out of hymn books decades ago as morally indefensible. Yet the attitude it reflects persists in today's attitudes toward human migration of the world's most vulnerable citizens, seeking to improve their situation.

The fundamental drivers of human movement have not changed over millennia: survival, colonization, trade and opportunity. For some people these days, moving is easy; borders are permeable if one happens to be born with the right nationality and with sufficient wealth. Some people can respond to the pull to travel and relocate if and when they choose; borders are

inconsequential. For other people, born in poverty or with a nationality that is viewed as having less quality or having no nationality at all, many borders are legally impassible. Yet some are pushed to leave the country of their birth because of fear of persecution or destruction of their homes and communities by war, natural and human-made disaster, poverty and climate change. They may do so even at the risk of their lives.⁴

The Quality of Nationality Index (QNI)⁵ shows glaring parallels between former colonial empires, with greater wealth and white privilege at the high end, for whom opportunities for movement are more abundant and the formerly colonized, lower income, largely non-white nationalities of the low and very lowest end of the index, for whom movement is restricted.⁶ When wealthy investors migrate, they are viewed as assets. When the people at the “bottom” of the QNI try to migrate, often unauthorized because they are unable to move through legal channels, then they are viewed as a problem. Even though capital and goods are moving more freely around the globe, i.e. increasingly unregulated, backed by “free” trade agreements, the movement of people has become more restricted and the distribution of wealth more extreme, favouring the rich who grow richer, leaving the poorest desperate to seek ways of improving their situation. Journalist and author Stephan Faris states that, “Our system of passport controls, immigration restrictions and closed borders has created a world in which few factors shape a child’s life as much as one she can do nothing about: the flag under which she was born”.⁷ Immigration policies in well-to-do nations have become more restrictive and more walls are being built to keep people out – as along the US border with Mexico and in Western Sahara – or in – as in Gaza and West Bank.⁸ Those who are forced to migrate may rely on human smugglers. Some fall prey to traffickers and others who exploit irregular migrants. Some are left to drown in the Mediterranean Sea or die of thirst in the Arizona desert or are sold into servitude.

Stephan Faris shared the story of Eritrean refugees he met in Italy:

The church is open and I step inside. A small group of Eritrean men were sitting in the pews near the door. Two of them got up to speak with me. They had heard that the priest sometimes gave out jackets and were waiting for him to arrive and while they waited we talked. Both men had been teachers in Eritrea and they asked me not to print their names for fear of reprisals against their families back home. They told me they had set out from Eritrea in early 2011 and passed illegally through Ethiopia, Sudan and Libya. They had crossed the Sahara packed twenty or thirty to a car. In Libya, in the city of Misurata, they were kept in a small room and beaten until their families sent payment for the trip across the Mediterranean. The journey had taken them more than two years, required them to risk their lives in the desert and at sea and cost them roughly \$10,000 each.⁹

In Asmara [Eritrea], you can buy an airline ticket to Rome for less than \$1,000. With a plane change in Cairo, if the connection is good, you’ll be sipping an Italian espresso less than eleven hours after the first lift-off.¹⁰

God’s desire for every human being is that they should “have life and have it to the full”. (John 10:10b) Why should the circumstances of a person’s birth limit their ability to be all they can be? Why can’t all individuals, particularly vulnerable people, have the right to live free from fear and free from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential?¹¹

What could the world be like, if the gifts of those born where the QNI is “low” were not lost for lack of opportunity to develop and use their gifts for the common good? Would we not be closer to the Kin-dom of God if each person were allowed, even encouraged, to be all they can be?

Without the 20% of its population that are international migrants with permanent residency in Canada, plus the thousands of temporary foreign workers that come every year (often returning year after year), Canada would hardly be Canada.¹² Migrants fill gaps in our labour force, pay taxes and contribute significantly to the economy. They make up for Canada’s low fertility rate (1.6 – well below the 2.1 replacement rate) and support Canada’s ageing population.¹³

Most people in the world do not love to move; they feel attachment to the land and community bonds where they were born.¹⁴ Of the world’s 7.8 billion people in mid 2020, only 3.6 percent or 280.6 million are international migrants (those who have crossed international borders).¹⁵ Of these, 79.5 million have been forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing the public order – 40 percent of which were children. Some 45.7 million are internally displaced people, within their own country but forced out of their homes. Officially, 26 million are refugees, with special protections under United Nations conventions. These refugees are covered by two UN organizations: 20.4 million under the UN High Commissioner for Refugees’ mandate and 5.6 million Palestinians under UN Works and Relief Agency’s mandate. Only 107,800 refugees were resettled into new permanent homes in 2019 (these are the most recently available statistics). There are 4.2 million asylum-seekers in various countries and in mid-2019, 3.6 million Venezuelans were displaced abroad.¹⁶ The rest of the international migrants have migrated through regular and irregular channels. Some felt pulled to move and many felt pushed.

We as the church have a responsibility to help people connect the dots and see the relationships between environmental destruction, restrictive migration policies, racism, neocolonialism and economic disparity and land occupation that have become entrenched in many governments around the world. For the church and all the world’s citizens today, “...we need to transform our thinking – to step away from narrow nationalism and open our minds to the possibilities of new ways of belonging and better ways of sharing the one world that is home to all of us”.¹⁷ When the current pandemic is better managed, we need to look seriously at advocating for easing restrictions on migration and welcoming the stranger.

MIGRANT WORKERS IN CANADA

Who are the migrant workers in Canada and under what programs do they work? Most Canadians are unaware, as they carefully select their fresh produce for quality and price in the grocery aisle, that it has been harvested by a migrant worker. These workers are largely invisible and yet play a vital role in getting food to our tables. This cheap food and labour, enjoyed by Canadians, is an integral part of Canada’s food chain.

Canada has attracted temporary migrant workers since 1966 to fill the void in industries where there have been chronic labour shortages. Today, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) plays a significant role in the Canadian labour force with close to 470,000 workers registered in 2019. With a permit to work in selected industries the migrant worker, often working to support family who remain in their home country, arrives in Canada to work seasonally. Temporary employment in agriculture, domestic care, recreation, hospitality services, retail, food manufacturing, draws the migrant worker to escape poverty at home to provide for their family. They come to Canada out of necessity, leaving families behind. Annually the number of TFWs has increased significantly.¹⁸

Most migrant workers are from Latin America and the Caribbean coming to Canada under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) which has been in place since 1996. Under this program workers can stay up to eight months at a time returning year after year. The Temporary Foreign Workers Program also brings workers from Guatemala, the Philippines, Thailand, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Ukraine and Vietnam through the Low-Skill Pilot Project (LSPP), set up in 2002 and a specific Agricultural Program under TFWP, established in 2011.

The availability of these programs has allowed employers seeking workers for low-skilled occupations to hire them from any country they wish, provided a work permit can be secured. A Canadian employer must fit the criteria to hire foreign workers by obtaining a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA). This states that there is no permanent resident of Canada available to do this temporary employment. In reality this work is undervalued by Canadians. The work is often arduous, labour intensive and can be dangerous at times. Workdays are long, often six or seven days a week but migrant workers often accept these conditions to have the opportunity to support their families back home.

Under these programs Canada has encouraged temporary migration rather than one of permanence to meet the labour shortage. This distinct change in immigration policy indicates that Canada has become a country that brings in temporary low skilled migrants, garnering low wages for short periods of time, instead of a country relying on permanent migration to help build communities and the economy.

Often migrant workers must rely solely on their employer for housing, access to health care and community services. If a worker has a query or complaint regarding job or housing issues, there is real fear of job loss or deportation. Complaints documented show a picture of grueling work, long hours. Other documented issues include having no access to water for agricultural workers to no days off or expanded duties for domestic care workers. Many face exploitation and abuse with no clear avenue for remedy. Where would one lodge a complaint, if essential information about their legal rights to do so are denied? Very few provinces have legislation to safeguard the rights of workers and without this they are highly vulnerable with no recourse.¹⁹

And yet migrant workers pay income tax and contribute to social benefits without being able to claim those benefits. As migrant workers work hard to feed Canadians and care for our families, Canada is deducting taxes and employment insurance premiums from wage packets without allowing workers to access insurance benefits or rights associated with Canadian citizenship. After eight months they must leave the country making it difficult to apply for EI. In addition, the federal government collects mandatory Canada Pension Plan payments but accessing these benefits is not straightforward and workers do not always know how to do so or that they are entitled to, these and other benefits.²⁰

Despite some provinces recognizing the federal government shortfall in providing services to the temporary migrant worker, others such as Quebec, Manitoba and Newfoundland lack any legislation to address the challenges facing the migrant worker. Migrant workers may spend a large portion of their lives in Canada, yet most in low wage occupations are not eligible to apply for permanent immigration based on that work experience.

Even those who can apply for permanent residency often face significant barriers. For instance, some prospective employers and immigration consultants have charged foreign nationals large monetary fees for chances at permanent residency. *The Globe and Mail* tells of one young international student who after college sought a job and was lured into this illegal and unethical

scheme. He had a minimum wage job with Subway working 60 hours per week with overtime pay of \$10 per hour, cash only. When asked if the employer would sponsor him for permanent residency under the provincial nominee program, he faced refusal unless he paid a fee of \$11,000 to an immigration consultant.²¹ In addition to the ongoing cheap labour the employer received kickback from the immigration consultant. In essence, workers such as him are paying for their jobs and as such cannot leave. Desperation and financial hardship are often the reality facing the migrant worker as they seek illusive permanent residency.

International Human Rights Instruments and Migrant Workers

The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and their Families (CRMW) was adopted by the UN in December 1990. Primarily this convention recognizes that migrants are not only workers but firstly human beings who deserve the same equality as nationals experience in their working and living conditions. The Convention promotes the proper safeguards for migrants and their families. The CRMW has been in force since July 1, 2003 when the required 20 countries signed it, which allowed the International Committee of Migrant Workers (CWM) to monitor the guidelines regarding the human rights of migrant workers regardless of legal status. To date only 47 State Parties have ratified this convention with an additional 55 State Parties who have signed but not ratified. The majority of the countries who have signed are those who send migrant workers whilst the countries who receive larger numbers of migrant workers have not ratified. Canada has failed to sign this Convention and consequently is not legally answerable to the ongoing international monitoring of the CMW.

Other bodies exist as well to help migrant workers. For example, in 2011 the International Labour Organization (ILO) introduced worldwide standards establishing protections for domestic workers by adopting the Convention Concerning Decent Work For Domestic Workers (Domestic Workers Convention, No 189). Globally this Convention has strengthened domestic workers rights by enhancing their conditions of employment covering issues concerning wages, hours, days off, so that they are entitled to the same basic rights enjoyed by workers in their home country. Canada is not one of the 31 countries that have ratified this Convention. Ratifying Convention No.189 would orient Canadian protections to address the vulnerabilities of domestic workers to abuse and, increase safeguards against child labour.

Migrant Farm Workers in Canada in 2020 during the COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 has changed many people's lives but imagine if you were a migrant worker coming to Canada to work on farms and living in cramped dormitories and unable to isolate yourself from others? Farm and domestic migrant workers, who, under normal circumstances, have tenuous rights in Canada, are even more vulnerable during the pandemic.

A report from the Caregivers' Action Centre, a grassroots organization made up of former caregivers, reports:

There are approximately 25,000 migrant care workers in Canada today, almost all of whom live in employer homes. Many of us kept working during the pandemic. With schools closed and our employers working from home, our work intensified immensely. But we did not get paid for all of the extra hours we worked. Some employers also refused to allow migrant workers to leave their homes. Employers were free to come and go but their employees were not. Migrant care workers, the overwhelming majority of whom are racialized women, were cut off from social and personal support networks,

unable to even send remittances home to families abroad in need. We continued to care for children, upkeep homes and support the sick and elderly.²²

Issues such as – labour intensification, unpaid wages, job loss and unemployment, denial of or difficulty accessing income support, employer control over movement, worries about permits and employers with LIMA assessments (the necessary assessment documents to hire temporary foreign workers) and the constant uncertainty about permanent resident status, family separation and health crises are all stresses resulting from the pandemic. Some farm workers were not able to return home after the harvest season due to travel restrictions of their government and the Canadian government. They were stuck in housing meant for summer months, without jobs, without access to Employment Insurance or the Canada Employment Wage Subsidy, because their work permits were tied to a single employer and they could not legally get other work. Hundreds of workers were stuck in this limbo until the Government issued a policy to allow them to apply for an open (untied to one employer) work permit.²³

On November 30, 2020, Matt Galloway of CBC's *The Current*, interviewed Gabriel Alladua, formerly of St. Lucia and a migrant farm worker for four years, who is currently a permanent resident of Canada and is with an organization called Justice for Migrant Workers. He says, – “Over two decades, we’ve been highlighting that housing conditions, living and working conditions are very, very difficult. They do not allow...overcrowding is a basic thing, overcrowding. And is this not a condition, a recipe, the recipe for COVID to spread like wildfire?” COVID did spread like wildfire through some farms. During the months that Canada’s migrant farm workers laboured, many hundreds tested positive for the COVID-19 virus and at least three men died.²⁴

In this same interview, Mark Kelley from CBC's *The Fifth Estate* spoke of the situation of farm workers, adding, “These guys are working six, seven day weeks, you know, 12, 14, 16 hour days and it really highlighted some of those, you know, inequalities, the fact that they’re not getting paid overtime, that there is no sort of pandemic bonus. I mean, remember a time when a cashier at the local grocery store was getting paid a pandemic bonus? Well, the person who was out picking and packing your food was getting none of that.” These are harsh realities for migrant workers struggling to make a living and support their family, made only more vulnerable by a pandemic.

