



ELCA Sumud “Stolen Stories” Video Series Discussion Guide

Introduction:

How do Palestinian Christians tell their story? In “Stolen Stories”, a 5-part educational video series by ELCA Sumud, listen to the voices of Palestinian Christians as they recount their historical narrative from pre-1948 to present day. This series highlights the important perspectives of our Palestinian siblings in Christ and lifts up the lived experiences of Palestinians-- especially the indigenous Christians of Palestine and Israel-- in their own words. In “Stolen Stories”, Palestinian Christian pastors, bishops, and scholars offer important contextual, historical, and theological framework that continues to shape life in Palestine and Israel today.

Use the questions below **before** and **after** each corresponding video to discuss in your small group.

Video 1: “Nakba”

Pre-video:

- Have you heard the word “Nakba” before?
- What is your understanding of the Christian population in Palestine/Israel?
- What comes to mind when you hear the word “home”?
- Why might accompaniment be an important posture when learning about the lived experiences and history of people in different circumstances than our own?

Post-video:

- What stood out to you about the role of Western Christians in the experiences and knowledge shared in this video by Palestinian Christians?
- What struck you about the role of the Palestinian Church in the Nakba?
- Where do you see God in the life and ministry of the local indigenous Church in this video?
- After watching the video, what do you ponder? What moved you? What questions do you have?

Video 2: “Naksa”

Pre-video:

- In what ways is humanity affirmed in our daily life? What are things that degrade humanity? What does Jesus teach about our call to uplift the humanity of others?
- What are some real-life examples you know of Christians responding to injustice in a Christ-centered way? What about their response reflected their Christian identity?
- What is your relationship to your home? To your country? How does that impact your identity? How does that impact your faith?

Post-video:

- How is the Naksa connected to the Nakba?
- What feelings, emotions, or connections did you experience while watching this video?
- What is the role of theology in the story of the Naksa?
- Bishop Imad ends this video by talking about the formation of the Palestinian Church that was challenged to form “a life and a faith that has to stand in the face of oppression”. What does this mean to you?
- From this video, how do you understand the local indigenous Palestinian Church being challenged by the experience of oppression?
- What are aspects of American Church that are challenged by the experience of oppression?
- If an understanding of oppression is not included in our understanding of Church, how does our understanding of faith change?

Video 3: “Intifadas and Oslo”

Pre-video:

- What comes up for you when you hear the word “dehumanization”? What are examples of dehumanization in your context?
- How does Jesus interact with instances of dehumanization of himself and others? How are we called to respond when our neighbors are dehumanized?
- What comes to mind when you hear the word “peace”?
- What do you think is necessary for peace?

Post-video:

- What is one story from this video that sticks with you? Why?
- Pastor Ashraf shares about the tension Palestinians, and especially Palestinian Christians felt between leaving their homeland for a safer future or staying to carry on the indigenous Christian presence. In our American context, moving is a rather regular and normalized experience. What have you learned so far in this video series which makes this decision much different for Palestinians—especially the Palestinian Christian population?
- What are actions or circumstances which prevented justice and peace during the intifadas and the Oslo Accords?
- How do the Palestinian Christians in this video describe the outcome of the Oslo Accords? How does this challenge the notion of “peace” in the lived reality of Palestinians post-Oslo?

Video 4: “The Daily Life 2003-2023”

Pre-Video:

- What comes to mind when you hear the word “security”? Do you feel “secure” in your daily life? What makes you feel secure in your home, your neighborhood, your state?
- Think about your daily commute to work, to church, or to see your family. What are obstacles that make this commute more difficult? What logistics do you think through before you go?
- How is ignorance built? How is ignorance transformed?

Post-Video:

- How did the Palestinian Christians in this video talk about “security”. With the construction of the separation wall and military checkpoints, who is secure? Who is not? Why?
- Pastor Ashraf talks about the ignorance built as the wall was built. What do you think he means “when ignorance grows, hatred grows”? Do you agree? Do you see this play out in contexts you have witnessed in your own life?
- After viewing this video, what is your understanding of a checkpoint?
- Dr. Rifaat names that Israel is the only country in the world that prosecutes children in military courts. How does this contribute to the pattern of dehumanization Palestinians face living under military occupation? Do you see this happening in your context?
- Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb states that Americans who grow up and consume American media are “default Zionist”, and that we must unlearn this. What do you think he means by this? What are narratives you heard about Israel and Palestine in the past? How do you understand those narratives in light of this video series?
- What impact does settlement expansion have on the daily life of Palestinians? How does settlement expansion impact the idea of a Palestinian state?
- At the end of the video, Bishop Imad talks about the cost of Israel’s illegal settlement expansion to Palestinian life and livelihood. When thinking about the future of both Palestinians and Israelis in the Holy Land, how can we make sense of the word justice, thinking about the testimony of our Palestinian siblings in Christ? Thinking back to Pastor Ashraf’s remarks about the effects of the separation wall, how does ignorance continue to play a role in the ongoing settlement expansion project?

Video 5: “Gaza”

Pre-Video Questions:

- When was the first time you learned about Gaza? What was your understanding? Who did you understand it from?
- What is necessary for peace? How does Jesus talk about peace? What does Jesus teach us are obstacles to peace?

Post-Video Questions

- What did you learn from this video?
- After watching this video, what is one fact you can tell others about the people of Gaza they might not know?
- Many of the speakers in this video point to dehumanization as a cause for both the catastrophic actions that were carried out and continued to be carried out by the Israeli military upon the people of Gaza over the years, and the lack of intervention and action by the international community and the Global church. Why is this important? How does this connect to the content of the first four videos in this series?
- What are the impacts of the genocide in Gaza on the lived experiences of the Palestinians living in the West Bank?
- Dr. Yusef says “...our pursuit for justice is justice for all. For Palestinians and Israelis. Where both groups can live together on this land. Where we can pursue healing together, and reconciliation. The domination of one group over another does not help”. What is lost when one group is dominated by the other? What is the relationship between dehumanization and domination?
- Rev. Dr. Mitri says in this video that he fears by 2050, the Holy Land will lose its Christians and will become merely a “theme park” for Christianity, with empty churches, shrines, and landmarks. What have you learned from this series about the importance about the continuous presence of the indigenous Christian community of Palestine? How is our Church called to act for justice?
- How have the stories in these videos reshaped your understanding of Palestine and the Palestinian people?

