
Christian Peacemaking in the Context of the Recent Gaza War: Challenges and Theological Reflections

Sally Azar

As Christians, we are called to reflect God's love by standing with all people, especially those who are marginalized, suffering, or oppressed. This sacred duty of compassion and solidarity extends to Palestinians. Unquestioning political allegiances must never override our commitment to Christ-like love, justice, and peace. The ongoing conflict in Gaza poses profound challenges, but it also presents Christians with a moral responsibility and opportunity to act. We are called to pray for peace and the transformation of hearts, to stand in solidarity with the suffering, to educate ourselves and others about the realities on the ground, to offer humanitarian support, to divest from entities that contribute to injustice, and to challenge interpretations of Scripture that are used to justify violence. In all things, our faith demands that we love as Christ loves—without exception, without condition.

Introduction

Over the past year many things have changed, yet such changes didn't begin in a vacuum. The mass killing of over 40,000 Palestinians in Gaza, including at least 16,000 children, represents a turning point for the Middle East from more than one perspective. The Palestinian people knew very well that the Israeli government was not going after Hamas only, but that it was going to conduct a campaign reflecting its well-stated positions against the implementation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. This has been reflected in unprecedented numbers of casualties and destruction in densely populated areas, leading international observers to call for urgent humanitarian interventions.

The Israeli bombing of the Saint Porphyrios Church in Gaza, one of the five oldest churches worldwide, put the situation of Palestinian Christians in the spotlight. All Christian institutions in Gaza have been attacked by the Israeli Army, including the Anglican-run Al Ahli Hospital, the YMCA, the Gaza branch of Dar Al Kalima University and the Orthodox Cultural Center, among others. This article seeks to explore how Palestinian Christians are responding to the ongoing situation, from theological, ecclesiastical and national perspectives. Christian leaders have faced numerous challenges in peacemaking within this complex landscape. This article also aims to outline both the foundational principles and efforts for

peacemaking and the difficulties involved in these efforts. It begins with my own background in order to establish the context for my understanding of the current reality.

Life Growing Up

Growing up in Jerusalem, an occupied city under international law, I struggled to grasp much of what was happening in our country as a child. A lot of my memories are about soldiers, checkpoints, and walls as I traveled back and forth to Bethlehem or Ramallah, only about ten kilometers away from my home.

My school, the Schmidt Girls' College, represented one of the main landmarks for Palestinians in Jerusalem. Located opposite Damascus Gate, an often-busy entrance that connects Christian and Muslim Quarters of the Old City with what is left of the Al-Musrara neighborhood and Nablus Road, the school was built by a German Catholic congregation at a time of Christian expansion in Palestine during the 19th century. Yet, it was just a matter of leaving the campus and one would find vivid scenes of oppression, with young Palestinians often persecuted by Israeli Forces.

In this context, and despite the fact that successive Israeli governments have been trying to prevent Palestinian students in Jerusalem from learning about our own national narrative, we began to learn more about our people's history, not only through textbooks,

but also from our grandparents who lived through 1948 and 1967, experiencing firsthand the Nakba, represented in the exile of the Palestinian people, and the Naksa, the occupation of what was left of Palestine. My grandparents were both from Jaffa, but they and their families were kicked out of their homes. Many hoped they would be able to come back one day, but they never could. My mom's family fled to Jordan and my dad's family escaped to Jerusalem and Nazareth. It is noteworthy that even though Israel claims that Jerusalem is its "undivided capital," in reality we never met Israelis other than as soldiers and police officers. They attended different schools, took separate buses, and lived in distinct neighborhoods, including illegal settlements built on occupied Palestinian land.

Some may argue that this separation is what has left most Israelis unaware of the realities faced by Palestinians behind the walls constructed in the name of safety. For others, this may just be an excuse. But what is clear is that such barriers not only isolate us physically but also emotionally and intellectually.

As I reflect on my journey and the context of our lives, I recognize that the integration of Palestinians and Israelis was never truly possible. The walls built around us—both literal and metaphorical—served to deepen our divisions, leaving many Israelis oblivious to the struggles endured daily by Palestinians. It is a painful reminder of how our different worlds often coexist in silence, lacking the understanding and connection that could pave the way for a more peaceful coexistence. We remained committed to two opposing projects: one that speaks mainly of Jewish exclusivity, including with regards to the right to self-determination, and another that speaks of freedom and self-determination for the Palestinian people.