What can we and our congregations do?

Resources and information on migrant justice are available through KAIROS, of which The Presbyterian Church in Canada is a member. Some of these resources include “Know your Rights and Be Bold: a Workshop for Migrant Workers” and “Equal in Dignity, Equal in Rights: a Migrant Justice workshop for Church Communities”. KAIROS also has links with other migrant justice organizations such as the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change (MWAC) and Caregivers Action Centre (CAC). MWAC is composed of migrant workers, community groups, faith groups and labour organizations whose focus is to provide advocacy, legal support and services. CAC is made up of former and present-day domestic care workers and community supporters to provide education in seeking opportunities for fair employment and permanent residency²⁵

Additionally, one can:

- Become more aware of our food supply and food-chain in Canada – don’t take it for granted.
- Support migrant workers in your community if you are able.
- Pray for farmers and workers alike who are working through difficult situations.

- Pray for the families left in home countries as they try to make economies in their way of life.
- Pray for changes in legislation so that migrant workers can have a voice to make changes and also find a path to become immigrants to Canada if they so choose.
- Learn about supports provided in your communities for migrant workers to access medical, educational and services to meet basic human rights.
- Start a conversation in your congregation. Are there migrant workers in your community? Do you employ migrant workers yourself? Are there ways your congregation can assist grassroots organizations that are working with migrant workers?
- Celebrate International Migrants Day December 18 (on an appropriate Sunday) within our congregations with prayer and learning about justice for migrants.

Recommendation IAF-001 (adopted, p. 40)

That the Moderator write to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, urging the Government of Canada to sign and fully ratify the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and their Families and encourage presbyteries, sessions and individuals to do the same.

Recommendation IAF-002 (adopted, p. 40)

That the Moderator write to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship encouraging the Government of Canada to sign and ratify the ILO Domestic Workers Convention No. 189 and encourage presbyteries, sessions and individuals to do the same.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking – also called modern-day slavery by the United Nations – is a crime in which victims are lured into an exploitative situation for the profit of the perpetrators. It is found in all regions and most countries of the world and is the fastest growing crime globally, involving low risk and high reward for the traffickers. Every 30 seconds another person becomes a victim of human trafficking.²⁶ This may occur within a country but can also involve trafficking across international borders. The International Labour Organization's 2017 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery reported that on any given day in 2016, an estimated 40 million people were victims of modern slavery. Out of these, approximately 25 million people were in forced labour.²⁷ The full extent of the crime is difficult to determine because of its hidden nature and the fear or inability of victims to come forward to law enforcement agencies.

Local communities in Canada are not immune from the problem of human trafficking. In a case that made national headlines, police in Simcoe County, Ontario, rescued 49 Mexican migrant workers from a Barrie house who were being exploited by a cleaning company. Police revealed a “very disturbing” operation that brought men from Mexico with promises of work visas, education or permanent residency. Instead, the men were housed in squalid conditions and forced to work as cleaners in Collingwood, Innisfil Oro-Medonte and Cornwall. The traffickers charged the men fees for accommodation and food, making their situation even more financially dependent on those who were exploiting them.²⁸

The same newspaper article reported that in July 2019, four Barrie residents were charged with human trafficking after a young woman met a man online, who then lured her to a party. Police say two men sexually assaulted her at the party and then forced her into the sex trade with the threat that if she ever left, she would be found and killed.²⁹

The relatively easy availability of internet access in Canada contributes to the scope and variety of online abuse. According to a study by Cybertip.ca, Canada ranked in the top 3 of 60 countries measured in hosting human trafficking websites, hosting visual images of trafficked persons and selling these illegal images for profit.³⁰ This technology also enables users to pay money to abuse victims at a distance by logging onto live webcam websites and directing sex acts by those on view.

Human trafficking, whether facilitated by technology or not, is coerced exploitation of one person in response to an illegal demand for the gratification of another or for illegal labour at vastly reduced cost to an employer. Those exploited are not compensated fairly and are frequently forced to live under conditions that enable their captor's control. Often those conditions include physical or sexual violence. Opportunities for abuse are all around us – in our homes (with, for example, cleaning and other domestic services), in local hotels and nail salons, in agriculture or industry places of employment, at highway truck stops and service centres and at large gatherings of people for entertainment or sporting events. Victims may be a teenager from your neighbourhood or someone brought into the local community from somewhere else in the world. The abuse is perpetrated both by those who conduct the trafficking and by those who engage in using the services of trafficked people. However, people may not always be aware that the products or services they consume may be a result of the labour of someone who has been trafficked. Human trafficking thrives on invisibility.

Human trafficking affects men, women and children, often those who are the most vulnerable in society.³¹ The most likely to be at risk are those who are socially and economically disadvantaged and may include Indigenous women and girls, migrant workers and new immigrants. At-risk youth, children in the child welfare system and those with disabilities can be especially vulnerable to traffickers. Migrant workers in particular may have language barriers, a deficiency of access to services and support and often lack basic information about their rights. With promises of a better life and meaningful work, many victims go willingly at first, only to be tricked, held against their will and coerced to give services, physical or sexual, for the financial benefit of the trafficker.

The impacts of COVID-19 have further exacerbated conditions for vulnerable people. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime notes: “The increased levels of domestic violence reported in many countries is a worrying indicator for the living conditions of many trafficking victims... In an environment where priorities and actions are geared toward limiting the spread of the virus, it is easier for traffickers to hide their operations, making victims increasingly vulnerable.”³²

The casualties of human trafficking suffer emotional and physical abuse, often living and working in deplorable conditions, with their basic human rights violated. The CBC's Marketplace investigated allegations of human rights abuses in overseas factories producing personal protective equipment (PPE) that are imported into Canada and used by Canadians, highlight the need for watchfulness of our supply chains even during the pandemic.³³ Victims can be exploited time and again for the financial benefit of the traffickers. In a report titled, “Human Trafficking is Big Business”, the International Labor Organization estimates that in 2014 this clandestine crime generated \$150 billion USD, for its perpetrators, second only to profits made in the drug trade, affecting millions of victims worldwide.³⁴ Canada's Criminal Intelligence Services estimated that back in 2010 domestic sex traffickers earned an average of \$280,000 annually from every victim under their control. One convicted male offender from Ontario reportedly earned at least \$400,000 from sexual exploitation of one girl.³⁵

Over the last 10 years, the profile of detected trafficking victims worldwide has changed. Although most detected victims are still women, children and men now make up larger shares of the total number of victims. The share of victims who are trafficked for forced labour has also increased. About four in 10 victims detected between 2010 and 2014 were trafficked for forced labour and out of those trafficked for forced labour, 63 percent were men.³⁶

Human trafficking and human smuggling are often confused, as the two crimes appear to be very similar in nature. But human trafficking always involves exploitation and force, with the victim having no freedom of choice. Human smuggling involves the provision of a service, typically transportation or forged documents, voluntarily paid for to allow illegal entry into a foreign country – often at great risk to those being smuggled and for exorbitant prices. It is also possible that the crime may start out as human smuggling but escalate to become human trafficking.³⁷

One striking example of the tragic effects of human smuggling was the discovery in October 2019, in Essex, England, of 39 people from Vietnam frozen to death inside a refrigerated container truck. They were all from Nghe An Province, one of Vietnam's poorest regions. Criminal gangs regularly exploit young people who are desperately seeking a better life in Europe to be able to send money back to their families. The journey is filled with danger. Physical and sexual abuse are commonplace. Some individuals are fortunate and make it safely to their destination to eventually find employment but many more do not and are coerced into jobs typical of human trafficking. Many women find work in nail salons, where some have to work long hours for little pay and others are forced by their employers to engage in sex work. Young Vietnamese men are lured into work on cannabis farms, living under poor conditions. They are often deprived of their passports, making leaving the situation difficult to near impossible.³⁸ In another situation, a journalist in North Carolina was offered a reporting job for the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games. The talent agent who contacted her said he was hiring American reporters for the Olympics. After a four-month interview process the woman discovered that the "talent acquisition agency" was bogus. The FBI became involved and discovered the agency was most likely a front for a sex trafficking ring.³⁹

Human Trafficking in Canada

Indigenous women and girls are over-represented among people who are trafficked in Canada. One demonstration of this is in British Columbia, where a 724 km stretch of highway between Prince George and Prince Rupert known as the "Highway of Tears" is bordered by 23 First Nations communities and many small towns. This rural area is impoverished and lacks sufficient public transportation, so local citizens will often hitchhike as a form of transit. In 2013, Human Rights Watch released a report, "Those Who Take Us Away", focusing on the need for an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women on the Highway of Tears.⁴⁰ Many of the issues noted in this 2013 report as contributing to the high rates of violence against Indigenous women and girls are more fully examined in the comprehensive study initiated in 2016 by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The final report of this inquiry delivered 231 Calls for Justice directed at governments, institutions, social service providers, industries and all Canadians.

Diane Redsky is the director of MaMawi Wi Chi Itata Centre in Manitoba, which advocates for Indigenous women and children, specifically sex trafficking victims. Redsky says the history of racism against Indigenous people in Canada feeds into the cycle of violence and exploitation against them. Indigenous Canadians make up just 4 percent of the country's population but more than half of all sex trafficking victims in Canada are Indigenous.⁴¹ Redsky and others in Manitoba are now leading transformative programs to help identify the threats and risks so prevalent in

Indigenous communities, including a history of bias and racism that has prevented some members of police services from fully understanding how and why Indigenous girls and women are often targeted for violence, including human trafficking.⁴²

In a 2014 report of the National Task Force on Sex Trafficking of Women and Girls in Canada, the task force states that while many service providers report the average age of recruitment as 13 to 14 years old, some children are trafficked at younger ages.⁴³ Young people from middle class families as well as from poorer neighbourhoods are lured from high schools and shopping malls and enticed through social media with gifts and promises of love.

Many factors contribute to the rise in human trafficking, including long-term unemployment; gender-based inequality; the internet; a globalized, free-market economy; an increase in the demand for cheap labour, goods and services; and increased international mobility.⁴⁴

How is the international community responding?

Human trafficking is one of the issues the United Nations is working to counter. The Palermo Protocols were adopted by the United Nations to supplement the 2002 Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. The first protocol is to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in human beings, especially women and children. The protocols came into force in December 2003 and have been ratified by 187 states, Canada among them. In so doing, these nations pledged to take a series of measures against transnational organized crime. With enhanced international cooperation, the state parties can have a real impact on hindering the ability of international criminals to operate successfully.

Effective implementation of the Palermo Protocols would help ensure that vulnerable citizens across the globe can live in safety and dignity in their homes and communities. This would align with United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.⁴⁵

What is Canada doing?

Human trafficking was listed under the Criminal Code of Canada in 2005.⁴⁶ The Government of Canada's approach to addressing human trafficking is guided by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Palermo Protocols.⁴⁷ In September 2019, the Canadian government announced a five-year National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking with a budget of \$58.22 million and thereafter \$10.25 million annually in federal funding.⁴⁸ The pillars of the plan include: Supporting victims and survivors; steps to increase prevention; addressing gaps in existing supports and providing culturally-informed services; prosecution of human traffickers; building appropriate partnerships to better address human trafficking.

The National Strategy was designed to be adaptable, recognizing that human trafficking is a crime that is often hidden and evolving. One important part of the strategy to help inform how it is carried out, is the establishment of an advisory committee comprised of survivors of human trafficking to provide a platform in which individuals with lived experiences can inform and provide their unique and invaluable recommendations to the Government of Canada on current and future federal anti-human trafficking policies and initiatives.⁴⁹

Civil society groups are also working to end human trafficking. An example is Project Maple Leaf, a public awareness campaign, launched by the Canadian organization Courage for Freedom

(courageforfreedom.org) on July 30, 2019. The campaign used a series of videos with tips to identify potential human trafficking and encouraging the public to report any suspicious activity. The videos played at service stations along 400 series highways in Ontario. These highway corridors are some of the busiest roadways in Canada and are being used to transport victims of human trafficking around the province and further afield, often in clear view of the driving public. It is estimated that 60 percent of all human trafficking in Canada is initiated along the 400 series of highways and campaign organizers estimate that the videos were viewed more than 16 million times.⁵⁰

There is also a Canadian Human Trafficking confidential hotline at 1-833-900-1010 that is managed 24 hours daily and serves to connect survivors and victims with local support services in communities across Canada. This initiative has funding support from Public Safety Canada and collaborates with the anti-human trafficking and global hotline experts at Polaris in the United States.

One essential part of combating human trafficking is to address the needs of trafficked victims for such things as food, shelter, education, employment and personal safety. The Government of Manitoba has committed more than \$10 million a year to fund Tracia's Trust, named in memory of 14 year old Tracia Owen, an Indigenous girl who was sexually exploited before she died by suicide in 2005. Tracia's Trust outlines a strategy developed from input from 54 organizations, stakeholders, front-line service providers, community members, Indigenous elders, law enforcement and exploited Manitobans to combat sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of children.⁵¹ While the content is specific to Manitoba, Tracia's Trust offers a useful model to develop a strategy to address online exploitation and trafficking and provide supports for youth who are at risk.

In our own time, the church is called to action against the evils of human trafficking whereby people are enslaved, human dignity is degraded and in extreme cases fatality occurs. "Is not this the fast 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?" (Isaiah 58:6). For a focus text in its 2014–2015 study on human trafficking, the Women's Missionary Society (WMS) chose Proverbs 31:8–9: "Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy."

