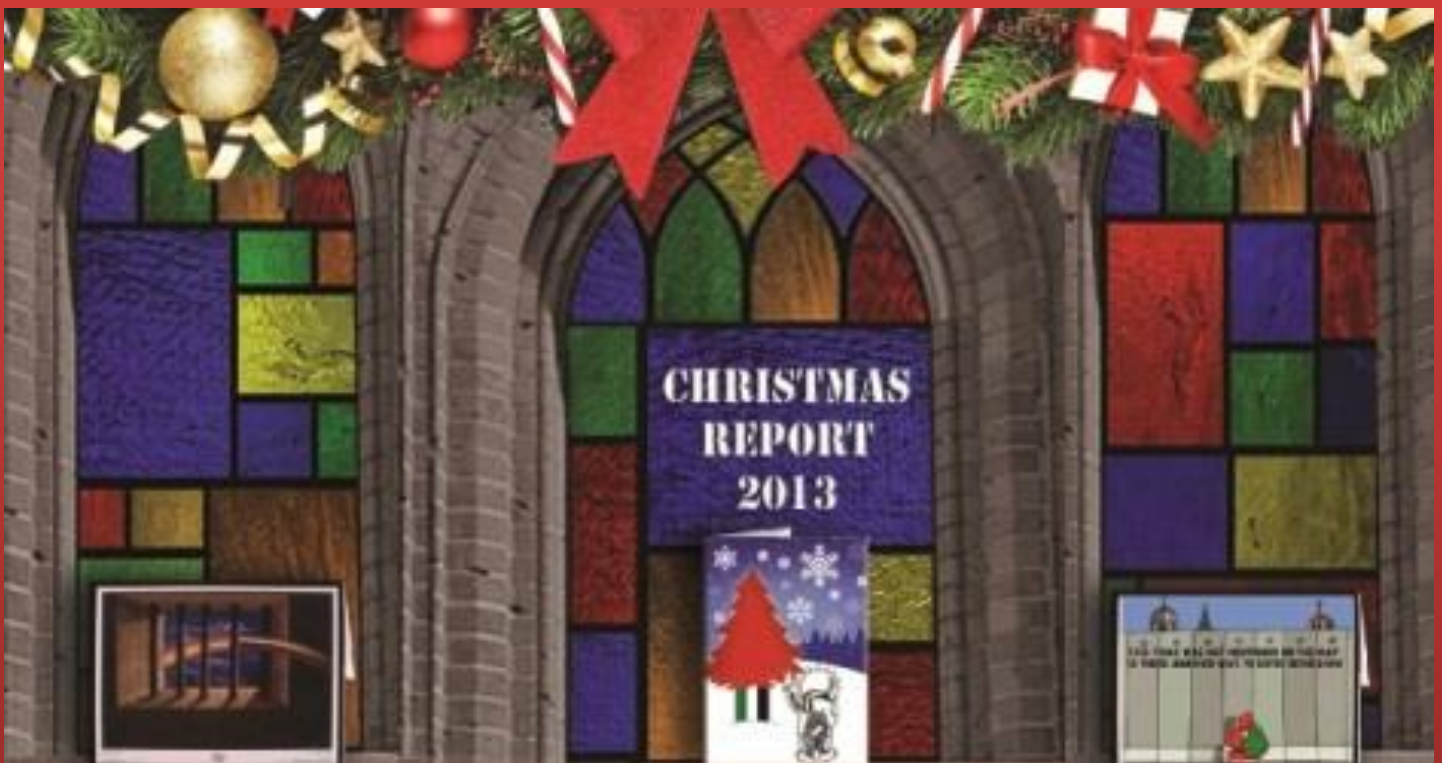


'Tis the Season 2013: How Anti-Israel NGOs Manipulate Christmas



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NGO Monitor's mission is to provide information and analysis, promote accountability, and support discussion on the reports and activities of NGOs claiming to advance human rights and humanitarian agendas.

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Overview

As in previous years, NGOs (non-government organizations) and well-known charities are exploiting the 2013 Christmas season with political warfare against Israel. Groups such as [Christian Aid](#) (UK), [Sabeel](#), [War on Want](#) (UK), [Amos Trust](#), [Israel Committee Against House Demolitions](#) (ICAHD), and [Adalah-NY](#) are again using theological themes to advance immoral anti-Israel campaigns, boycotts (BDS), and, in some cases, antisemitism. [Kairos Palestine](#) published a 50-page “[Christmas 2013](#)” pamphlet, with contributions from radical anti-Israel NGOs Badil, Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ), [St. Yves](#), Addameer, and [Defence for Children International – Palestine Section](#) (DCIPS).

These organizations often use offensive and inflammatory rhetoric in Christmas carols, holiday messages and cards, nativity scenes, and other items. This year, verses and prayers that promote anti-Israel themes are prominent, polarizing Jewish-Christian relations and exacerbating an already complex and violent conflict.

The abuse of Christmas messages is part of a broad international campaign to introduce political warfare against Israel into churches. As seen in NGO Monitor’s “[BDS in the Pews](#)” project, Palestinian Christian NGOs, such as Sabeel and Kairos Palestine, provide the theological and ideological frameworks for these attacks.

