

Writing in a War Zone

Raed Abdul Masih, a Palestinian Christian and a professor at Bethlehem Bible College, emphasizes the importance of Christian literature in violent contexts.

A professor at Bethlehem Bible College witnessed the shooting of a 16-year-old. He bled to death. An Israeli soldier shouted at the small crowd who gathered around the injured boy: "Anyone who comes near will be shot."

What can that Christian teacher write from such an experience? How does he tell the world about justice? How can he apply Biblical concepts to reach the audience who witnessed the violence and the killing? How can he explain the roots of the conflict to those misled by mass media? Or, how can he discuss love for one's enemies or Bible verses that relate to Israel?

There are many other topics Christian writers and leaders must address, such as the life of Christ, salvation, spiritual transformation, discipleship, and other classical issues from the Bible and the Christian faith. But the point that hurts most—the political situation in Palestine—is the one where answers are needed most.

A critical issue for Palestinian Christians, for example, is the theology of the land. Who owns the land occupied by Israel? How is the answer related to history, God's Word, or theological interpretations of the Scriptures? This type of writing and publishing is not easy. Is it worth doing in such difficult conditions?

Why write at all?

History is full of wars and conflicts. Christians see this fact from a Biblical perspective and know the

roots and remedy for human suffering (Gen. 1-3; John 3:16). The most important information Christian writers want to communicate is the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), to all nations and to every corner of the earth (Matt. 28:19-20), and regard-

times of suffering and war. Writing and publishing is important to local Christians because it gives them hope; it strengthens their faith; it explains events; it answers their questions about the conflict.

Literature also motivates Christians to reflect and pray before they act negatively and become a party to war. It helps them to work for peace and reconciliation instead of becoming part of the conflict. Books and literature are important because they anchor local Christians to the long history and heritage they have in the Holy Land, tracing back to the first-century church.

Palestinian Christian writing is also important to the universal Church because

it sheds light on realities

that have been hidden from them. It brings awareness, statistics, historical events, dates, and other types of information.

Through their books, writers and publishers in this war zone invite the Church at large to recognize and understand the issues they face. "In Christ," writes Paul in Romans 12:5, "we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." By sharing their experiences, Palestinian Christians promote unity and show the world that believers are one Body in Christ. ❖



A dramatic cover on a Bible Society publication, The True Truth, arrests readers.

less of the conditions faced, war or peace (2 Tim. 4:2).

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Palestinian Christian authors write from their own experiences in this region—what they face, how they are treated, what their hopes and expectations are for the future. They write to give hope to people who are suffering, that they might see a better future; to give them real hope in God, the Creator of the universe; to point them to real peace in war, and not the false and fallible promises of politicians.

Local Christians expect authors and publishers to answer their questions. They expect to find answers, comfort and purpose in