The 2014 International Ecumenical Consultation on Migration and Human Trafficking: Modern Slavery? declared that trafficking in human beings is a serious justice and human rights violation. It is one of the most horrific results of the economic and social disparities that increase the vulnerability of millions of people. Migrants constitute the greater number of victims of trafficking. Such vast inequality allows many within our societies to be considered little more than disposable commodities. In opposing corrupt practices and abuses of power against human beings that are inherent in the "modern day slavery" of human trafficking we are drawn to focus on and continue to trust the passionate love of Jesus Christ for all people and the way in which Christ identifies with and accompanies the vulnerable.⁵²

What can we do?

As a society, we can seek to address systemic injustices such as poverty, racism, barriers to accessing education and health services and economic insecurity. Addressing these injustices will reduce the vulnerability of people who are targeted for human trafficking. Human trafficking is driven by demand that leads to the exploitation of others. As Christians who believe in the dignity of all human beings with the right to live in peace and freedom, we can take positive steps in

prevention by advocating for peace and opposing all forms of exploitation and violence. We can take a stand and challenge those who make racist or sexist remarks, which contribute to making targeted groups more vulnerable to exploitation.

We can make choices every day that encourage gender equality for individuals. We can become involved in supporting Indigenous communities in Canada in their efforts to lessen poverty that disproportionately affects them. We can support micro credit plans to allow people to have meaningful work that alleviates the poverty that is often a doorway to trafficking others or being trafficked. Education is key to combatting human trafficking. Rather than avoiding the difficult topics like physical abuse and sexual exploitation we can develop awareness that leads to prevention and that provides support for those affected by human trafficking. Church leaders can work to create a culture of openness and compassion, instead of judgement. By being more intentional about these efforts, churches can make headway in identifying, preventing and ending human trafficking. Congregations can support learning initiatives about human trafficking. Prayers can be made both for the victims and perpetrators of human trafficking that their dignity and freedom be restored. Elected officials at all levels of government can be contacted about actions taken and being considered to address problems associated with human trafficking. We can consider where goods are made and under what conditions they are fabricated and support Fair Trade production and policies and be vigilant about the working conditions under which people are providing services that we are consuming. We can campaign for just refugee and immigration policies and safe paths of migration.

Resources

In April, 2008, the Commission on Justice and Peace (of the Canadian Council of Churches) identified human trafficking as a common concern and established the Human Trafficking in Canada Working Group to facilitate learning, theological reflection and common action.⁵³ This was done with the hope that all churches in Canada would become more aware of human trafficking in Canada and advocate together when appropriate, share and develop educational materials and provide a forum for theological reflection on the topic.

The commission produced a study guide, *Human Trafficking in Canada: A Leadership and Learning Kit for Churches* (available at councilofchurches.ca). The guide provides a series of reflections, awareness-raising exercises to help recognize indicators of abuse and exploitation, Bible studies and background materials. In an attractive and user-friendly layout, contributions from more than a dozen Christian traditions come together on one of the most pressing social justice issues in our context.

The Anglican Church of Canada created a documentary aimed at raising awareness about the realities of sex trafficking in Canada. It is posted online at youtu.be/-Bmfne5Dcwg. Courage for Freedom is a Canadian-based organization that supports victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation and provides resources to increase public awareness of how to recognize and respond to human trafficking through Project Maple Leaf (mentioned earlier in this report), a hotline 1-833-900-1010 and a hashtag for social media: #KnowHumanTrafficking.

Congregations are also encouraged to learn of the work of ARISE Ministry, (ariseministry.ca), an outreach mission of the Presbytery of East Toronto for those who are or have been involved in the sex trade and those at risk of sexual exploitation. This ministry is directed by the Rev. Deb Stanbury and is supported by Presbyterians Sharing. The WMS has a study that includes a session on human trafficking. It is online at wmspcc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Social-Justice-Study-2.pdf.

The following poem was written by Angel Power, a peer support worker with ARISE Ministry. It may be a useful catalyst for discussion. Used with permission.

“Lessons Learned”

Our choices
Will impact our life.
Our voices
Can win the fight.

As powerful as loud and proud is silent and humble.
What do we all require in the dark?
A light or a guide so we don't stumble.

It is imperative that we always protect ourselves
Because you are a precious gift inside a soft shell.
Worrying about where you may be in the future or regretting what you did in the past is
a waste of time
Because you end up missing the present moment and in that moment you could
discover what you're here to find.

Spend time with animals, be cautious of man and always respect thy land.
Day dream and soul search, go to your inner church, diligently do self-work. Study,
practice and question until you understand.
And if you see someone trying to find the light and are in a position where you can,
always lend a helping hand.

Power, Angel. *The Darkness & the Light*, AuthorHouse, 2016

Recommendation IAF-003 (adopted, p. 40)

That individuals, congregations, sessions and presbyteries be encouraged to make use of the resource “Human Trafficking in Canada: A leadership and learning kit for Churches” produced by the Canadian Council of Churches (councilofchurches.ca).

Recommendation IAF-004 (adopted, p. 40)

That congregations be encouraged to contact their local police departments and community groups to learn more about human trafficking in their area and how to recognize it.

Recommendation IAF-005 (adopted, p. 40)

That the Moderator write to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness inquiring about its timelines and progress in implanting key activities of the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking and that sessions and individuals be encouraged to do the same and to inquire with their local elected officials about actions they are taking to address human trafficking.

A GLOBAL CRISIS – THE LOSS OF GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY

The various plants, animals and microorganisms that are part of the web of God's creation are the caretakers of all ecosystems. We can think of the natural world as an enormous bank account of capital assets capable of paying life sustaining dividends indefinitely. However, this is only possible if the capital is maintained.⁵⁴

Climate Change, ecosystem balance and biodiversity

According to the 2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services by the United Nations Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), 25 percent of plant and animal species are threatened with extinction as the result of human activity.⁵⁵

Habitat destruction has played a key role in extinctions, especially in relation to tropical forest destruction.⁵⁶ Factors contributing to habitat loss include overconsumption, overpopulation, land use change, deforestation,⁵⁷ pollution (air pollution, water pollution, soil contamination) and climate change. We note with deep concern the loss of habitat due to wildfires in places like the Amazon, Australia and even here in Canada. Such loss of habitat has foreseeable and unforeseeable consequences regarding loss of biodiversity.⁵⁸

Climate change has been proven to negatively affect biodiversity. Increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide affects plant morphology – the physical form and external structure of plants – and is acidifying oceans.⁵⁹ The changes in temperature affect species ranges,⁶⁰ phenology⁶¹ – plant and animal life cycles – and weather⁶². Major extinctions are possible as climate change drastically alters the biology of many species. The complexity of the world climate is such that we cannot reliably predict how the climate will continue to change, just that it is changing significantly and at a faster rate than has ever been recorded.⁶³

Nature is more than just beautiful or nice to have; it is indispensable and the balance that holds the Earth's ecosystems and all we call “nature” together – which, remember, includes ourselves – is fragile. One-celled plant organisms, called phytoplankton, living just below the surface of the oceans, produce 50 percent of the world's oxygen supply. Another 25 percent is produced by the tropical rainforests of the Amazon River Basin. The remaining 25 percent comes from plant life living around the remainder of the globe. All food products consumed by humans come from nature. Of 115 crop species, 87 depend on insect pollination.⁶⁴ Human life and all human economic activities ultimately depend on nature. Threats to nature must, therefore, be taken very seriously, much more seriously than they currently are.

While climate change is a growing threat, the overexploitation of species, agricultural activity and land conversion are still the dominant causes of current species and biodiversity loss. Three-quarters of the earth's land surface has already been impacted by human activity. It is projected that, unless steps are taken to protect currently unimpacted land, only 10 percent of the earth's land surface will remain in a natural state by 2050.⁶⁵ Wetlands around the world are estimated to have declined by more than 50 percent since 1900.⁶⁶ Forests are among the world's richest ecosystems. Tropical, temperate and boreal forests cover nearly 30 percent of the world's land area, yet, are home to more than 80 percent of all terrestrial species of animal, plants and insects.⁶⁷ The increasing expansion of commercial agriculture has resulted in the loss of 40 percent of all tropical and subtropical forests. The Amazon rainforest has declined in size by almost 20 percent over the last 50 years. Every single year, approximately 6 million hectares, an area of rainforest equivalent in size to the American state of West Virginia, is deforested in the Amazon.⁶⁸

Biodiversity in the world's oceans is threatened by climate change, overfishing, acidification and pollution. At the present time, 90 percent of seabirds have fragments of plastic in their stomachs. In 1960, it was 5 percent.⁶⁹ Coral reefs exist on only 0.9 percent of the area covered by the world's oceans and yet they provide habitat for one quarter of all marine species. Millions of

people depend on coral reefs for food. Yet, the world has lost almost half of its shallow water corals in just the last thirty years and unless current levels of global warming, ocean acidification, bleaching and overfishing are addressed, it is projected that coral reefs will cease to exist by the end of this century. They will have become the first full ecosystem in the world to have been destroyed and eliminated by human activity.⁷⁰

Worldwide, between 1970 and 2014, there has been an overall average decline of 60 percent in vertebrate, that is, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish population sizes. Species' population declines are especially troubling in the tropics, with Central and South America having experienced the most dramatic decline, one of 89 percent compared to 1970. Freshwater animal populations have experienced an 83 percent decline, worldwide, over the same period.⁷¹ The most endangered animals in the world, today, are amphibians. Amphibian populations in North, Central and South America and in Australia have collapsed as a result of habitat loss, pollution and the introduction into their environment, by human agency, of an invasive species, the chytrid fungus, which is lethal to amphibians, everywhere, except in Africa, where amphibians and chytrid fungi evolved together and have learned to coexist.

The Possibility of Mass Extinctions

Declines in biodiversity and the possibility of significantly rising numbers of extinctions is not unknown on the Earth; we know that mass extinctions are possible. During the last, approximately 450 million years of our planet's geological and biological history, scientists have identified five major mass extinction events, each of which dramatically altered the course of the evolution of life on planet Earth: the Late Ordovician, the Late Devonian, the End Permian, the End Triassic and the End Cretaceous mass extinction events.⁷²

1. The End Ordovician mass extinction – 444 million years ago: resulted in the loss of 49 percent of all marine genera. (Genera is the plural of genus, a scientific term used to designate a grouping of animal species that are closely related genetically and are descended from a common ancestor.)
2. The Late Devonian mass extinction – 364 million years ago: resulted in the estimated loss of 57 percent of all marine genera.
3. The End Permian mass extinction – 250 million years ago: resulted in the loss of 96 percent of all marine species and 70 percent of terrestrial vertebrates. (Vertebrates are animals, marine and terrestrial that have backbones.)
4. The End Triassic mass extinction – about 200 million years ago: resulted in the loss of about 20 percent of all marine families and 20 percent of all genera. (Family is a biological term used to designate a grouping of genera that are related genetically because they are all descended from a common ancestor.)
5. The End Cretaceous mass extinction – about 65 million years ago: resulted in the loss of some 30 percent of all genera and 50 percent of all species, within the geologically short period of about 2,000 years, after a large meteor struck and exploded in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula.

After each of these mass extinction events, the life forms that had been dominant for millions of years ceased to be dominant and were replaced by new life forms that evolved to become dominant in their turn. The best-known example of this phenomenon was the extinction of the

dinosaurs. Their replacement by mammals as the dominant life forms on Earth was a result of the End Cretaceous mass extinction event.

Over the last three decades, more and more scientists have begun to express concern that the world is on the brink of or in the midst of, a sixth mass extinction event that is of anthropogenic, that is, human origin. Peter Sale, a Canadian oceanographer and ecologist, who has spent most of his life studying coral reefs, states unequivocally that humans “are responsible for most of the extinction occurring today and the rate is somewhere around 0.1 percent of extant species per year”, which means that, “species are now disappearing at a rate of about a thousand times faster than the average rate of extinction over the last five hundred years”.⁷³

Some scientists, primarily biologists and ecologists, have suggested that the negative impact of human activity on the Earth has permanently changed our planet to such an extent that the official current geological epoch recognized by geologists, the Holocene (meaning “entirely recent”) Epoch that began 11,700 years ago, at the end of the last Ice Age, should be considered to have ended and needs to be replaced by an officially recognized new epoch called the Anthropocene, from the Greek words *anthropos* for “man” and *cene* for “new”. In 2009, the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS) appointed an Anthropocene Working Group (AWG) to consider the merits of this proposed name change. In 2016, the AWG advised the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS), the professional organization which is responsible for defining the world’s geological time scale, that they formally recognize the end of the Holocene and the beginning of the Anthropocene but, so far, no formal decision has been made, one way or the other.⁷⁴

Theological Reflection

The capacity of humankind to influence the natural world has reached an unprecedented scale that has pushed natural systems to their limits and had a devastating impact. Is this what Creator God intended for God’s good creation?

The creation stories in Genesis are well-loved and frequently cited in creation care theology. Genesis tells us much about God’s intentions for creation: that God is the creator of all things (Genesis 1:1); that everything created by God is good (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25); even very good (Genesis 1:21). It is clear that God loves and delights in creation.

God’s creation does not passively receive the love and delight of God. All creation, desiring to be in relationship with God, praises God (Psalms 66:4, Romans 8:19). This is perhaps a strange notion but the Bible is full of examples of relationships transformed by God’s love. The prophet Isaiah offers prophetic images where God has transformed relationships: wolves and lambs are peaceful companions (Isaiah 11:6) and weapons are remade into plowshares and pruning hooks (Isaiah 2:4). Jesus’ many examples of healing the sick, drawing people into community, especially those who have been excluded and marginalized and calling out those who abuse power exemplify how humankind can be in relationship with each other and creation. Romans 8:18–22 describes how all creation yearns for God’s redemption. All creation is in relationship with God and God’s transforming love is not just for humankind: it is for all of creation. How humankind is in relationship with the rest of creation matters. We must strive for relationships with creation that reflect God’s love of a diverse and flourishing creation.