In the examples below, NGO Christmas messages conspicuously omit the context of deadly terrorism and other violence against Israelis. Many of them focus on the harm allegedly caused by the Israeli security barrier, in particular surrounding Bethlehem, ignoring the role this structure has played in preventing terror attacks against civilians. The NGOs also erase the persecution of Palestinian Christians by Islamic extremists in Gaza and the West Bank, including Bethlehem.

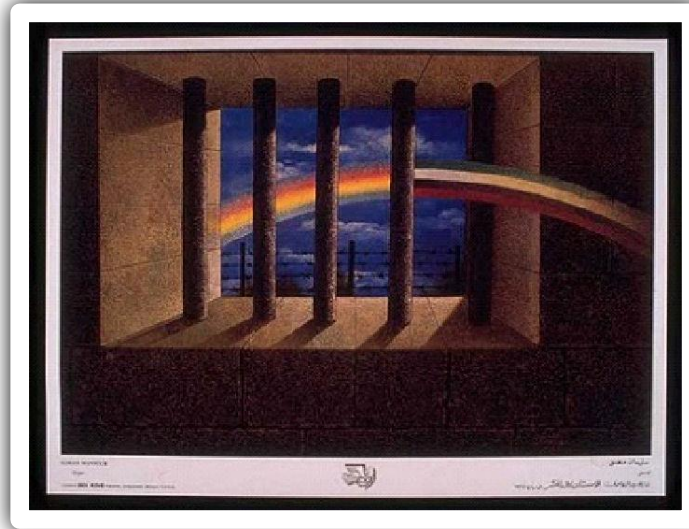
Many of these NGOs are funded by European and other governments. Sabeel is funded by [Sweden](#) (via [Diakonia](#)) and the [Netherlands](#) (via [ICCO](#) and Kerk in Actie); War on Want by [UK](#), [EU](#), and [Ireland](#); Christian Aid by UK, Ireland, [Norway](#), and EU. **As funders, these governments are enablers and share the moral responsibility for the actions of the NGOs.**

Religious Themes and Images in Attacking Israel

During the current holiday season, political advocacy organizations give prominence to religious themes and verses, recalling a long history of classical antisemitism.

- The [Kairos Palestine](#) pamphlet exploits traditional Christian sources, using religious figures and biblical stories as part of politicized messages:
 - “Mary understands the right of return for refugees. Standing in the shadow of empire, Mary sees and still bears witness, sings to God the Savior...After 46 years of occupation and denial of all basic rights, can I continue joyfully witnessing and singing like Mary?”

- “The Holy Family seeking to protect its Child stayed in Egypt for a period of time until they learned of Herod’s death and decided to go back to their home land. They chose to stay in a small village called Nazareth, where Jesus lived as a young boy. The Holy Family taking refuge in Egypt away from danger and death brings back memories of Palestinian families who sought a similar refuge in nearby villages and countries like Egypt away from the cruelty and destruction of war in 1948.”
- UK-based [Amos Trust](#) advertises an annual [Bethlehem Pack](#), which contains the following theological references:
 - “If Jesus was born today in Bethlehem, the Wise Men would spend several hours queuing to enter the town.”
 - “The shepherds, despite being residents of Bethlehem, would struggle to graze their sheep because their land would be annexed by the building of the separation wall and a lack of freedom to travel and restrictions on trade would make it very difficult for them to make a living.”
 - The packet also includes a prayer, “Forgotten Gaza.” The prayer, with no context of terror or rockets launched from Gaza to Southern Israel, states: “Each Christmas we are reminded that there was no room for the Holy Family. This year, Lord, we remember forgotten Gaza. There is no room for them in our world. This Advent and Christmas nothing has improved, the people of Gaza are still forgotten, still imprisoned, still under a medieval type siege, with their water taken and resources destroyed. Lord we remember forgotten Gaza – once a beautiful, historic place, now its people denied human rights, with no proper facilities for the injured and disabled.”
- Similar to other NGOs that have exploited the Bedouin issue for politicized attacks against Israel, Naim Ateek writes in Sabeel’s 2013 annual [Christmas message](#), “One of our most disturbing issues during this Christmas season is the situation of the shepherds and farmers of today, namely, the Bedouins of the Negev who are citizens of Israel. The Israeli government plans to Judaize the Negev by forcibly relocating tens of thousands of Bedouins from their ancestral lands on which most of them have lived for hundreds of years, long before the state of Israel came into being. Israel wants to force them away from their lands and traditional way of life for the benefit of Israeli Jewish citizens. **It is essentially a land grab.**”(Emphasis added).
- Churches for Middle East Peace is circulating an [Advent for Christmas 2013](#) titled “God is with Us,” which quotes a verse from the New Testament about “imprisonment” and features a graphic of a Palestinian flag locked in a prison cell extending outward to become a rainbow.