Later, after studying abroad, I was struck by the stark contrast between my experiences in Jerusalem and the outside world. I had never fully grasped how deeply entrenched the normalization of occupation and dehumanization had become in my daily life. In my country, on my land, we were always treated as second-class citizens, facing constant difficulties that were so woven into the fabric of our existence that we often didn't question them.

I found it shocking to discover places where borders didn't exist, walls were not present, and people did not have to show their identification papers just to move around. The freedom of movement I experienced abroad highlighted the restrictions we live with daily, especially for those of us in Palestine. Israel controls everything—entry and exit points, permits, and even our basic rights—creating a reality in which leaving the country feels like an insurmountable challenge.

The normalization of these conditions is alarming, which makes it easy to overlook the harsh realities faced by Palestinians. What should be a basic human right,

the ability to travel freely and live without the constant fear of checkpoints and surveillance, has become a distant dream for many. My experience abroad opened my eyes to the realities of my homeland and the pervasive impact of the occupation on our lives. It underscored for me the urgent need for dialogue, understanding, and a collective effort to challenge the status quo.

It is through my personal story that I want to make an important point clear: the conflict did not start on October 7, 2023. The dispossession of the Palestinian people has been occurring since 1948, and its results can be seen today. This conflict is not just about Gaza, but about all Palestinian people. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, there is a growing sense of desolation, with dozens of Palestinian villages emptied of their residents and more colonial-settlement expansion, including on areas of deep Christian importance such as Jaffa Gate, the Armenian Quarter, Mount of Olives and Al Makhroun in Beit Jala. All Palestinians are affected, all aspects of life are controlled by Israel, and there is an urgent need for the world to know this. In an attempt to play my part, my writing focuses on the current responses and the way I, as a Palestinian pastor in Jerusalem, have experienced this human tragedy.

Theological Foundations for Christian Responses

For many reasons, Palestinian Christians feel abandoned. Pastor and theologian Dr. Mitri Raheb noted in his book *Politics of Persecution* (2021) that Palestinian Christians went through three Nakbas, or catastrophes: a geographic one for the loss of land, a demographic one for the exile of our people, and a spiritual one given the support that groups of foreign Christians gave to the Palestinian dispossession. Between October 2023 and October 2024, Palestinian Christians were killed; religious sites were attacked; Palestinians, including Christians, were banned from Jerusalem; land was expropriated; and family reunifications were banned, to mention just some of the repressive policies during the Israeli occupation. Even so, Palestinians experienced very little solidarity from abroad. While Palestinian Christians were demanding a strong stance to stop what the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is investigating as genocide, many were not willing to do more than "pray for peace" or send limited financial support.

Palestinian Christians, just like Christians in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria or Egypt, are an integral part of their societies and indigenous to the land and culture, but this seems to be either forgotten or ignored abroad. Still, it astonished us to see so many churches, Christians, and organizations taking pro-Israeli positions so easily, where human life has been

devalued. This made me wonder, how they can do this, when the Bible so clearly demonstrates the opposite?

Scriptures such as Micah 6:8 underscore the importance of "doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God," a central theme in Christian ethics. Similarly, the prophet Isaiah envisions a time when "nations shall beat their swords into plowshares" (Isaiah 2:4), highlighting a future hope for peace. These texts form a biblical framework that many Christian peacemakers draw upon when advocating for non-violence and justice in conflict zones.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus pronounces, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). This call to peacemaking lies at the heart of the Christian response, pushing believers to actively pursue peace even amidst violence. The challenge for Christian leaders is applying these biblical principles in a context where both sides claim historical and theological justifications for their actions.

Another critical theological foundation for Christian engagement in the Israel-Palestine conflict is the belief in the inherent dignity of all people, as expressed in Genesis 1:27: "So God created humankind in his own image." This concept of *Imago Dei* implies that every person, Israeli and Palestinian alike, bears the image of God and thus has inherent worth and dignity. This belief compels Christians to advocate for the protection of all civilians, regardless of nationality or political affiliation, and pushes against narratives that dehumanize or demonize either side.