As Christians consider the mounting ecological crises, it is easy to despair and ask ourselves, why is it up to us to deal with today? The answer is that the call to serve and love God includes all creation and us among it. The challenges are too complicated for any one person, any single

group to tackle. Environmental degradation including pollution, climate change and declining biodiversity have multi-generational causes and impacts. These challenges are bound up in a snare of global politics. Canada's actions contribute to these challenges on a global scale.

While it is true that those with power and influence need to commit to working for effective solutions, the scope of the call does not negate the importance of a single creature to God. And the size of a challenge does not negate a single action taken to amend it. We are an Easter people. From decline, death and decay comes flourishing, life and redemption. This is our hope, our faith in God through Jesus: that all creation, thriving, may sing praises to Creator God. To live out our calling as Easter people, we must act, working to make room for flourishing, life and redemption.

What is the International Community Doing?

In 1992, the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit sponsored by the United Nations initiated two binding agreements, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (unfccc.int) and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (ipcc.ch/). The CBD has since been ratified by 196 parties, every country in the world, except the USA. The CBD has three main goals: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of the components that make up the world's biological diversity and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the world's genetic resources. While the CBD sets overall policies and goals, the responsibility for achieving these goals rests largely with the signatory countries themselves, all of which, including Canada, currently fall short of achieving the five medium-term strategic goals and twenty targets, called the Aichi targets, after the name of the location in Japan where they were decided on, that they have agreed to reach by 2020. Details of these targets and the targets of the signatory countries can be found at cbd.int/undb/media/factsheets/undb-factsheet-sp-en.pdf.

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Living Planet Report (LPR) for 2018 celebrates the Rio Earth Summit as “a critical landmark in mankind's relationship with nature”, where “for the first time the global community came to together and collectively agreed on the importance of the natural world and our responsibility to protect it”⁷⁵ Highlighting some important successes such as the recovery of some whale populations and the designation of protected areas for them the LPR goes on to say that these remain “isolated wins” and that “the continued decline in species shows that we have failed the natural world”, acknowledging that “current targets and consequent actions amount, at best, to “a managed decline”⁷⁶

The Convention on Biological Diversity is the only international legal instrument that explicitly seeks to protect biodiversity on planet Earth. The parties to the CBD are committed to establish new goals and targets that it is hoped will make it possible to realize the CBD's long-term vision that “by 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people”.⁷⁷

In preparation for the 2020 meeting of the CBD (which was delayed due to the pandemic but is being rescheduled), a working group of climate scientists and experts on the current crisis of decline in global biodiversity published, in April 2019, a major scientific paper describing and advocating for what they call a “Global Deal for Nature”.⁷⁸ The Global Deal for Nature (GDN) is described as “a time-bound, science-driven plan to save the diversity and abundance of life on Earth”, designed to avoid catastrophic climate change, to conserve species and to secure those essential ecosystem services that are necessary for human well-being. Advocating the pairing of GDN and Paris Climate Agreement Goals, proponents of the GDN call for the nations of the world to set a target of 30 percent of the Earth's landmass to be protected from human

development by the year 2030 and to pair this target with a renewed effort to stabilize global warming at a level below 1.5 degrees Celsius. These are very ambitious goals. Failure to reach these goals will mean a diminished future for humankind. Reaching them, however, will require considerably more vision and much more strategic and concerted effort than the nations of the world have yet been able to muster.

What is Canada doing?

In 2018, Canada reviewed progress towards our national biodiversity targets. The details of this assessment are contained in Canada's 6th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity.⁷⁹ According to this assessment, Canada is on track to meet its target of conserving 10 percent of coastal and marine areas by 2020. Progress towards Canada's terrestrial target – which aims to conserve at least 17 percent of terrestrial areas and inland water by 2020 – has been slower to date. However, major efforts to accelerate this progress have been launched and an unprecedented federal investment of \$1.3 billion in nature conservation, including a \$500 million Canada Nature Fund, has been made.⁸⁰

Canada is making steady progress towards its targets related to wetland conservation, sustainable forest management, sustainable aquaculture and agriculture and controlling invasive alien species. Steady progress is also being made in expanding and improving the scientific information needed to support decision-makers, integrating information about biodiversity into school curricula, connecting Canadians with nature and incorporating biodiversity considerations into both municipal planning and Canada's national statistical system.

Progress has been somewhat slower with regard to the recovery of species at risk, ecosystem-based management of fisheries and reducing pollution levels in Canadian waters. These will continue to be areas of shared focus in Canada moving forward.

What can we do?

- As individuals and churches, there are many actions we can take to address biodiversity loss.⁸¹ Some of the following suggestions directly contribute to biodiversity, whereas others work indirectly to preserve biodiversity by making more environmentally sustainable choices and reducing human contributions to climate change, one of the leading culprits in biodiversity loss.⁸²
- 'Biodiversify' your landscaping and home: use environmentally friendly products and dispose of chemical and hazardous materials safely; landscape using native trees and vegetation; plant pollen and nectar plants that attract beneficial insects and bees; and plant more flowers than grass.
- Become more aware of how the products you buy are farmed, made or caught. Ensure that your purchases are not negatively impacting at-risk species due to practices such as deforestation.
- Buy wood and wood products that come from a sustainable legal source. Look for the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) label.
- If you choose to eat seafood, seek out sustainable options. At restaurant or at home, choose fish which are more sustainable, avoiding endangered species like Bluefin Tuna or North Sea cod and aim to purchase seafood labelled with the blue MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) logo or Ocean Wise Seafood (a program founded by the Vancouver Aquarium) symbol.
- Keep your cat inside. Domestic cats kill 1.4 to 3.7 billion birds in the United States each year, 70 percent are killed by feral cats.⁸³

Wrap up in winter, eliminate draughts and improve the insulation in your home.

As Churches

- Plant a bee garden, research and build bird houses or bat boxes.
- Start a compost bin and use it for church gardening projects.
- Partner with other groups in your area to encourage and support local government initiatives that protect habitat and support biodiversity, helping to stem the effects of climate change.
- Undertake an energy audit, switch to a green energy supplier, switch to low-energy bulbs, install thermostats with a timer, switch off computer equipment and turn off lights when possible.
- Upgrade your building to be more energy-conserving. Caulk windows and doors against drafts. Improve the Church insulation. Install storm windows or pane protectors over stained glass windows.
- Become a Fairtrade church.
- Encourage the use of locally and ethically sourced seasonal food for church meals.

Recommendation IAF-006 (adopted, p. 40)

That congregations be encouraged to learn about the interconnectedness of human, plant and animal life in the web of God's creation and care for the biosphere.

Recommendation IAF-007 (adopted, p. 40)

That congregations and ministries be encouraged to foster biodiversity on their properties, as well as in their homes and communities.

Recommendation IAF-008 (adopted, p. 40)

That courts of the church and their ministries be encouraged to create policies for environmentally sustainable use of churches, buildings and properties and that these policies be applied to rental groups.

Recommendation IAF-009 (adopted, p. 40)

That the Moderator write to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change commending the Government of Canada on its progress towards meeting its Convention on Biodiversity goals, urging prompt action on outstanding goals and that the government regularly report on its progress to Canadians.

Recommendation IAF-010 (adopted, p. 40)

That sessions and individuals be encouraged to write to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Premier of their province and meet with their elected officials to encourage them to ensure Canada meets its Convention on Biodiversity goals and to report regularly on its progress to Canadians.

CLIMATE-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT

Early in 2019, a year before the world shut its borders completely, Jorge A. knew he had to get out of Guatemala. The land was turning against him. For five years, it almost never rained. Then it did rain and Jorge rushed his last seeds into the ground. The corn sprouted into healthy green stalks and there was hope – until, without warning, the river flooded. Jorge waded chest-deep into his fields searching in vain for cobs [his family] could still eat. Soon he made a last desperate bet, signing away the tin-roof hut where he lived with his wife and three children against a \$1,500 advance in okra seed. But after the flood, the rain stopped again and everything died. Jorge knew then that if he

didn't get out of Guatemala, his family might die, too...In March, Jorge and his seven year old son each packed a pair of pants, three T-shirts, underwear and a toothbrush into a single thin black nylon sack with a drawstring. Jorge's father had pawned his last four goats for \$2,000 to help pay for their transit, another loan the family would have to repay at 100 percent interest. The coyote called at 10 p.m. – they would go that night. They had no idea then where they would wind up or what they would do when they got there. From decision to departure, it was three days. And then they were gone.⁸⁴

For most of human history, people have lived within a surprisingly narrow range of temperatures, in places where the climate supported abundant food production. As the planet warms, that band is shifting north. By 2070, the kind of hot zones where it is difficult for people to live, like in the Sahara, that now cover less than 1 percent of the earth's land surface could cover nearly a fifth of the land, potentially placing one in three people outside the climate niche where humans have thrived for thousands of years.⁸⁵ Many will dig in, suffering through heat, hunger and political chaos but others will be forced to move. By 2100, temperatures may rise to the point that just going outside for a few hours in some places, including parts of India and Eastern China, "will result in death even for the fittest of humans".

Environmental factors that drive people to migrate include resource scarcity and increased frequency of extreme weather events that the resulting competition for access to and control of food, water and other resources. People are already beginning to flee. For example, in Southeast Asia, where increasingly unpredictable monsoon rainfall and drought have made farming more difficult, research supported by the World Bank notes that more than eight million people have moved toward the Middle East, Europe and North America. In the African Sahel, millions of rural people have been streaming toward the coasts and the cities amid drought and widespread crop failures. Should the flight away from hot climates reach the scale that current research suggests is likely, it will amount to a vast remapping of the world's populations.^{86,87}

Water is life and developing methods to manage and equitably share water sources is critical. The importance of storing the water of the monsoon season to be used for the remainder of the year has been a hard-learned lesson to those in monsoon-controlled areas of the world. The techniques of rainwater harvesting can be shared with farmers now experiencing irregular patterns of rain and drought. Changing irrigation practices to those that use much less water can help manage water where rainfall patterns – too little or too much rain – have disrupted the ability to grow food for subsistence.

Recent studies suggest that the future displacement from rising tides should be increased by a factor of three, with the likely number of people affected about 150 million globally. These models show high tides submerging much of Vietnam by 2050, including most of the Mekong Delta, now home to 18 million people, as well as parts of China and Thailand, most of southern Iraq and nearly all of the Nile Delta and many coastal regions of the United States.⁸⁸

Migration has resulted in increased urbanization – people are leaving rural areas and gravitating toward cities. In these cities, the numbers of new people stretch infrastructure, resources and services to their limits. Migration researchers warn that more severe strains on society will unfold. Food has to be imported – stretching reliance on already-struggling farms and increasing its cost. With little formal education and few marketable skills, people will congregate in slums, with little water or electricity, where they are more vulnerable to flooding or other disasters. These stresses often spill into political arenas and can be a source of tension or conflict. For example, drought helped push many Syrians into cities before the civil war, worsening tensions and leading to rising discontent.⁸⁹ Crop losses led to unemployment that stoked Arab Spring

uprisings in Egypt and Libya.⁹⁰ As we have learned in the past year, having too many people in tightly packed areas can make it difficult to stop the spread of diseases as well.

Most people who end up becoming migrants don't want to move away from home. Instead, they'll make incremental adjustments to minimize change, first moving to a larger town or city. It is only when those places fail them that they tend to cross borders, taking on ever riskier journeys, in what researchers call "stepwise migration". Leaving a village for the city is hard enough but crossing into a foreign land is an entirely different trial. Some of this migration is intentional, much is not.⁹¹ Jorge's story, which opened this section of the report, reminds us that people – families and children – are the ones that bear the consequences of climate change induced migration. There are things that can be done to change what is predicted. For example, there are ways to limit the effects of drought or of desertification but knowledge of these changes has to be shared in a way that they are available to the farmer who needs them in a way they can be put to use.

The Norwegian Refugee Council estimates that the number of people displaced by natural disasters between 2008 and 2016 averaged 26.8 million per year.⁹² There is at present no official designation or set of protections that apply specifically to people who have been displaced by climate change. The current UN approach to people who have been displaced by climate change is not to press for an official definition in international conventions which would likely be subject to extended and fractious negotiations but rather to deal with the aftermath of natural disasters on a regional basis.

Many thoughtful people have spent their lives spreading knowledge of the impacts of the changing climate. They have told us again and again what we need to do to slow the rate of the changing climate but it has failed to get through the haze of daily headlines; COVID-19, the loss of 140 more migrants, the fighting in Nagori-Carobac, the price of gold, the weakness in the Alberta oil patch. So many other things grab our attention. Meanwhile, those among us with the means to do so often continue the idolatry of owning more stuff; a bigger house, more and bigger cars, more clothes as we speed towards a world where millions of people will have to move or die. We know the cause of this change in the climate. We know the ways we must change to help God's creation to heal. We must collectively find the will to do what we know must be done.

