

Hagee: While Threats to Israel Surge, So Does Christian Zionism

While anti-Semitism in Europe and anti-Zionism on U.S. college campuses are on the upswing, how is American Christian support for Israel trending? Stronger than ever, says the founder of the country's largest pro-Israel organization.

"I can assure you that the evangelical Christians of America support Israel right now in a more aggressive mood than at any time in my lifetime," Pastor John Hagee, national chairman of the member Christians United for Israel (CUFI), said in an interview with .

Hagee's assessment of the pulse of Christian Zionism came one day after 5,000 people attended the 33rd annual "A Night to Honor Israel" at Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas, last week. CUFI's goal is to facilitate that same program in every major U.S. city.

"We want to send the message to the world and to the Jewish people that Christians are standing up for the state of Israel and the Jewish people at home and abroad," Hagee said. "It's not conversation. It's action."

At Sunday's event in San Antonio, that action was the distribution of more than \$2.8 million in donations to Israeli and Jewish charities by John Hagee Ministries. The causes included: Afikim Family Enrichment Association, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Avukat Or, Bikur V'Ezras Cholim, Forum for Christian Enlistment, Friends of the Israel Defense Forces, Heart of Benjamin, International Council of Young Israel, Israel Help and Education Center at Kiryat Gat, Jewish Agency for Israel, Just One Life, Kefar Tsevi Sitrin, Koby Mandell Foundation, Magen David Adom, Meir

Panim, Nahal Haredi, Nefesh B'Nefesh, Netanya Academic College, Ohr Torah Stone, Or L'Doron, Save a Child's Heart, Shurat Hadin, Western Galilee Hospital, Women's International Zionist Organization, World ORT, and Yad Vashem.

The Western Galilee Hospital is a Jewish hospital run by an Arab Christian that treats Syrian refugees—covering “all the bases in one shot,” said Hagee, who sought to address public misconceptions that Hagee Ministries focuses on political rather than humanitarian philanthropy.

“There are people who themselves have political agendas that they're trying to drive, and they're trying to do and say anything they can to ridicule what we do so that they can prove their bias is the correct position,” he said. “But no one can look at the millions of dollars that we have given to Israel and call it anything but humanitarian. ... You look at that list of donors [from Sunday's event], and it's hard to say, ‘That's not humanitarian.’”

But while Hagee Ministries focuses on faith and philanthropy, CUFI's mission is different: education and advocacy. Participants of the organization's annual Washington Summit visit their local U.S. Senate and House of Representatives members to urge the support of Israel. Hagee cited those lobbying efforts as an example of Christian pro-Israel advocacy that adds value to what the Jewish community is already bringing to the table, since members of Congress are “not accustomed to Gentiles coming in their office, 75 or 80 of them from their district.”

“Whenever those kinds of numbers come from your district and say, ‘We are here to express our support for Israel, and we are watching what Congress does with regard to this specific thing, because this is great concern to us’—when the numbers are enough it becomes of great concern to every person running for election,” Hagee said.

When it comes to current pro-Israel causes, addressing the Iranian nuclear threat is at the forefront of the evangelical Christian community's thinking.

"We're all sitting on pins and needles before November 24th, waiting for the decision [in negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 powers] to come down on Iran's nuclear bomb efforts, and we all have this deep concern that it's going to be a negative decision as far as Israel is concerned," said Hagee. "[We fear that] America will once again be very conciliatory to Iran, and let them go forward with their maniacal nuclear plans."

Ron Dermer, Israeli Ambassador to the U.S., echoed Hagee's sentiment concerning Iran during his remarks at Sunday night's event in San Antonio.

"Folks, I don't know if there will be a deal with Iran next month, but Israel is very concerned," Dermer said. "We're concerned because a year ago, some hoped that the tough sanctions regime on Iran would only be dismantled if Iran's nuclear weapons program was dismantled. Today, the international community is prepared to make a deal that would suspend and ultimately lift the sanctions. But no one is talking about dismantling Iran's nuclear weapons program anymore."

Addressing the rise of the Islamic State terror group—a threat that he believed "would pale in comparison" to Iran's development of a nuclear weapon—Dermer noted the ongoing persecution of ancient Christian communities and other minority groups in the Middle East.

"Kurds and Yazidis are hunted down and sold into slavery in the 21st century," he said. "Militant Sunni and militant Shi'a [Muslims] massacre each other and even their own if their subjects don't heed their unforgiving creed."

Hagee told that Christian Zionists see the Islamic State threat within the context of the historical persecution of

Jews.

"ISIS (Islamic State) murdering Christians and decapitating children is one of the most extreme forms of terror that we have seen in our lifetime, but as far as Christians supporting Israel is concerned, we see it just as a continuum of the terrorist organizations that have been formed over the years that have a covenant to kill every Jewish person on the face of the earth," he said, citing Hamas and Hezbollah, as well as their state funder, Iran.

Popular radio talk show host and author Dennis Prager made a similar point on Sunday, telling the crowd at Cornerstone Church that no matter who is being persecuted, understanding the battle against evil is about "understanding the Jews' role."

"How people regard Israel is a litmus test of their whole values system," Prager said. "Do they resent that which works, that which is healthy, that which is productive? ... Evil focuses on the Jews. Period. Jew-haters are the world's evil group. There are no wonderful people who happen to hate Jews. Those who hate Jews are announcing, as if they wore a button, 'Hello, I'm evil.' That is the way it is.

"The Jews carry the burden of God in history. Even Jewish atheists, even Jews who hate being Jews, even Jews who hate Israel—the anti-Semite doesn't distinguish. Zionists went into gas chambers, anti-Zionists went into gas chambers. Orthodox Jews went into gas chambers, and atheist Jews went into gas chambers. They don't care—it's a Jew. The Jew is the embodiment and representation of God on this earth, whether they like it or not."

Prager described a "civil war" within Christendom between left-wing groups like Presbyterian Church USA, which last July approved a boycott of Israel at its biennial general assembly, and right-wing elements whose replacement theology argues that

Jews are no longer God's chosen people. But CUFI is "the Christian center," Prager told the crowd.

"There's nothing wrong with being right-wing, but you're not," he said. "In Christendom, you are truly the center. Because there is a right wing that you are fighting just as much [as the left]. ... This is Christians united not just for Israel, but for the integrity—'I' is for integrity—of Christianity. You are fighting a fight within and without, and God bless you for doing so, because we need you to win. If you lose, it's over, for the U.S. and for much of the world."

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