This is particularly relevant as both sides have experienced immense suffering. For Christian peacemakers, the recognition of the shared humanity of all people presents a theological mandate to resist all forms of violence and injustice that violate human dignity. It also encourages a more balanced and compassionate approach to addressing the conflict.

At the heart of Christian peacemaking is the example set by Jesus Christ, particularly in his teachings on reconciliation and non-violence. The Sermon on the Mount offers guidance on how Christians are to act in times of conflict: loving enemies, praying for those who persecute them, and resisting the temptation to respond to violence with violence (Matthew 5:44). These teachings challenge the cycle of retaliation that often perpetuates violence in conflicts like the one in Israel-Palestine.

Historical Christian Involvement in the Question of Palestine

The Christian mission is deeply intertwined with the pursuit of justice, particularly for the oppressed. Scriptural references such as Luke 4:18, where Jesus proclaims the good news to the poor and freedom for the oppressed, and Amos 5:24, which calls for justice to

roll down like waters, serve as ethical foundations for understanding Christian responses to the conflict. Many Christians view their engagement in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a moral imperative, advocating for justice as an essential component of their faith (Marteijn 2020).

The Christian presence in the Holy Land has a rich and complex history that dates back to the early church. Following the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christianity spread rapidly in Palestine, where the first Christian communities were established. Throughout the centuries, Christian communities—particularly the Greek Orthodox, Latin Catholic, and Armenian Apostolic—have maintained a continuous presence in the region. The Protestant presence was officially established in 1841. Up until 1948, Palestinian Christians represented around 10% of Palestine's population, a number that fell to 3% within one year (Marteijn 2020) due to what Israeli historian Dr. Illan Pappé refers to as "the ethnic cleansing of Palestine" (Pappé 2007). Today, approximately 1.5% of the population in Israel and Palestine identifies as Christian, with significant communities in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Nazareth. The church's involvement has not only been spiritual but also social and political, engaging in education, healthcare, and social justice initiatives within Palestinian society (Scholz 2018).

For Christians, leaders have faced significant challenges, as their very existence has been threatened. From the control over holy sites to restrictions on movement and access, to the burdens of taxes, the fragmentation of the land, and scattered communities—all of these point to a harsh reality. Christian leaders also often have to rely on Israeli-issued permits for much of their work. Despite these difficulties, Christian leaders and organizations should not remain silent about the situation in the country. Historical archives show that many of them, even before 1948, were actively lobbying for justice in Palestine (Eid and Abdelhady 2022). An important element over the past decades has been the development of the Palestinian liberation theology, which properly emerged during the Intifada of 1987, and emphasizes the experiences of Palestinians, focusing on their plight and the call for liberation from oppression. This theological perspective argues that faith must be intertwined with the struggle for justice, aligning with the broader Christian mission to care for the marginalized.

This movement has allowed for networking with other churches abroad, as well as with Ecumenical groups, prominently the World Council of Churches, which has also played a crucial role in promoting a just and lasting peace. They have engaged in dialogues and advocacy efforts, seeking to address injustices faced by Palestinians while also calling for a peaceful resolution. Pope Francis has consistently emphasized the need for

dialogue and reconciliation, urging leaders from both sides to work towards peace and justice in the region. His visits to the Holy Land and calls for a Palestinian state highlight the Holy See's commitment to supporting peace efforts (Wooden 2018).

Ecumenical and Christian Responses

Since October 7, 2023, Christian responses to the genocide in Gaza and the broader reality of Palestine and the Middle East have varied widely, reflecting a spectrum of theological and political perspectives.

Some Christian leaders have expressed support for Israel's "right to defend itself," citing biblical covenants regarding the land of Israel. They reference scriptures such as Genesis and Romans, emphasizing Israel's enduring spiritual significance. These voices, especially from evangelical and pro-Israel circles, have viewed the conflict in light of eschatological beliefs, framing Israel's struggle as part of a divine narrative (Patrick 2023). In response to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) has affirmed Israel's right to defend itself. The EKD emphasized that, while advocating for peace and the protection of civilian lives, Israel, like any sovereign nation, has the right to safeguard its citizens from external threats and aggression. This stance is rooted in both political and theological considerations, underscoring Israel's right to protect its borders and ensure security for its people in the face of continued attacks (EKD 2023). Some Christians refer to the concept of "Just War," arguing that Israel has the right to protect its citizens under biblical principles of justice, and that military action may be justified in response to terrorism (Patrick 2023).