On January 13, 2021, the Government of Canada pledged up to \$55 million dollars in support of the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Fund of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. The fund supports private sector projects in developing countries that use sustainable land management techniques to restore degraded ecosystems and adapt to green economies.⁹³ Sustainable and ecologically-based systems of farming such as those practiced in the "Greening the Desert" project in Jordan are a good example of the ecological approach to agriculture that not only produces food but rebuilds and nurtures the whole of creation.⁹⁴ Fighting to hold back the desert is also a laudable effort so long as there is a good expectation that the changing climate will provide even the small amount of water needed.⁹⁵

Climate change is primarily driven by burning of fossil fuels such as gasoline, diesel fuel and coal and conversion of natural areas to factory agriculture.⁹⁶ Anything we, as individuals, congregations, presbyteries, the national church and the Government of Canada, can do to slow climate change will reduce the forces which are pushing the climate to change at a rate unknown for a thousands years⁹⁷ or more. The church has published several reports in past years that suggest ways that individuals and congregations can respond to climate change. Further information can be found on the church's Social Action Hub. In addition to the recommendations

from the section just previous to this one, on biodiversity, the following recommendations are offered.

Recommendation IAF-011 (adopted, p. 40)

That the Moderator write to the Prime Minister to compliment him and his government on their efforts and urging it to continue its efforts to mitigate climate change and urging redoubled efforts to support national governments in their efforts to do the same.

Recommendation IAF-012 (adopted, p. 40)

That congregations and individuals be encouraged to learn about the causes of human migration and help support by the most effective and appropriate means possible welcoming migrants to Canada.

For more information about migration and welcoming migrants, see the Social Action Hub's page on Immigration (Refugees and Migrants) and Xenophobia, at presbyterian.ca/justice/social-action/immigration-and-xenophobia.

PALESTINIAN MIGRATION

*Readers are cautioned that this section of the report contains detailed accounts of violence.

To speak of migration and the Palestinian people is to describe three different periods and perhaps a fourth in the past 70 years: the Nakba, the Naksa, the Occupation and Annexation.

First Period: Nakba

The first period occurred in 1948 at the time of the formation of the state of Israel by United Nations resolution, promising this new state 56 percent of British Palestine. At the end of the war that broke out, Israel controlled over 77 percent of the land and 750,000 Palestinian men, women and children had been forcibly displaced from their homes. During this time of devastation known by Palestinians as “the catastrophe” (Nakba), many fled to Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. Others fled to territory that until 1967 was under Jordanian jurisdiction, places such as East Jerusalem and the West Bank. For example, Bethlehem has two large refugee camps resulting from of the 1948 UN decision and its devastating aftermath.

No other refugee group has remained stateless for so long with no “right of return” to their homes even though it is enshrined in international law.⁹⁸ A poignant symbol of this time is the key to their former homes that many elderly Palestinian women and men continue to treasure.

Most of the families living in Aida Refugee Camp, located near Bethlehem in the West Bank, are Palestinian refugees from the War of 1948. When they fled their villages, they locked their doors thinking they would come back to their homes after the fighting. After almost 70 years, they still hold the original keys to their homes, hoping that one day they will return. This large key rests over the entrance of the camp as a symbol of the hope of return.⁹⁹

Zochrot (“remembering” in Hebrew), an Israeli NGO, has been working since 2002 to promote acknowledgement and accountability for the ongoing injustices of the Nakba and the reconceptualization of the “right of return” as the required redress of the Nakba and a chance for a better life for all the country's inhabitants. It and other Israeli NGOs, have been fairly successful over the past few years in raising the Nakba to the awareness of the broad Jewish public.¹⁰⁰

The situation of Palestinians living in Lebanon describes how the Nakba migration continues to the present day. The majority, continuing to live in 12 formally assigned camps, is estimated to be 280,000. Denied citizenship, they do not hold a passport of any country. They depend on UNRWA for an identify card, education, health, housing and social service needs. Current Lebanese laws restrict Palestinians from working in many fields and prevent them from purchasing property. Since the land on which the refugee camps sit is owned by the government or religious organizations, residents face stringent rules about where, what and how they can build. The result is overcrowded conditions with limited access to water, electricity and waste disposal services.

Najwa gazes at the green fields beyond the UNIFEL Blue Line that separates Lebanon from the occupied Palestinian territories. She points to the far lands, turns her head towards me and says, “My dignity is there”. She continues to narrate how her “life in Lebanon’s refugee camps will always be incomplete”, and that they are only a waiting zone. For Najwa, the only permanence she can recognize exists in her Palestinian homeland and her “life could only be completely dignified in the original home”, referring to the homeland that she has never visited.¹⁰¹

Even though the right of return remains pertinent in the fourth-generation Palestinian refugees’ discourse, “return” has taken on a new meaning.

Somehow Palestine is far for us now. Of course, we claim the right of return and even in the Qur’an it is written that it is our right to return back home. But for the children this thought is far. They just want to improve their lives and therefore they want to leave to any place...to go somewhere and take a break from the pressure. We may travel anywhere but the thought about reclaiming the land will always remain, even if we might not actually return in the end. (Female, age 34).¹⁰²

Second Period: Naksa

The second period, the Naksa, in English setback or defeat, occurred in June 1967, resulting in a second forced migration of the Palestinian people. In that year, under Israel military occupation the whole of historical Palestine was absorbed, as well as additional territory taken from Egypt and Syria. By the end of the war, Israel had expelled another 280,000–325,000 Palestinians from their homes, including 130,000 who were previously displaced in 1948. In six days, Israel brought more than one million Palestinians under its direct control in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

The Salah family was one of the Palestinian families to flee their homes following the 1967 Six Day War. Leaving behind approximately 1200 acres of agricultural land in their village, they fled to al-Khader, the nearest urban area, to find shelter. In 1992, Muhanned Salah made the decision to start working the land they left behind. He arrived back in the village with his grandfather and a set of tools and they began to nurture the abandoned fields of figs, grapes and olives. The following year, the first Oslo Accord was signed and it was not long before Israeli settlements began expanding rapidly across the surrounding area. In 1995, determined to maintain his presence on the land, Muhanned left al- Khader and moved back to the run-down remains of their old home, his wife later joining. The property was without doors, without windows and cut off from any electricity and water supply. “Settlers came regularly to throw stones and

try and scare us away”, says Muhanned. “They tried to force us to leave here but we decided to continue. If we didn’t, we would lose the land forever.”¹⁰³

Palestinians have not forgotten the Nakba or the Naksa or their right to return as stated by international law. Beginning on March 30, 2018, Palestinians in Gaza have gathered to peacefully protest along the fence separating Gaza from Israel. They have been calling for their “right to return” to the homes of their ancestors’, who were displaced in 1948. They are also demanding an end to the 13-year long blockade on Gaza, that the United Nations categorizes as collective punishment. The borders of Gaza, home to nearly 2 million people, about 70 percent of whom are registered refugees, are controlled on three sides by Israel. The southern entrance borders Egypt, which supports Israel in controlling the movement of the residents of Gaza. In the first year of the protest, 266 people were killed (including 50 children) and more than 30,000 wounded.¹⁰⁴

Too worn out to shed more tears, Sabreen al-Najjar recalls the last time she saw her daughter alive. “She stood up and smiled at me, saying she was heading out to the protest”, the 43 year old told Al Jazeera from her home in Khuza’a, southern Gaza Strip. Sabreen’s daughter, 21 year old Razan, was volunteering as a paramedic to help those shot by Israeli snipers. “In a blink of an eye, she was out of door. I ran to the balcony to watch her outside but she had already made her way to the end of the street. She flew like a bird in front of me.”

At the protest site in Khuza’a, witnesses said that Razan approached the fence on Friday in her medic’s vest and with both of her arms raised to show the Israeli soldiers a 100 yards away that she posed no threat. Her intention was to evacuate a wounded protester lying on the other side of the fence, after he had managed to cut a hole through it. Instead, Razan was shot in her chest with live ammunition, the single bullet escaping through a hole in the back of her vest.

Known as the “butterfly bullet”, it explodes upon impact, pulverising tissue, arteries and bone, while causing severe internal injuries. “She was deliberately and directly killed by an explosive bullet, which is illegal under international law”, Sabreen said.

Back in Khuza’a, before Razan’s body arrived for the funeral, her father held out her bloodied medic’s vest. “This is Razan’s weapon”, he told local TV crews outside his house. He emptied the vest’s pockets, taking out gauze and bandages. “This is her weapon”, he repeated.¹⁰⁵

Contrary to the denial of the “right of return” guaranteed to Palestinians by international law, Jewish people from anywhere in the world are encouraged to migrate to Israel where they receive rights and benefits almost immediately upon entry.

Third Period: Occupation

The year 1967 signaled the beginning of the third phase, that of the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem as well as what became the imprisonment of Gaza, which continues unabated to the present time.

The Occupation unleashed restrictions on Palestinian migration and movement, particularly the right, according to international law, to move freely within one’s own territory.¹⁰⁶ Checkpoints manned by the Israeli military monitor and severely restrict the movement of the Palestinian population. By the end of 2016 there were 572 fixed movement obstacles, including 44

permanently staffed, 52 partially staffed checkpoints and 376 roadblocks, earth-mounds and road gates. Added to that are the on average 107 Israeli military's weekly ad hoc flying checkpoints along West Bank roads.¹⁰⁷

Another part of the Occupation strategy leading to further restrictions on the internal movement of the Palestinian people began in June 2002 with the construction of a Separation Wall. The route of this wall – including the sections built to date, those under construction and those awaiting construction – is 712 kilometers long with only 15 percent on Israeli land and the remaining 85 percent inside the West Bank. According to B'tselem, an Israeli human rights organization:

Israel in constructing the barrier has broken up contiguous Palestinian urban and rural blocs, severed inter-community ties that had been forged and cemented over the course of many generations and abruptly imposed an arbitrary reconfiguration of space based on settlement boundaries and to suit the convenience of Israeli security forces. If construction is completed along the entire planned route, 52,667.7 hectares of land – an area that is equal to 9.4 percent of the West Bank and includes the territories that Israel annexed to the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem will be cut off from the West Bank.¹⁰⁸

The extent to which this restricts the internal movement and migration of Palestinians for the purpose of visiting family, for health reasons, for work or religious observance is unimaginable. Such restricted movement has also been a matter of life and death for Palestinian women giving birth. It is estimated that between 2000–2005, a time frame of 60 months, 67 Palestinian women were delayed at or denied the right to cross through gave birth at a checkpoint; 30 babies died.¹⁰⁹

In 2002, Houria, then 40 years old, was in the eighth month of her sixth pregnancy when sudden complications arose and she began hemorrhaging. Alerted, her husband immediately rang the emergency medical services for an ambulance. The Yassins live in a village just outside of Jericho that is closed off by a checkpoint on the main road as well as a dirt mound barricade around their village. The Yassins were informed by the emergency services that an ambulance would be waiting outside the checkpoint on the main road but that they were denied entry to the road itself and to their village; somehow, Houria and her husband would have to find a way to cross the distance to get to the ambulance.

They set out by car after crossing the dirt mound to their village by foot. Upon arriving at the checkpoint on the road to Jericho, armed soldiers confronted the couple with pointed guns even though it was obvious that the woman was pregnant and in distress. For over an hour, the husband pleaded with Israeli troops oblivious to the plight of Houria and despite her hemorrhaging. The couple could see the ambulance across the checkpoint but it remained a distant image as Houria's condition worsened by the minute.

Finally, Houria gave in from exhaustion. Infuriated and wrought with anxiety, her husband informed the soldiers that he would leave her to die at their feet and let them take responsibility. Only then did they finally consent to allow only Houria to pass through the checkpoint and on foot. Somehow, she gathered her strength and slowly began walking the two kilometers to the ambulance, bleeding the entire way. She never made it and collapsed with Israeli troops watching. When she awoke hours later in

hospital and after an emergency caesarian section, Houria was alive but in critical condition. The baby did not make it.¹¹⁰

It is hard to imagine that in so small a country, children living in Bethlehem have never been to Jerusalem or seen or been able to swim in the Mediterranean Sea. As we deal with temporary restrictions under COVID-19, we can at least get a partial understanding of the suffering that such permanent restrictions are to one's full human development. Below is a telling reminder of how important freedom of movement is to one's emotional, physical and spiritual health and why international law describes it as a right:

As part of a Sabeel conference in Bethlehem in 2019, attended by several Canadian Presbyterians, an event was arranged for some of us to meet with Palestinian school children. We were shocked to hear first-hand their stories. One 14 year old living in Bethlehem was continually denied a permit to visit Jerusalem, which is within walking distance, because her father was on an Israeli watch list. A 13 year old boy wistfully described how he had never seen the Mediterranean Sea and how much he would love to swim in it just once. Another boy, 12 years old, expressed his fear walking home from school each day— anxious about whether the Israeli military would arrest him. We asked why – the response “because they can.”¹¹¹

Fourth Period: Annexation

As this report is being written, we are at another turning point in the Occupation of Palestine. In January 2020, former US President Trump released a ‘Middle East Plan’ that proposes a demilitarized and disjointed Palestinian state with a land mass of only 15 percent of historic Palestine. This plan has been met with severe criticism by the international community and Palestinian leaders. Part of this plan included the incorporation of all Israeli settlements in the West Bank into Israel – something no other US administration has supported. With the release of this plan, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced Israel would be annexing 30 percent of the West Bank. Annexation is a clear violation of international law and would render permanent the devastating impact of 53 years of occupation. While annexation of the West Bank is for the moment formally suspended, the ongoing creation of new Israeli settler homes, the building of military and settler-only roads, the continued extension of the Separation Wall indicates that annexation continues unabated.

Roads and infrastructure are a fundamental part of the government-backed settlement enterprise's attempts to create facts on the ground and fortify Israel's control of the territories – at the expense of the movement of the Palestinians within their own territory.

