

A Shameful Statement From Palestinian Christians

Before Israel launched its attack on Hamas terrorists in response to their barbaric, murderous acts, I put out a call to pray for the people of Gaza, knowing that many innocent civilians would lose their lives. Since then, I have been in meetings with other Christians where we prayed for the protection of Gazan civilians and for the Israeli Defense Force to use wisdom and restraint in its rightful attempts to eradicate Hamas.

Many other Christian leaders I know, all of them pro-Israel, have expressed similar sentiments, and when I preached on Oct. 8 on sharing God's pain, I mentioned His pain for the suffering Palestinians as well.

As followers of Jesus, we should care about all those who are suffering right now, regardless of whether they are Muslim or Jewish, Christian, Palestinian, Israeli or other.

At the same time, we must categorically rebuke those who make false accusations against Israel, repeating standard antisemitic tropes and peddling libelous media reports, especially when they do so in the name of Jesus.

I'm speaking here of "A Call to Repentance: An Open Letter from Palestinian Christians to Western Church Leaders and Theologians," published by Palestinian Christian leaders and calling for Christian leaders in the West to repent of their one-sided support of Israel. Some of the contents of the letter are truly revolting.

First, in the midst of constant references to Palestinian suffering, there is not a single word about the butchering of more than 1,300 Israelis by Hamas, other than statements like, "We come alongside fellow Christians in condemning all attacks

on civilians, especially defenseless families and children.”

So, despite 17 references to “Israel” in their letter, they do not say one word about the butchered Israeli children. Not one.

Not one word about the families burned alive. Not one.

Not one word about the women raped and tortured. Not one.

Not one word about the babies slaughtered in their cribs—or worse still, decapitated. Not one.

Not one word about the Holocaust survivors executed in cold blood. Not one.

Not one word about the taking of more than 200 hostages, including babies and the elderly. Not one.

This is reprehensible and immoral. It is spitting in the face of the one they profess as Lord. And it is inexcusable.

Second, there is not a single reference to Hamas. Not one.

There is not a single reference to terrorists or terrorism. Not one.

But there is a reason for the silence. They know full well that to say anything publicly against Hamas is not only to express disloyalty to the larger Palestinian cause. It is to put themselves in danger.

Where is the Christian courage and conviction? Where is the prophetic rebuke of terrorism? How can these brothers and sisters, in the name of morality and justice, fail to rebuke barbaric acts that put Isis to shame?

This was a challenge I gave them directly when I spoke at their Christ at the Checkpoint conference in 2018. Sadly, rather than do the right thing, they have been silent in the face of evil. (And note carefully in my address that I began

my comments with tears, expressing my pain for the suffering of my Palestinian brothers and sisters.)

Third, this open letter repeats the libelous claims that Israel bombed a hospital and a church, referencing, "the heinous massacre at Al-Ahli Anglican-Baptist Hospital and the bombardment of the Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Porphyrius which wiped out entire Palestinian Christian families."

Again, it is deeply grievous that lives were lost, especially the friends and family members of some of the writers of the letter. We should all mourn with them.

But repeating lies will not bring those loved ones back.

Israel did not bomb the hospital. The casualties are 100% the result of a failed Palestinian Islamic Jihad missile, and even at that, the numbers have been cruelly exaggerated.

As for the church, as verified by aerial footage provided by the IDF, the truth is that Israel was bombing a nearby building and was slightly off target, hitting a building near to the church, which then caused structural damage to part of the church building. What a contrast between this and the letter's claim that this was an "atrocious Israeli bombardment of innocent civilians on Oct. 19, 2023."

As noted by the Open Source Intelligence Monitor, "Once again the Mainstream Media caused a Total Meltdown of People around the World last night who thought that Israel had Purposefully Bombed a 1,000-Year-Old Church which was being used as a Shelter by Palestinian-Christians; how quickly everyone seems to forget that Hamas is known to place their Launch Sites and Arms Stockpiles near or inside Churches, School, Hospitals, and Residential Buildings so when they get Damaged by the Cross-Fire or Debris, like what happened here, they can make the IDF seem like the Villain."

For this open Christian letter to repeat these libels is to

partner with falsehood and to further demonize Israel. That is wicked in God's sight.