Other Christian voices, however, particularly from Palestinian and Middle Eastern Christian communities, have condemned the violence in general, while also criticizing Western Christian leaders who offer uncritical support for Israel. These groups point out that the long-standing occupation of Palestinian territories and systemic injustices against Palestinians must be addressed to achieve any meaningful peace. Organizations like Kairos Palestine, Bethlehem Bible College, and other Palestinian Christian institutions have called for a balanced approach, condemning violence from Hamas but also decriing what they see as the disproportionate military response from Israel and the suffering it causes for innocent Palestinians (Kumar 2023).

Additionally, there have been calls from Christian leaders, such as those in the Christian Reformed Church, for peace and restraint. These leaders emphasize the need for prayer, diplomacy, and non-violence, urging their congregations to pray for the cessation of hostilities, the protection of civilians, and the pursuit of justice and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians (CRC 2023).

Christian relief organizations have actively responded to the humanitarian crises resulting from the conflict, providing essential aid, shelter, and medical care in war-torn Gaza. Organizations like Lutheran World Federation, Caritas, ACT Alliance, Mennonite Central Committee, and World Vision work tirelessly to support affected communities, by delivering food, clean water, and healthcare to those in need. These efforts reflect the Christian calling to care for the most vulnerable and to respond compassionately to human suffering.

Christian teachings emphasize solidarity with the marginalized, prompting believers to stand alongside those who suffer. The experiences of Palestinians living under occupation resonate with the Christian call to advocate for justice and compassion. Many Christians view their responsibility as supporting those facing oppression, embodying the principles of love and care that are central to their faith. This solidarity is not merely theoretical; it is manifested through advocacy, humanitarian efforts, and support for Palestinian rights (Alkassim 2018).

Christian Zionism represents a significant perspective within evangelical circles, rooted in specific theological beliefs regarding the state of Israel. Proponents of this ideology interpret biblical prophecy as foretelling the establishment of Israel and see contemporary events as fulfilling God's plan. This belief often leads to strong political and financial support for Israel among evangelical Christians. Theological frameworks within Christian Zionism emphasize the importance of Israel as a key player in eschatological events, shaping a complex relationship between faith and political ideology (Kuttub 2018).

While Christian Zionism advocates for unconditional support of Israel, it has sparked significant debate within the broader Christian community regarding its implications for peace and justice in the region. Many Christians, particularly those persuaded by liberation theology, challenge this perspective, arguing that it often overlooks the rights and suffering of Palestinians. The varied Christian responses to the conflict reflect a broader theological and ethical diversity, highlighting the complexity of the issue (Febriantoro et al. 2024).

The Kairos Palestine document titled "A Moment of Truth" serves as a significant theological and political manifesto by Palestinian Christians. Initially released in 2009 and updated in 2020, it calls for global Christian solidarity with Palestinians and highlights the injustices of the Israeli occupation (Kairos Palestine 2009). The document frames the struggle for justice in theological terms, emphasizing non-violence and the need for a just peace rooted in mutual recognition and respect. The Kairos document has gained international attention and support from various Christian denominations, urging

action against the occupation while promoting peace and reconciliation. The Kairos Palestine document has also garnered substantial international support from Christian denominations around the world, who have echoed its call for justice and peace in Palestine. For instance, the World Council of Churches (WCC) has strongly endorsed the Kairos document, emphasizing the need for solidarity with Palestinian Christians and supporting the non-violent resistance to the Israeli occupation. The WCC has been vocal in advocating for Palestinian rights, including their endorsement of the Kairos Palestine call for action. In their statement, the WCC declared that Christians have a moral obligation to “speak truth to power” and resist the unjust occupation (WCC 2015).

Another ecumenical group that has been outspoken is Sabeel, a liberation theology movement based in Jerusalem, founded by Palestinian Christians in the late 1990s. Sabeel emphasizes justice, peace, and non-violence and seeks to educate both local and international communities about the Palestinian struggle. The center regularly organizes conferences, workshops, and events to advocate for peace, highlighting the voices of Palestinian Christians who desire an end to the occupation.