- As in [previous years](#), Christian Aid is using its Christmas materials for politicized statements about Israel. Christian Aid published an “[Advent Journey](#)” and “[Advent Reflections](#).” These publications promote the work of Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHR-I), a Christian aid partner and a radical politicized organization that [claimed](#) that Israel’s self-defense measures in Gaza during November 2012, in the face of hundreds of rocket attacks, was nothing more than an “empty show of force” in the “cynical political arena.” In a separate Christmas appeal sent out to potential donors, Christian Aid also promotes the work of NGO Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees (PARC). While PARC operates a range of agricultural, economic and social projects in the West Bank and Gaza, primarily devoted to rural development, it is also involved in political advocacy campaigns, including support for BDS, utilizing [demonizing rhetoric](#).

Demonization in the Kairos Palestine Pamphlet

In 2009, a group of thirteen Palestinian Christian clergy drafted the [Kairos Palestine Document](#). It calls for BDS against Israel, denies the Jewish historical connection to Israel in theological terms, and blames Israel solely for the continuation of the conflict. Its purpose is to rally churches globally to support BDS, delegitimization, and demonization directed at the State of Israel.

This year, [Kairos Palestine](#) published a 50-page “[Christmas 2013](#)” pamphlet, slated to be used as an educational hub for religious groups and gatherings. This pamphlet also serves as a primary vehicle for anti-Israel holiday messages for websites and churches, including the [Presbyterian Mission Agency](#) (USA).

Examples of demonization:

- In the Introduction: “The wall is a dark reminder of Israel’s occupation, an occupation that strangulates our lives, devours our land, and denies us the freedom to move and visit friends and family. It reminds me that we simply aspire to live normal lives amidst the abnormality of colonization. **We are submitted to this injustice, and to add insult to injury, our resistance is promoted as terrorism, and our victimhood as aggression.**” (emphasis added)
- Badil’s “The on-going Nakba” accuses Israel of developing and utilizing “displacement in the form of a ‘silent’ transfer policy. The policy is silent because Israel applies it while attempting to avoid international attention by regularly displacing small numbers of people, which it presumes will go unnoticed.”
- Addameer, a Palestinian NGO that advocates for Palestinian prisoners, refers to the Israel Defense Force (IDF) as the Israeli Occupying Force (the IOF), claiming, “Bethlehem suffers from regular and severe arrest campaigns by the Israeli Occupying Forces.”
- DCI-PS accuses Israel of a “systematic policy of abuse” and “an ongoing attempt to suppress the Palestinian peoples’ aspiration for self-determination and their struggle for peace, justice and equality.” (DCI-PS Director Rifat Odeh Kassir is also the general coordinator of Kairos Palestine.)
- ARIJ makes unsupported accusations that “The Israeli settler attacks on Palestinian and their properties in the occupied Palestinian territory remain to be a main concern especially that such attacks are disregarded by the **Israeli occupation Army**; in fact much of such attacks are carried out under their protection and direct sight.” (Emphasis added).

NGO Cards and Events Exploiting the Holiday Season

- From December 23 - January 5 several NGOs are organizing a politicized “festival” using Christmas themes to criticize Israel. The event, run by St James’s Church, Piccadilly in association with Amos Trust, [Holy Land Trust](#), Interpal, Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions-UK, Jews for Justice for Palestinians, and War on Want is called [“BETHLEHEM UNWRAPPED: A festival of Bethlehem at Christmas”](#) featuring speaker

Jeff Halper, with all proceeds going to the Holy Land Trust's 'Future Peacemakers' appeal. The project also [supports](#) the Kairos Palestine document (see above).

- The UK Palestinian Solidarity Campaign (PSC) is selling a [Christmas card](#) with Palestinian symbols, synthesized with classic Christmas imagery. Ireland's Palestinian Solidarity Campaign has sold [politicized Christmas cards](#) for the past few years. One card displays the Madonna and Child, with the Madonna dressed in the Palestinian flag and star of Bethlehem in the background. The card reads, "This Christmas remember Palestine."



- [War on Want](#), which receives British government funding, continues to promote its [politicized Christmas cards](#) depicting the security barrier paired with traditional Christmas images.
- Canadian NGO Palestine House is circulating a Christmas card showing Santa attempting to enter Bethlehem but being blocked by the security barrier.



- Adalah-NY¹ [2] held its 7th annual “Anti-Apartheid Holiday Caroling at Leviev’s,” a New York jewelry store owned by Israeli businessman Lev Leviev. The protest is part of Adalah-NY’s ongoing campaign against Leviev. Activists were invited to sing from “[The Boycott Leviev Holiday Songbook – Why SHOP when you can help STOP Apartheid](#),” including altered versions of traditional holiday songs such as “Leviev, Leviev, destroys human lives / Think of where your money goes when shopping for your wives, HEY! ...Selling di-amonds / With blood on his hands. Ho Ho Ho!”

Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns as part of Christmas appeals

- In 2013, Friends of Sabeel-North America is running a campaign to “Send a Christmas Appeal to the SodaStream 14.” The effort sends letters to [the chief executive officers \(CEOs\) of 14 major companies](#) that sell SodaStream devices, asking them to discontinue sales.

¹ Adalah-NY is not affiliated with Adalah in Israel.