

When You Pray for Israel, Don't Forget Palestinian Christians

Oct. 7, 2023, will be etched forever in Israel's collective memory. On that day, near the end of the Jewish festival known as Sukkot, Hamas terrorists crossed into Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip to inflict unimaginable horror on Jews—and on other innocent people from 43 countries.

The Hamas militants arrived by boat to attack people on beaches. They shot rockets into Israeli communities. They used paragliders to attack a music festival, butchering 260 concertgoers and kidnapping many others.

The terrorists barged into homes or bomb shelters and shot Israelis randomly. Children were ripped from their parents' arms and kidnapped. And the world reacted with disgust when we learned that Hamas soldiers decapitated babies in Kfar Aza.

At the beginning of this week the Israeli Health Ministry said the death toll in Israel stands at 1,400, with another 3,400 injured. Forensic teams are working around the clock to identify the dead. An undetermined number of people are still being held hostage by Hamas—including at least 30 Americans. These people are being used as human shields to protect the terrorists as they carry out their cowardly plan.

This evil attack, which is now being called "Israel's 9/11," is the most deplorable act of antisemitism since the days of Hitler's death camps.

In spite of an outbreak of anti-Israel protests on campuses in the United States, most Americans—including our president—are standing with the Jewish state. This is not a time for appeasement with murderers. Israel has every right to root out

Hamas from Gaza, no matter what it takes. Declaring a cease-fire with Hamas will only result in more carnage.

My prayer during this war has been from Psalm 121:4 (NASB 1995): "Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." Our awesome God is able to expose evil plots and schemes, including those carried out under the cover of darkness. Verse 7a (ESV) goes on to say: "The Lord will keep you from all evil." We need to cry out to the Lord to protect Israel from those who want to kill, maim and destroy.

But as we pray fervently for Israel's safety during this war, I want to remind everyone that Arab Christians also need our love and prayers. They are caught in the middle of this conflict, and they are often forgotten.

When I made my first pilgrimage to Israel in 1994, I visited the ancient town of Bethlehem. After visiting the 1,500-year-old Church of the Nativity, I met a dear Palestinian Christian brother who managed a Bible college there. He told me that he had suffered persecution not only from militant Muslims but also from Israeli soldiers.

This man, like so many Arab believers in Jesus, was trapped in the crossfire. Both Muslims and Jews hated him because of his faith. I have since learned of several thriving Palestinian Christian churches in Bethlehem and other areas of Israel.

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

Arab Christians deserve our respect. They have maintained the historic biblical sites in Israel for centuries, yet they get little thanks for that today. Many have fled the Middle East because of persecution. Those who remain in Israel have been muffled in a hostile land where the loudspeakers on the mosques are turned up full-blast.

When I returned to Israel for a second pilgrimage in 2018, I met a Palestinian Christian man who leads a tourism company. He was raised in a Christian home, and he has an incredible knowledge of the Bible. When he took us to biblical sites such as Jericho, Caesarea, Capernaum or the Sea of Galilee, he offered rich insights not only from history but also from his own personal relationship with the Lord.

Today, my friend's future is in jeopardy. All tours to Israel have been canceled because of the war, so he is busy refunding people for their trips. He hopes the conflict will end soon so he can restart his business. But with Hamas rockets landing indiscriminately, he also fears for his family. Hamas terrorists don't care if their bombs land on Palestinian Christians.

When you pray, remember that Israel's population includes Arab Christians as well as Ethiopian, Russian and Ukrainian refugees, along with 1.7 million Muslims—18% of Israel's population. They desperately need the gospel.

When Jesus lived in Israel 2,000 years ago, He didn't support the religious racism of His day. He healed a Roman centurion's servant, ministered to a Canaanite woman's daughter, talked to a Samaritan woman and ventured into Gentile territory. He showed the Jews that God's love is much wider than our narrow political boundaries.

Let's open our arms wide as we pray for Israel during this conflict. Pray that terrorism will be uprooted so that —true peace, the *shalom* of God—will be established in that special place.

Join Charisma Magazine Online to follow everything the Holy Spirit is doing around the world!