The Palestinian Christian Alliance for Peace is yet another collective that seeks to advocate for justice and peace in the Holy Land. Their platform calls for an end to the occupation and emphasizes the importance of Christian values in promoting peace and reconciliation. The alliance comprises various Christian leaders who actively engage in dialogue and advocacy efforts to raise awareness about the plight of Palestinians.

The Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Lebanon actively engages with the Palestinian Christian context and advocates for justice through theological education. Their programs often address the occupation's impact on communities and the role of Christian witness in promoting peace and reconciliation.

These voices collectively represent a diverse and passionate commitment among Palestinian Christians to advocate for peace, justice, and an end to the occupation, drawing on their faith and the historical context of their struggles. This dynamism is a consequence of several elements, prominently the sense that Palestinian Christians have justice on their side as they fight what is truly battle for survival.

Since October 7, 2023, Christian organizations around the world have responded with calls for peace, protection of civilians, and adherence to international humanitarian laws in relation to the renewed violence between the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian people.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), in its statement on October 11, 2023, condemned attacks on

civilians by all parties, particularly the brutal actions by Hamas, and called for the immediate release of hostages. The LWF also urged Israeli forces to follow international humanitarian law, stressing that violations of the law by one side do not justify violations by the other. Their statement expressed deep concern over deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, where civilians have been displaced, and crucial infrastructure like hospitals and schools destroyed. They demanded safe passage for civilians and the opening of humanitarian corridors to ensure aid reaches those in need (LWF 2023).

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), which operates within the Middle East, has emphasized the need for both immediate humanitarian assistance and long-term political solutions. They highlight the ongoing financial crisis of institutions like the Augusta Victoria Hospital, which is directly linked to the instability and violence in the region. The ELCJHL has consistently called for the international community to support such life-saving services and to uphold the dignity of all people affected by the conflict.

The WCC has also issued statements echoing the need for peace and justice in the region. They condemn the loss of civilian life and the continuous occupation of Palestinian territories, reaffirming their commitment to human dignity and the protection of all civilians in conflict. The WCC has long advocated for a two-state solution and an end to the occupation as part of a lasting solution to the conflict (WCC 2024).

These Christian bodies are unified in their message and commitment to peace, justice, and the protection of civilians, while also calling for deeper engagement from the international community to bring about a sustainable and peaceful resolution to the conflict.

What Is Being Done?

Christian peacemaking faces significant challenges in the present situation between the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian people, particularly due to the background of the situation, entrenched narratives, and polarized global responses. This section explores these challenges and how they impact efforts by Christian groups to advocate for peace. It has always been difficult to have interreligious dialogues because of the political situation, as religion is often misused in terms of the war.

One of the foremost challenges in Christian peacemaking is the deep theological and political polarization among Christian communities themselves. Many evangelical groups, especially in the West, have historically supported an alleged Israeli right to all the land of Palestine, seeing it through a biblical lens of God's covenant with the Jewish people. This eschatological view can sometimes lead to

unconditional support for Israel's actions, limiting calls for mutual justice and reconciliation (LWF 2022). On the other hand, Palestinian Christians, represented by organizations like Kairos Palestine, advocate for an end to the Israeli occupation and call for global Christian solidarity with Palestinians, emphasizing justice, peace, and human rights. This divide complicates efforts to present a united Christian voice (Patrick 2023) as the concepts end up being radically opposed, with groups of Western Christians calling for the annexation of Palestinian territory and opposing Palestinian Christians who demand their right to self-determination.

Another challenge is the control of the narrative around the conflict, both in global media and among local populations. The media's portrayal of the conflict often focuses on the violent aspects and political blame rather than grassroots peacemaking efforts, including those led by Christian organizations. This skewed representation affects how the global Christian community perceives the conflict, often simplifying it into pro-Israel or pro-Palestine binaries, which limits the space for nuanced, balanced dialogue that peacemaking requires. The WCC and other Christian bodies have struggled to amplify their messages of justice and reconciliation in a media landscape dominated by more immediate and sensationalized reports of violence (LWF 2022). But for many in Palestine, such movements are too little, too late, and the fact that no concrete measures to impose sanctions on Israel have been taken raises more questions about the real will of Western Christians with regards to justice and peace in Palestine.