“This is not another hundred housing units there or here. This is de facto annexation on steroids.”, says Yehuda Shaul – a founding member of Breaking the Silence. “Israel is continuing at full speed ahead down the road to annexation of the West Bank by developing infrastructure that will help double the number of settlers and in doing so, to entrench our control over the Palestinian people for eternity.”

“Take a look, for example at the Al-Aroub Bypass Road, built so that settlers wouldn't have to enter Al-Aroub. In order to build it, 401 dunams (1 dunam = 1000 sq. meters) of land were expropriated from the Palestinians. The Hawara Bypass Road necessitated the expropriation of 406 dunams from the Palestinians. And it doesn't take long before housing units for settlers are approved by the Israeli planning committees. At this very

moment, 1,600 units are being considered for approval alongside route 55 which crosses through the northern West Bank.”¹¹²

In addition to the displacement caused by home demolitions to make room for the annexation of East Jerusalem, the demolition of Bedouin villages continues unabated. Where do such people go? They can't easily immigrate to another country nor do they want to leave Palestine, which has been their home for centuries.

This is Khan al-Ahmar, a Bedouin community displaced from the Negev after the 1948 war. It is under imminent threat of demolition and displacement for a second time. Khan al-Ahmar is in Area C which, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, comprises over 60 per cent of the West Bank, where Israel retains near exclusive control, including over law enforcement, planning and construction. Most of Area C has been allocated for the benefit of Israeli settlements or the Israeli military, at the expense of Palestinian communities...In response to international criticism of the potential transfer of the Bedouin, Israel is constructing an 'urban relocation centre' at al-Jabal West in Abu Dis. Ibrahim says that the new site is completely unsuitable for shepherding animals. As [Ecumenical Accompaniers] we verified this when we visited. It looked like a zoo enclosure was being constructed. It is surrounded by a thunderous main road and is cheek by jowl with Palestinians and another Bedouin community. Objections to the plan have been submitted by the Palestinians living there. Whatever the politics involved; these are anxious days for the Bedouin.¹¹³

Reflection: I am Palestinian and I have a dream

I have a dream of...the right to walk freely in the towns and villages of my occupied country without being stopped at “security checkpoints” to show my papers to a soldier who might or might not let me pass, depending on his mood, while having pleasure in seeing my exhaustion and suffocated breath as I surrender to the instructions of his weapon and the status quo.

I have a dream of walking comfortably while I visit the Rosh Hanikra Grottoes and the wall of Acre, before taking a swim in the beaches of Haifa; and then heading to Mount Carmel to fill my lungs with fresh air. In the evenings, I would rest in Nazareth and continue my journey through the centre and south of the country, tasting the oranges of Jaffa and embracing the corners of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the destination of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)'s nocturnal journey and ascension to the heavens (the Isra and Mi'raj), before passing by the Church of the Resurrection in Bethlehem, home of the Cradle of Jesus (peace be upon him).

But even if the occupation, the UN Security Council and all their allies on this planet meet to deny me the right to dream and strive to realize my dream, they will not be able to take it away from me. If the forces of the whole earth come together, they will not be capable of depriving me of this right, which many consider impossible but I and millions of Palestinians and supporters of the Palestinian cause see victory as being as close as a blink of an eye.¹¹⁴

Recommendation IAF-013 (adopted, p. 40)

That congregations be encouraged to utilize resources from Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations for study and worship on issues around migration as described in this

report (e.g., B'tselem, Sabeel, Kairos Palestine, Middle East Monitor, Al Haq, Breaking the Silence).

Recommendation IAF-014 (adopted, p. 40)

That congregations be encouraged to invite those with experience working for a just peace in Palestine and Israel (e.g., former EAPPis who could be contacted through International Ministries, Canadian Friends of Sabeel (CFOS), Defense of Children International – Palestine, Just Peace Advocates, Kairos and Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) to speak with their members.

Recommendation IAF-015 (adopted, p. 40)

That the Moderator write to the Prime Minister's Office requesting that the Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations be given authority to take stronger action in support of recommendations on Palestine and that a copy of this letter be shared with presbyteries and congregations.

Recommendation IAF-016 (adopted, p. 40)

That the Moderator write to the Government of Canada encouraging Canada to pressure Israel to adhere to international law related to annexation of the occupied territories and the right of return of the Palestinian people.

Recommendation IAF-017 (adopted, p. 40)

That Presbyterians be encouraged, once pandemic travel restrictions are eased, to plan a "Come and See" visit to the Palestinian Territories using a Palestinian Tour company and that advance preparation include reference material such as "A Code of Conduct for Tourism in the Holy Land: A Palestinian Initiative": prepared by the Alternative Tourism Group in cooperation with Kairos Palestine.

Recommendation IAF-018 (adopted, p. 40)

That congregations be directed to the new Social Action Hub "Peacekeeping" tab for decisions, resources and letters of the Moderator to the Canadian Government on Palestine/Israel.

IMPACT OF THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

The disciples of Jesus reacted sternly to the children whose parents brought them to be blessed. Rebuking his disciples, Jesus embraced these children, saying the kingdom of God belongs to them. (Mark 10:13–16)

As Jesus demonstrated to his disciples that children are important to God, so must we follow his example and work to see how we can bless and safeguard children today. God saw fit to be born as a human child in Bethlehem long ago and then too, families suffered violence, trauma and the death of their children. (Matthew 2:1–12, 16–18). Today, children continue to live under threat of violence in Palestine and Israel. In 2019 the International Affairs Committee reported on Palestinian children being tried in Israeli military courts. (A&P 2019, p. 276–79, 30) This report on children, written originally for the 2020 General Assembly, considers a broader context of the devastating impact the Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territories has on children and their families and offers recommendations for The Presbyterian Church in Canada to consider.

Children are dying

Both Palestinian and Israeli families have lost children to violence. As the occupation stretches on with no end in sight, families on both sides have taken action to work for reconciliation, realizing that the anger and pain of losing their children to the violence was destroying them.

The Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF) is a joint Israeli-Palestinian organization working with over 600 families seeking positive change in a violent context. It was created in 1995 by Mr. Yitzhak Frankenthal and a few Israeli families. All who belong to the Parents Circle – Families Forum have lost an immediate family member to the effects of the Israeli Occupation. The first meeting between bereaved Palestinians from Gaza and Israeli families took place in 1998 and they have continued since.¹¹⁵ The PCFF's activities have shown that reconciliation between individuals is possible.

In December 2019, five Canadian Presbyterians – including two members of the International Affairs Committee and Glynis Williams, Associate Secretary of International Ministries – attended a presentation by two members of the Parents Circle in Jerusalem. Two speakers shared their tragic stories of suffering and their commitment to working for an end to the occupation. Laila is Palestinian and Rami is Israeli.

Laila lost her six-month old son when the infant was exposed to teargas by Israeli soldiers. The family was held at a checkpoint for four hours while trying to seek medical care. Once admitted to the hospital, Laila was told she could not stay overnight and had to return home. That night, her son died alone. The family was not notified. Laila arrived at the hospital the following day and was told that staff could not locate her son's body. Her son is one of the many children that have lost their lives to the systemic violence of the state of Israel.

Rami was born and grew up in Jerusalem in an ultra-Orthodox Jewish family whose father had been in the Auschwitz concentration camp. In the fall of 1983 Rami's daughter was born. She was killed in September of 1997 when two Palestinian suicide bombers detonated their explosives. She was 14 years old.

Both speakers recounted the sea of anger between the two communities and how it was destroying them. When her son died, Laila said she hated all Israeli people. But she had a recurrent dream, of white doves saying: "Mama don't cry." Initially too, Rami's anger made him want to get even, to seek revenge. Laila spoke of her rage, which affected her family and her relationships; she said it starts with ourselves. They both asked: "whose pain is worse, who is to blame?"

Laila and Rami testify to the enduring pain of parents and families that have lost children as a result of the Israeli occupation. It is in the reconciliatory acts of ordinary people that we see hopeful lights shining. Despite the brutality of the Israeli occupation, these acts of reconciliation between families who have lost children are happening because individuals – both Israelis and Palestinians – recognize the injustice of Israeli government policies and military actions. In the words of the Parent's Circle and Family Forum, "Bereaved PCFF members are opposed to the Occupation and believe that attaining historical reconciliation between the nations is a prerequisite for turning a future peace treaty into sustainable Peace".¹¹⁶ It is their vision to "influence the public and the political decision makers to choose reconciliation and the path of peace over violence and war in order to achieve a just settlement based on empathy and understanding".¹¹⁷

Right now, however, the path of peace – and especially the path of peace for children – has many obstacles. We name some of them below; incarceration, denial of rights, demolition of homes. Seeing a way forward can seem impossible but as these grieving families in the PCFF have shown each other and any who will listen, it is possible. Before that can happen, however, the injustices children and families face must be addressed.

Children are incarcerated

In 2019, the General Assembly voted in favour of endorsing the No Way To Treat A Child Campaign (A&P 2019, p. 279, 30). This campaign documents how the Israeli military takes Palestinian children and teenagers from their beds during night raids. Alone and scared, they are subject to the Israeli military court system, incarcerated and interrogated, typically without their parents or guardians present, often involving threats, yelling, verbal abuse and sometimes physical violence.¹¹⁸ Over half of these children report physical or psychological abuse during arrest, transfer or integration.¹¹⁹ Only three percent report that their parents are present during interrogation.¹²⁰ No Way to Treat a Child notes that Israel is the only country in the world that automatically prosecutes children in military courts. As a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the State of Israel has a responsibility to end the human rights abuses that Palestinian children are subjected to in the Israeli military court system. To do so would remove one of the barriers to well-being of Palestinian children.

Children are denied their right to education

For many Palestinian children, what should be the simple task of going to school is complicated and sometimes made impossible by such things as checkpoints. In Hebron, elementary school children and their teachers must cross through Israeli military checkpoints twice a day to get to and from school. Shaun MacDonald participated in the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel. He witnessed a situation where three teachers were arbitrarily denied entry through Checkpoint 55 in Hebron outside Cordoba School, where they teach. He explains the significance of this action: "the students in those classes would have no lessons that day, which is unfortunately a regular, yet also unpredictable, occurrence. In this area, the universal human right of access to education is completely subject to the whims of the Israeli military authority and the so-called 'security needs' of the illegal settler population in the centre of Hebron".

Children are impacted by demolition of homes and schools

Since 2004, 987 residential units have been demolished by the Israeli military in East Jerusalem leaving 1,704 children without a home.¹²¹ Six year old Zainab¹²² attends Bedu al-Ka'abna Basic Co-ed School. When Zainab's home, which was a few hundred metres from the school, was demolished, her principal shared with Ecumenical Accompanier Amy Zavitz that he watched Zainab dig through the rubble to find her school bag. He stood with her in the playground as she stared at her demolished home – her entire existence under threat. The principal asked, "What does it mean to be human?" Zainab's school has 21 demolition orders on its buildings and trees.

Children in Gaza lack access to basic amenities

In Gaza children are denied access to necessities – water, electricity, safety. In 2012, the United Nations predicted that Gaza would become unlivable in 2020.¹²³ Many would argue that dire prediction was already reached in 2017. The sewage, water and electricity infrastructure have been greatly damaged such that hardly any sewage treatment installations remain to purify water

before it is dumped in the sea or used for irrigation. Water is essential for life yet Sara Roy, an expert on Gaza from Harvard University's Centre for Middle East Studies, writes, "innocent human beings, most of them young, are slowly being poisoned in Gaza by the water they drink and likely by the soil in which they plant".¹²⁴

Haaretz, an Israeli newspaper, cited a study from the RAND Centre for Middle East Policy, indicating that 97 percent of water in the Gaza strip is undrinkable by any international standard and that polluted water is the leading cause of child mortality, accounting for over 12 percent of child deaths.¹²⁵ The need to conserve water, even polluted water, means that schools have one toilet for every 75 pupils and one sink for hand washing for every 80 students.¹²⁶

The hospitals in Gaza are ill equipped to treat many of their patients. In desperation, parents seek permits to take their children to hospitals outside of Gaza where treatment is available but are often refused permission to accompany their children. While Israel claims that more permits are being granted to parents to accompany their children, Holmes & Balousha state that according to the Israeli charity Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHRI; a partner of the Church of Scotland): "7,000 permits were issued for minors from Gaza last year. Less than 2,000 permits for parents were granted, suggesting most children travelled without mothers or fathers".¹²⁷

The Rev. John McCulloch, minister of St. Andrew's Scots Memorial Church in Jerusalem and his wife, Annette a physician, travel to Gaza regularly as part of the Church of Scotland mission work. The following is a report from a 2019 trip.

There are times in life when you come face to face with human suffering and your heart weeps, as you know that this is just one of many similar stories and anything you do to try and help just feels like a miniscule drop in a vast ocean of injustice.

Our transit through the Gaza border crossing some weeks back was one such moment. We had just got through the Hamas checkpoint on our way back into Israel after three days in Gaza. We were waiting on a bus to drive us through the security buffer zone to Israeli Security. It was on the bus that we met nine month old Sajida and her grandmother.

Sajida is suffering from leukaemia and needed specialist treatment in a Jerusalem hospital. We spoke with the grandmother in our broken Arabic, as she told us a little more about the situation. A few moments later Sajida's mother came onto the bus, to try and feed Sajida with a syringe and to say goodbye, as she and her husband had not been granted permission from the Israeli authorities to travel with her to the hospital.