Fourth, the letter repeats standard anti-Israel, even antisemitic tropes, including references to "the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Palestine, and the oppressive and racist military occupation that constitutes the crime of apartheid."

The letter even provides a tacit justification of the Hamas atrocities when speaking of "the root causes of this war: Israel's systemic oppression of the Palestinians over the last 75 years since the Nakba." Do these writers even believe Israel has a right to exist?

More specifically, the letter speaks of "Israel's cruel blockade of Gaza for the last 17 years has turned the 365-square-kilometer Strip into an open-air prison for more than two million Palestinians—70% of whom belong to families displaced during the Nakba—who are denied their basic human rights. The brutal and hopeless living conditions in Gaza under Israel's iron fist have regrettably emboldened extreme voices of some Palestinian groups to resort to militancy and violence as a response to oppression and despair."

So, the butchers, the barbarians, the cold-blooded, demented Hamas executioners were simply "extreme voices" who were "regrettably emboldened" by Israel's evil actions. Such words are a stench in the nostrils of our Lord and a defilement of the names of the dead.

And why is there no mention of the reason for the blockade, namely, that the people of Gaza elected Hamas, which is sworn to the destruction of the Jewish people in the land, as their leaders in 2006? Hamas is a cousin to Isis and Al-Qaeda, a radical Islamic death cult bent on murdering Jews. Yet Israel is guilty of protecting its borders against these terrorists? And concerned Christians are rebuking Israel for doing this?

And where is there even a passing reference to the fact that

Israel has been in an existential battle for survival since the U.N. Partition Plan was announced in 1947, living under constant threat from surrounding hostile Muslim nations? There is none.

But the letter doesn't stop here. It repeats other, inaccurate, but now standard leftwing tropes, comparing the return of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland with "entrenched colonial discourse that has weaponized the Bible to justify the ethnic cleansing of indigenous peoples in the Americas, Oceania, and elsewhere, the slavery of Africans and the transatlantic slave trade, and decades of apartheid in South Africa."

As a colleague of mine commented after reading the letter, "Sounds like decolonization and liberation theology."

Get your FREE CHARISMA NEWSLETTERS today! Stay up to date with current issues, Holy Spirit news, Christian teachings, Charisma videos & more!

To be sure, I have said and will continue to say that: 1) We should pray for and work towards a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for the good of all those involved.

2) Where Israel acts wrongly, as friends of Israel, we should call the leadership to account. As I stated in my 2018 message, "I am not here to defend all the actions of the Israeli government or to defend the behavior of all Israelis or to whitewash Jewish failings. As a Jewish follower of Jesus, I am more than aware of my people's shortcomings."

3) The shedding of innocent Palestinian blood is just as grievous as the shedding of innocent Israeli blood, and as followers of Jesus, we should mourn with those who mourn. Right now, that includes the Palestinian people too.

As I posted on Oct. 9, "Tragically, many innocent Palestinians

will suffer terribly in the days to come, including women and children. That should matter to us as human beings, let alone as followers of Jesus. ... So, yes, the suffering of Palestinians is as grievous as the suffering of Israelis.”

Right now, I grieve for the pain of the people of Gaza, along with their brothers and sisters in the West Bank (ancient Judea and Samaria). Their suffering is deep, and their losses are massive. And, tragically, this is only the beginning of the story, as Israel has no moral choice but to remove Hamas from power and cripple its genocidal goals. Yet, ironically, Christians living in Israel under the supposedly monstrous Jewish leadership have far more liberty and rights than do the Christians living in Gaza.

Finally, while the letter says that Christians siding with Israel have hurt our Christian witness, the other side of the coin is that the Jewish people in Israel and worldwide have been deeply moved by this Christian support, which is going a long way to helping undo the terrible history of “Christian” antisemitism.

I appeal, then, to the writers and signers of this open letter: Please reconsider your words, please speak up on behalf of the Israeli victims, please rebuke the murderous terrorists by name and please present a truthful picture to the world.

We want to stand with you. We want to stand for justice. We want to show solidarity as brothers and sisters in Jesus.

But we cannot partner with falsehoods or double standards or libels.

In the name of our Lord, I appeal to you to repent of this deeply flawed call to repentance so that together, we can pursue righteousness, goodness, equity and mercy. {eoa}

Join Charisma Magazine Online to follow everything the Holy

Spirit is doing around the world!