The declining number of Christians in the Holy Land further weakens the influence of Christian peacemaking efforts. Palestinian Christians, who once played a vital role in local politics and society, have increasingly emigrated, mainly due to the Israeli occupation, whether through the ongoing instability, economic hardship, land theft, separation of families, and diminishing prospects for life and peace. This dwindling population makes it harder for local Christian voices to be heard in the broader conflict, while external Christian groups often lack the intimate understanding of the local context necessary for effective intervention. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land continues to advocate for peace and justice, but the decreasing Christian presence complicates their mission.

What Can Christians Do Now?

In the face of the ongoing conflict, Christians are called to respond with compassion, prayer, and active engagement. First and foremost, prayer and advocacy are crucial. Christians around the world are encouraged to come together in prayer, calling for peace, wisdom,

and justice. This is not simply a passive act; it is a means of fostering a deep sense of empathy and solidarity. Alongside prayer, Christians are urged to engage in advocacy, raising their voices in defense of human rights and justice, advocating for non-violence, and seeking an end to oppression. In this particular case, they can push to end the genocide in Gaza and achieve a comprehensive ceasefire, thus ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine and promoting freedom, security, and equality for everyone.

Beyond prayer, support for humanitarian efforts is an essential expression of Christian compassion. This can take the form of donations or volunteer efforts with Christian organizations working on the ground in Gaza and the West Bank. Many of these groups provide critical services, such as medical supplies, food, shelter, and psychological support to those affected by the ongoing violence. Through these tangible acts of love, Christians can serve as beacons of hope, contributing to the alleviation of suffering and demonstrating the power of faith in action.

Another crucial response is the need for education and awareness. It is important for Christians to take the time to understand the history and complexity of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Misunderstanding and ignorance can perpetuate harmful narratives, but by learning about the deeper issues at play, Christians can foster more informed, compassionate discussions within their communities. Churches can play a vital role by hosting events, inviting speakers, and providing educational resources that promote empathy, a balanced perspective, and a commitment to peace.

Churches worldwide have a relevant role to play in their various contexts. It is important for them to divest from companies involved in human rights violations and other crimes, such as the Israeli occupation of Palestine. They must also take care to promote only ethical pilgrimages. Church leaders must also issue an unequivocal statement against the use of the Bible as a tool to justify the commission of war crimes. It is paradoxical, to say the least, that the Bible continues to be used in order to justify the erasure of the oldest Christian community, as well as to spread injustice. For example, "*Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ*" (Eph. 6:5-8 NIV) was historically misinterpreted and distorted by proponents of slavery and apartheid as a divine justification for the subjugation of Black people. We already have a prominent example of religious fundamentalists using the Bible to promote injustice in the apartheid movement in South Africa, and this didn't end well for them.

Finally, Christians should actively work toward promoting non-violence and reconciliation. Before undertaking peacebuilding initiatives on both sides,

there must be healing on both sides, as it is too soon to talk about coming together. In order to reach that point, there should first be an end to the occupation, to the war, and to all of the illegal settlements. As churches, we need to continue spreading the Bible's message, which is all about love and peace. Jesus himself spoke up against injustices during the Roman empire, and now it is our turn.

Through these actions—prayer, humanitarian support, education, and peacebuilding—Christians have an opportunity to be agents of healing and transformation, offering a hopeful and tangible response to a conflict that has torn communities apart for generations.

Conclusion

The historical involvement of Christian communities in the question of Palestine reflects a rich tapestry of faith, advocacy, and social justice. From the early church to the present, Christians have grappled with their identity in a region steeped in complexity and turmoil. As voices advocating for peace, justice, and reconciliation, Christian organizations and leaders have sought to respond to the plight of Palestinians, emphasizing non-violence and solidarity with the oppressed.

The ethical frameworks that guide Christian responses highlight a commitment to justice and humanitarian concern. Scripture calls believers to prioritize the welfare of the marginalized, echoing through centuries of theological reflection and social activism. The varied perspectives within the Christian community from Christian Zionism to liberation theology illustrate a dynamic discourse on faith, politics, and morality.

In navigating this multifaceted war, Christians are called to embody the principles of compassion and justice that lie at the heart of their faith. The path forward requires continued dialogue, understanding, and a commitment to advocate for the dignity and rights of all individuals, regardless of their background. As the Church seeks to fulfill its mission in the Holy Land, the imperative remains clear: to work towards peace, foster reconciliation, and promote justice for all who inhabit this space. The journey is fraught with challenges, but it is also one filled with hope for a future where faith can be a force for healing and unity.