Annette spoke with the mother and told her that we would help Sajida and her grandmother through the checkpoint with her bags and drive her straight to the hospital in Jerusalem. The grandmother told us that she would have had to get two buses, which would have taken over 2 hours and used up the scant money they had. Rev. Angleena Keizer (a Methodist Ecumenical Associate with St Andrew's Jerusalem & Tiberias), sat next to the grandmother and Sajida on the way to Jerusalem, as tears ran down her face at the injustice of a situation where parents are separated from their children.

We do not know whether Sajida survived and was reunited with her parents. Sajida is just one of many children, victims of conflict in an unjust world. (From Partner Plan, John McCulloch – Israel, December 2019: Advent Message from Gaza)

Children and Trauma

The psychological stress of conflict on children cannot be understated. The issues covered in this report lead to levels of trauma for children and families that are devastating to children's well-being; not only now but with life-long impacts. A study into the impact on Palestinian civilians under the Israeli Occupation finds that 87 percent of respondents in Bethlehem report psychological stress at home, reporting "uncontrollable fear, hopelessness, fatigue, depression, sleeplessness, shaking episodes and uncontrolled crying episodes or enuresis [involuntary urination at night] in children".¹²⁸ In the words of another study, "Palestinian children's mental health problems were compounded by their extreme adverse socio-economic circumstances, which is a common finding in research with children who are victims of political conflict. Most traumatic events occur in refugee camps in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, where generations of children have been born for 55 years with little hope of escape."¹²⁹ This second study also noted that while children directly exposed to war trauma reported significantly higher post-traumatic stress and fears, children exposed to other types of traumatic events – for example, through violent images on the news – also reported adverse effects, such as anticipatory anxiety and cognitive expressions of distress. While the Israeli occupation impacts Palestinian and Israeli children in different ways, the violence of the occupation has negative mental health impacts on both groups of children.

We know from studies into childhood trauma that it leaves deep scars on both body and mind even into adulthood, causing increased physical and mental health problems and increasing a person's chances of early death or suicide.¹³⁰ Addressing the trauma children face would not simply improve the lives of children today – a worthy enough goal on its own – it would also help ensure futures where well-being is possible. Groups like Defense for Children International – Ramallah and Wi'am: The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Centre work to help children through documenting abuses and calling powers to account or through focusing on 'trauma-coping' strategies for children in the West Bank. The work of these and other organizations supports families and peace making but in any case, it is clear that healing cannot fully begin until the occupation ends.

What can we do?

1. Share: As Presbyterian Canadians the call is to share the stories boldly, share them within our congregations and with our elected officials.
2. Act: Support the various Israeli and Palestinian organizations that seek to alleviate the suffering and trauma of innocent children.
3. Go and See: If it all seems too unbelievable, go and see for yourself once international travel is again allowed. Join one of the witness tours that will introduce you to life on the ground for the Palestinian people. The Presbyterian Church in Canada has partners in Palestine and Israel with which we work. International Ministries of the Life and Mission Agency maintains a list of active partnerships.

Recommendation IAF-019 (adopted, p. 40)

That congregations and individuals be encouraged to visit partners of The Presbyterian Church in Canada during their pilgrimages to Palestine and Israel.

Recommendation IAF-020 (adopted, p. 40)

That Presbyterians be encouraged to support reconciliation initiatives in Palestine and Israel financially or through working visits, when health agencies again permit such visits.

Recommendation IAF-021 (adopted, p. 40)

That the Moderator write to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs requesting that they convey dismay to the State of Israel regarding the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and other areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territories and that human rights conventions to which Israel is a signatory must be respected, including by the Israeli military.

Recommendation IAF-022 (adopted, p. 40)

That sessions and individuals write to the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and meet with their elected officials to express dismay regarding the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and other areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territories and to express that human rights conventions to which Israel is a signatory must be respected, including by the Israeli military.

END NOTES

¹ “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, United Nations, un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/. Articles 13, 14, 15.

² “All things bright and beautiful”, Hymn #585, Hymns Ancient and Modern, Historical Edition, pub. 1909 for the Church of England, William Clowes & Sons Ltd, London.

³ “Dominance and Dominions”, Britannica, accessed February 5, 2021, britannica.com/place/British-Empire/Dominance-and-dominions.

⁴ “The Right to Move”, New Internationalist, no. 523 (Jan/Feb 2020): p. 17.

⁵ “The QNI is designed to rank the objective value of all the world’s nationalities as legal statuses of attachment to states. Looking beyond simple visa-free tourist or business travel rights, the QNI takes a number of other crucial factors into account to demonstrate that the world’s nationalities are not equal and that some nationalities afford a better legal status than others to develop your talents while living a rewarding life.” “Kälin and Kochenov’s Quality of Nationality Index”, accessed February 5, 2021, nationalityindex.com/#.

⁶ “Quality of Nationality Index”.

⁷ Joseph Carens, quoted by Stephan Faris in *Homelands: the Case for Open Immigration*, Deca (2014), ch. 2, n.p., reprints.longform.org/homelands-deca.

⁸ Marcello di Cintio, *Walls: Travels Along the Barricades*, (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane Editions, 2012).

⁹ Faris, *Homelands*, ch 6.

¹⁰ Faris, *Homelands*, ch 6.

¹¹ “Human security”, Glossary on Migration, International Organization for Migration, iom.int/, Dec 2020

¹² Migration Data Portal, migrationdataportal.org/?i=stock_abs_&t=2020, February 5, 2021

¹³ Deborah Coutinho, “Why immigration is so important to Canada’s economy?” *Immigration News*, November 6, 2018 immigrationnews.ca/2018/11/06/immigration-canada-economy/

¹⁴ Joseph Carens, p 270.

¹⁵ “Migration Data Portal”, International Organization for Migration, migrationdataportal.org/data?i=stock_abs_&t=2020, February 5, 2021.

¹⁶ “Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2019”, UN Refugee Agency, unhcr.org/globaltrends2019/ 05 Feb 2021.

¹⁷ New Internationalist, No. 523, Jan/Feb 2020, “The Right to Move”, p 20.

¹⁸ Yuqian Lu, “StatCan COVID-19: Data to Insights for a Better Canada. The distribution of temporary foreign workers across industries in Canada” Statistics Canada, June 3, 2020, 150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00028-eng.htm.

¹⁹ For an overview of recommendations regarding federal and provincial reforms, see the United Food and Commercial Worker’s Union and Agriculture Workers Alliance report “The Status of Migrant Farm Workers in Canada 2020”, ufcw.ca/templates/ufcwcanada/images/awa/publications/UFCW-Canada-Status-of-Migrant-Workers-Report-2020.pdf.

²⁰ Rachel Emmanuel “Migrant advocates call on feds to expand EI, CPP to foreign workers”, iPolitics, June 23, 2020, ipolitics.ca/2020/06/23/migrant-advocates-call-on-feds-to-expand-ei-cpp-to-foreign-workers/.

²¹ Kathy Tomlinson, “Employers taking cash from foreign workers seeking permanent resident status in Canada”. Globe and Mail, May 31, 2019, theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-employers-taking-cash-from-foreign-workers-seeking-permanent-resident.

²² “Behind Closed Doors: exposing migrant care worker exploitation during COVID-19”, Caregivers Action Centre, October 2020, migrantrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Behind-Closed-Doors_Exposing-Migrant-Care-Worker-Exploitation-During-COVID19.pdf.

²³ Nichoals Keung “Stuck in Canada, hundreds of migrant farm workers get help from federal government” Toronto Star, December 16, 2020, thestar.com/news/canada/2020/12/16/stuck-in-canada-hundreds-of-migrant-farm-workers-get-help-from-federal-government.html.

²⁴ Sofia Rodriguez “Third Ontario migrant worker dies of COVID-19”, CBC News, June 21, 2020, cbc.ca/news/canada/london/third-ontario-migrant-worker-dies-of-covid-19-1.5621487

²⁵ For more information, see kairoscanada.org/what-we-do/migrant-justice.

²⁶ “The Issue”, Courage for Freedom, accessed March 6, 2020, courageforfreedom.org/.

²⁷ “Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage”, International Labour Organization, p. 21–22, September 19, 2017, ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-dgreports/-dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575479.pdf.

²⁸ Rick Vanderlinde, “Human Trafficking Made Headlines in 2019”, Orillia Today, January 9, 2020.

²⁹ Vanderlinde, “Human Trafficking”.

³⁰ General Synod, “Confronting the scourge of human trafficking”, YouTube, July 12, 2017, youtube.com/watch?v=-Bmfne5Dcwg&.

³¹ “Human rights and trafficking in persons”, The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), accessed March 6, 2020, ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Trafficking/TiP/Pages/Index.aspx.

³² “Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trafficking in Persons”, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, May 3, 2020, reliefweb.int/report/world/impact-covid-19-pandemic-trafficking-persons-preliminary-findings-and-messaging-based.

³³ Eric Szeto, Caitlin Taylor, Asha Tomlinson, CBC News, “Hidden camera reveals ‘appalling’ conditions in overseas PPE factory supplying Canadian hospitals, expert says”, January 15, 2021, cbc.ca/news/world/marketplace-overseas-personal-protective-equipment-manufacturing-working-conditions-1.5873213.

³⁴ “Human Trafficking by the Numbers”, Human Rights First, January 7, 2017, humanrightsfirst.org/resource/human-trafficking-numbers.

³⁵ Natalya Timoshkina, “Human Trafficking in Canada and Worldwide: A Critical Assessment of the Available Estimates and Official Statistics”, International Journal of Arts and Sciences, 5(7), 2012: p. 409–21.

³⁶ “Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2016”, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, December 21, 2016, p. 6, traffickinginstitute.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/01/2016_Global_Report_on_Trafficking_in_Persons.pdf.

³⁷ “What is Human Trafficking?”, Department of Justice, last modified January 20, 2020, justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/tp/what-quoi.html.

³⁸ David Harrison “UK truck deaths: How Vietnam is still a hotbed of people traffickers”, Al Jazeera, October 28, 2019, aljazeera.com/blogs/Europe/2019/10/uk-lorry-deaths-vietnam-hotbed-people-traffickers-191028074312098

³⁹ Vivian Bertrand, “Human Trafficking”, Glad Tidings, September-October 2014, p 17, wmspcc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Social-Justice-Study-2.pdf

⁴⁰ “Those Who Take Us Away”, Human Rights Watch, February 13, 2013, hrw.org/report/2013/02/13/those-who-take-us-away/abusive-policing-and-failures-protection-indigenous-women

⁴¹ Paula Newton, “Canada’s stolen daughters: Sex traffickers target indigenous Canadians”, CNN, February 23, 2017, cnn.com/2016/08/23/world/canada-indigenous-sex-trafficking/index.html.

⁴² For more research on how Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people are targeted for violence, see Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/.

⁴³ “‘No More’: Ending Sex Trafficking in Canada”, The National Task Force on Sex Trafficking of Women and Girls in Canada, Fall 2014, available upon request from the Canadian Women’s Foundation canadianwomen.org/our-work/sector-resources/

⁴⁴ “Human Trafficking”, Glad Tidings, p. 18.

⁴⁵ “Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies”, United Nations, accessed March 6, 2020, un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/.

⁴⁶ “The Law and Human Trafficking in Canada”, Ontario Women’s Justice Network, June 12, 2018, owjn.org/2018/06/the-law-and-human-trafficking-in-canada/.

⁴⁷ “National Strategy To Combat Human Trafficking 2019-2024”, Public Safety Canada, last modified September 18, 2019, publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2019-ntnl-strtggy-hmnn-trffc/index-en.aspx.

⁴⁸ Public Safety Canada, “National Strategy”.

⁴⁹ Public Safety Canada, “National Strategy”.

⁵⁰ “#ProjectMapleLeaf”, Courage for Freedom, accessed March 6, 2020, courageforfreedom.org/solution/projectmapleleaf/.

⁵¹ Scott Billeck, “Tracia’s Trust: Manitoba working on plan to eliminate sexual exploitation”, Winnipeg Sun, January 30, 2019, winnipeg.sun.com/news/provincial/tracias-trust-manitoba-working-on-plan-to-eliminate-sexual-exploitation.

⁵² “International Ecumenical Consultation on Migration and Human Trafficking: Modern Slavery?”, World Council of Churches, April 15, 2014, download link available at oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/international-affairs/communique-on-human-trafficking?searchterm=colombo+communi

Canadian Council of Churches, “Human Trafficking in Canada”.

⁵³ Canadian Council of Churches, “Human Trafficking in Canada”.

⁵⁴ “Media Release: Nature’s Dangerous Decline ‘Unprecedented’; Species Extinction Rates ‘Accelerating’”, The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), accessed May 9, 2019, ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment.

⁵⁵ Based on Steve Bishop, “Green theology and deep ecology: New Age or new creation?”, Themelios 16, (3) (1991): p. 8–4, themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/green-theology-and-deep-ecology-new-age-or-new-creation.

⁵⁶ Richard T. Wright and Bernard J. Nebel, Environmental Science: Toward a Sustainable Future, Eighth ed., (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2002).

⁵⁷ Paul R. Ehrlich and Anne H. Ehrlich, Extinction: The Causes and Consequences of the Disappearance of Species. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1983).

⁵⁸ “Ten impacts of the Australian bushfires”, UN Environment Programme, January 22, 2020, unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/ten-impacts-australian-bushfires

⁵⁹ Elizabeth A. Ainsworth and Stephen P. Long, “What have we learned from 15 years of free-air CO₂ enrichment (FACE)? A meta-analytic review of the responses of photosynthesis, canopy

properties and plant production to rising CO₂”, *New Phytologist*, 165 (2) (November 18, 2004): p. 351–72, nph.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1469-8137.2004.01224.x.

⁶⁰ Scott C. Doney, Victoria J. Fabry, Richard A. Feely, Joan A. Kleypas, “Ocean Acidification: The Other CO Problem”, *Annual Review of Marine Science*, 1 (1) (January 1, 2009): p. 169–92, annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.marine.010908.163834; Scott R. Loarie, Phillip B. Duffy, Healy Hamilton, Gregory P. Asner, Christopher B. Field, David D. Ackerly, “The velocity of climate change”, *Nature*, 462 (7276) (24 December 2009): p. 1052–1055, doi:10.1038/nature08649; Gian-Reto Walther et al., “Alien species in a warmer world: risks and opportunities”, *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*, 24 (12) (1 December 2009): p. 686–93, doi:10.1016/j.tree.2009.06.008.

⁶¹ Thomas E. Lovejoy, Lee Jay Hannah, eds., *Climate Change and Biodiversity*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 41–55.; Stein Joar Hegland anders Nielsen, Amparo Lázaro, Anne-Line Bjerknes, Ørjan Totland, “How does climate warming affect plant-pollinator interactions?” *Ecology Letters*, 12 (2) (February 1, 2009): p. 184–195. doi:10.1111/j.1461-0248.2008.01269.x.

⁶² Seung-Ki Min, Xuebin Zhang, Francis W. Zwiers; Gabriele C. Hegerl, “Human contribution to more-intense precipitation extremes”, *Nature*, 470 (7334) (February 17, 2011): p. 378–81, nature.com/articles/nature09763.

⁶³ “Climate Change 2014 Synthesis Report”, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2015, p. 10–16, ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/05/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full_wcover.pdf.

⁶⁴ Peter F. Sale, *Our Dying Planet: An Ecologist’s View of the Crisis we Face*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), p. 226.

⁶⁵ “Living Planet Report 2018: Aiming Higher”, World Wildlife Foundation (WWF), 2018, p. 42, worldwildlife.org/pages/living-planet-report-2018

⁶⁶ WWF, 2018, p. 66.

⁶⁷ WWF, 2018, p. 50.

⁶⁸ Sale, p. 66–68.

⁶⁹ WWF, p. 62.

⁷⁰ Sale, p. viii.

⁷¹ WWF, 218, p.7.

⁷² Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2014), p. 17–18.

⁷³ Sale, p. 215–216.

⁷⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the state of the debate on whether or not the International Union of Geological Sciences should officially declare the Holocene Epoch over and declare that humanity is currently living in the Anthropocene Epoch see: Meyer Robinson, “Geology’s Timekeepers are Feuding”, *The Atlantic*, July 20, 2018, theatlantic.com/science/2018/07/anthropocene-holocene-geology-drama/565628/; Ian Angus, “Anthropocene Working Group: Yes, a new epoch has begun”, January 9, 2016, climateandcapitalism.com/2016/01/09/anthropocene-working-group-yes-a-new-epoch-has-begun.

⁷⁵ WWF, 2018, p. 110.

⁷⁶ WWF, 2018, p. 112.

⁷⁷ “Aichi Biodiversity Targets”, Convention on Biological Diversity, May 11, 2018, cbd.int/sp/targets/

⁷⁸ A Global Deal for Nature: Guiding principles, milestones and targets”, *Science Advances*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (April 19, 2019): p. 1, advances.sciencemag.org/content/5/4/eaaw2869.

⁷⁹ “Aichi Targets”, Convention on Biological Diversity.

⁸⁰ “Canada’s 6th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity”, [biodivcanada](http://biodivcanada.ca), accessed March 6, 2020, biodivcanada.chm-cbd.net/documents/canadas-6th-national-report-cbd.

⁸¹ This list was inspired by a resource produced by the World Wildlife Foundation which can be found at panda.org/our_work/biodiversity/what_you_can_do/ (accessed March 6, 2020).

- ⁸² “UN Report: Nature’s Dangerous Decline ‘Unprecedented’; Species Extinction Rates ‘Accelerating’”, United Nations, May 6, 2019, un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/.
- ⁸³ Kate Yandell, “Cats Pose an Even Bigger Threat to Birds than Previously Thought”, Audubon Society, January 30, 2013, audubon.org/news/cats-pose-even-bigger-threat-birds-previously-thought.
- ⁸⁴ Lustgarten, A. 2020. The Great Climate Migration. New York Times Magazine. July 23, 2020.
- ⁸⁵ Chi, X, et al. 2020. Future of the human climate niche. PNAS 117(21): 11350-11355.
- ⁸⁶ Eun-Soon, I. Et al. 2017. Deadly heat waves projected in the densely populated agricultural regions of South Asia. Science Advances 3(8).
- ⁸⁷ The World Bank, 2018 “Groundswell: Preparing for the internal climate migration”, Infographic.
- ⁸⁸ Kulp, S and B. Strauss, 2019, New elevation data triples estimated vulnerability to sea-level rise and coastal flooding. Nature Communications 10. Article number 4844.
- ⁸⁹ Kelly, C. et al. 2014. Climate Change in the fertile crescent and the implications of the recent Syrian drought. PNAS doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1421533112
- ⁹⁰ Werrell, C. et.al. 2013. The Arab Spring and security correlations. Centre for American Progress.
- ⁹¹ Paul, A. 2011. Stepwise International Migration: A multistage migration pattern for the aspiring migrant. Am. J. Socio 116(6): 1842-1886.
- ⁹² Bonn: Participants at UN conference examine human mobility in an era of climate change. 2017. refugeesmigrants.un.org/bonn-participants-un-conference-examine-human-mobility-era-climate-change
- ⁹³ United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, unccd.int/.
- ⁹⁴ Greening the Desert Project, greeningthedesertproject.org/
- ⁹⁵ United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification, unccd.int/
- ⁹⁶ Government of Canada, 2020, canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/climate-change/causes.html
- ⁹⁷ David Suzuki Foundation. What is Climate Change? davidsuzuki.org/what-you-can-do/what-is-climate-change/?gclid=CjwKCAjw8-78BRA0EiwAFUw8LIYUaNibF6w2WqdkUjcURHevXczWvKjKR1BDpHzmnvG7UGm3M5pd8xoCr18QAvD_BwE
- ⁹⁸ Link to UN convention Article 13:(2)- of Universal Del of Human Rights; UN Resolution 194 guaranteeing the Right of Return
- ⁹⁹ mcccand.ca/stories/fact-sheet-refugees
- ¹⁰⁰ zochrot.org/
- ¹⁰¹ frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2020.587063/full
- ¹⁰² Firella Larissa Erni, “Tired of Being a Refugee – Young Palestinians in Lebanon”, Graduate Institute Publications, 2013.
- ¹⁰³ EAPPI UK & Ireland, “We just wanted to come back home”, November 8, 2017, eyewitnessblogs.com/2017/11/08/we-just-wanted-to-come-back-home/
- ¹⁰⁴ Huthifa Fayyad, “Gaza’s Great March of Returns protests explained”, Aljazeera, March 30, 2019 aljazeera.com/news/2019/3/30/gazas-great-march-of-return-protests-explained
- ¹⁰⁵ inah Alsaafin and Maram Humaid, “In Gaza, grief and pain for slain ‘angel of mercy’ paramedic”, Aljazeera, June 2, 2018, aljazeera.com/news/2018/6/2/in-gaza-grief-and-pain-for-slain-angel-of-mercy-paramedic
- ¹⁰⁶ “Human Rights Watch Policy on the Right to Return”, Human Rights Watch, n.d. accessed March 12, 2021, hrw.org/legacy/campaigns/israel/return.
- ¹⁰⁷ “West Bank: Movement and access in the West Bank, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, December 21, 2017, ochaopt.org/content/west-bank-movement-and-access-west-bank; and Zena Tahhan, “The Naksa: How Israel occupied the whole of Palestine in 1967” Aljazeera, June 4, 2018, aljazeera.com/features/2018/6/4/the-naksa-how-israel-

occupied-the-whole-of-palestine-in-1967#:~:text=In%201967%2C%20Israel%20absorbed%20the,a%20half%20times%20its%20size.

¹⁰⁸ “The Separation Barrier”, B’Tselem, November 11, 2017, btselem.org/separation_barrier.

¹⁰⁹ “Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General, The issue of Palestinian pregnant women giving birth at Israeli checkpoints”; United Nations, February 1, 2008, un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-186867/;

“Checkpoint Births”, Visualizing Palestine, n.d. Accessed on March 12, 2021, visualizingpalestine.org/visuals/checkpoint-births.

¹¹⁰ Laila Baker, “At Checkpoints, Babies are born or Die”, The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, miftah.org/Display.cfm?DocId=6292&CategoryId=5

¹¹¹ Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, First International Gathering, Bethlehem, December 1–7, 2019, Day 2: Visit to Lutheran Church.

¹¹² Hamed Qawasmeh, 2020, “Meanwhile, behind the scenes: De facto annexation” Facebook, December 8, 2020, facebook.com/606711378/posts/10158234867786379/. Breaking the Silence is an organization of veterans of the Israeli military who have served in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Yehuda Shaul is co-author of a report, ‘Highway to Annexation’.

¹¹³ This story comes from EAPPI U & Ireland. eyewitnessblogs.com/2018/08/06/khan-al-ahmar-this-is-the-ethnic-cleansing-of-area-c/.

¹¹⁴ Adnan Hmidan, “I am Palestinian and I have a dream”, Middle East Monitor, December 8, 2020, [middleeastmonitor.com/20201208-i-am-palestinian-and-i-have-a-dream/?utm_source=Palestine+Updates&utm_campaign=d8d3dd8ab8-](http://middleeastmonitor.com/20201208-i-am-palestinian-and-i-have-a-dream/?utm_source=Palestine+Updates&utm_campaign=d8d3dd8ab8-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_6_22_2018_18_52_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_002b0f7bf9-d8d3dd8ab8-30376033)

[EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_6_22_2018_18_52_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_002b0f7bf9-d8d3dd8ab8-30376033](http://middleeastmonitor.com/20201208-i-am-palestinian-and-i-have-a-dream/?utm_source=Palestine+Updates&utm_campaign=d8d3dd8ab8-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_6_22_2018_18_52_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_002b0f7bf9-d8d3dd8ab8-30376033)

¹¹⁵ “About PCFF”, The Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF), accessed March 6, 2020, theparentscircle.org/en/about_eng/.

¹¹⁶ “Our Vision”, PCFF, accessed March 6, 2020, theparentscircle.org/en/about_eng/vision_eng/.

¹¹⁷ “Our Vision”, PCFF.

¹¹⁸ “Minors in Jeopardy: Violation of the rights of the Palestinian minors by Israel’s military courts”, B’Tselem, March 2018, btselem.org/publications/summaries/201803_minors_in_jeopardy.

¹¹⁹ “Fact Sheet”, Military Court Watch, last modified November 2019 militarycourtwatch.org/page.php?id=a6r85VcpyUa4755A52Y2mp3c4v.

¹²⁰ “Widespread, systematic and institutionalized abuse of minors in the West Bank”, Military Court Watch, June 10, 2015, [militarycourtwatch.org/files/server/UN%20SUBMISSION%20-%20ABUSE%20\(JUNE%202015\)%20-.pdf](http://militarycourtwatch.org/files/server/UN%20SUBMISSION%20-%20ABUSE%20(JUNE%202015)%20-.pdf).

¹²¹ “Statistics on demolition of houses built without permits in East Jerusalem”, B’Tselem, last modified February 23, 2020, btselem.org/planning_and_building/east_jerusalem_statistics.

¹²² Name has been changed for confidentiality.

¹²³ “Gaza in 2020: A Liveable Place?”, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), August 28, 2012, unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/gaza-2020-liveable-place.

¹²⁴ “Israel is systematically poisoning one million Palestinian children”, Palestine Updates, January 7, 2020, palestineupdates.com/israel-is-systematically-poisoning-one-million-palestinian-children/.

¹²⁵ Yaniv Kubovich, “Polluted Water Leading Cause of Child Mortality in Gaza, Study Finds”, Haaretz, October 16, 2018, haaretz.com/middle-east-news/palestinians/.premium.MAGAZINE-polluted-water-a-leading-cause-of-gazan-child-mortality-says-rand-corp-study-1.6566812.

¹²⁶ Kubovich, “Polluted Water”.

¹²⁷ Oliver Holmes and Hazem Balousha, “A Jerusalem hospital where Palestinian babies die alone”, *The Guardian*, June 20, 2019, theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/20/a-jerusalem-hospital-where-palestinian-babies-die-alone.

¹²⁸ Rita Giacaman, Abdullatif Hussein, Nahida H. Gordon and Faisal Awartani, “Imprints on the consciousness: The impact on Palestinian civilians of the Israeli Army invasion of West Bank towns”, *European Journal of Public Health*, Volume 14, Issue 3 (September 2004): p. 286–90, doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/14.3.286.

¹²⁹ Panos Vostanis, “Impact of Trauma on Palestinian Children’s Mental Health: Lessons from the Gaza Studies” *Bulletin of the Board of International Affairs of the Royal College of Psychiatrists*, 1(02) (October 2003): p. 5–6, at researchgate.net/publication/322374342_Impact_of_trauma_on_Palestinian_children’s_mental_health_lessons_from_the_Gaza_studies

¹³⁰ LK Gilbert et al, “Childhood adversity and adult chronic disease: An update from ten states and the District of Columbia, 2010”, *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 48(3) (2015): p. 345-349, doi: 10.1016/j.amepre. 2014.09.006.

Boghos Barbouri
Convener