As complexities continue to unfold, there is a profound call to action for Christians around the world. In the face of violence and suffering, believers are urged to reaffirm their commitment to peacemaking, justice, and compassion. The teachings of Jesus emphasize the importance of loving one's neighbor, standing in solidarity with the oppressed, and actively working towards reconciliation. Christians are called to be agents

of peace, fostering understanding and promoting dialogue in their communities and beyond.

The vision for the future is one of hope—a future in which a peaceful, just, and equitable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is realized. This vision is rooted in the Christian principles of love, compassion, and reconciliation. By embracing these values, Christians can contribute to a narrative of healing rather than division, advocating for the rights and dignity of all individuals involved in the conflict. Together, may we strive to cultivate an environment where justice prevails, where all people can live in peace, and where the light of faith shines as a beacon of hope in the midst of darkness.

References

- Alkassim, Samirah. 2018 (May 24). "The Role of Palestinian Liberation Theology: A Conversation with Reverend Naim Ateek." *The Jerusalem Fund*. <https://thejerusalemfund.org/2018/05/the-role-of-palestinian-liberation-theology-a-conversation-with-reverend-naim-ateek-3/>
- CRC. 2023 (November 10). "Statement on Israel-Palestine Conflict." Christian Reformed Church. <https://www.crcna.org/news-and-events/news/statement-israel-palestine-conflict>
- Eid, Xavier Abu, and Feda Abdelhady. 2022. *Rooted in Palestine: Palestinian Christians and the Struggle for National Liberation 1917-2004*. Bethlehem: Dar Al-Kalima University Press.
- EKD. 2023 (October 19). "Aufstehen gegen Terror, Hass und Antisemitismus—in Solidarität und Mitgefühl mit Israel." <https://www.ekd.de/aufstehen-gegen-terror-hass-und-antisemitismus-in-solidaritaet-81088.htm>
- Febriantoro, Valentinus Fio Milinio, Thomas Lasmono Wibowo, and JB Heru Prakosa. 2024 (June 1). "Naim Stifan Ateek's Palestinian Liberation Theology for The Israel-Palestine Conflict." *Proceedings of The International Conference on Theology, Religion, Culture, and Humanities* 1 : 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.24071/tic.v1i1.8466>
- Kairos Palestine. 2009. "Kairos Document: A Moment of Truth A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering." <https://kairospalestine.ps/index.php/about-kairos/kairos-palestine-document>
- Kumar, Anugrah. 2023 (October 23). "Palestinian Christians Accuse Western Church Leaders of Complicity in Gaza Airstrikes." <https://www.christianpost.com/news/palestinians-accuse-western-church-of-complicity-in-gaza-deaths.html>

- Kuttab, Jonathan. 2018. "Palestinian Evangelicals and Christian Zionism." <https://jonathankuttab.org/2019/01/19/palestinian-evangelicals-and-christian-zionism/>
- LWF. 2022 (June 16). "Israel-Palestine Conflict: A Lasting Solution Must Include Ending the Occupation | The Lutheran World Federation." <https://lutheranworld.org/news/israel-palestine-conflict-lasting-solution-must-include-ending-occupation>
- LWF. 2023 (November 10). "Israel and Palestine: Civilians Must Be Protected, and Hostages Released." The Lutheran World Federation." <https://lutheranworld.org/news/israel-and-palestine-civilians-must-be-protected-and-hostages-released>
- Marteijn, Elizabeth S. 2020. "The Revival of Palestinian Christianity: Developments in Palestinian Theology." *Exchange* 49 (3-4): 257-77. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1572543X-12341569>
- Pappé, Ilan. 2007. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.
- Patrick, James 2023 (November 30). "Israel-Gaza War: Don't Ignore What the Bible Actually Says." *Premier Christianity*. <https://www.premierchristianity.com/opinion/israel-gaza-war-dont-ignore-what-the-bible-actually-says/16802.article>
- Raheb, Mitri. 2021. *The Politics of Persecution: Middle Eastern Christians in an Age of Empire*. Waco: Baylor University Press.
- Scholz, Norbert. 2018. "Bibliography of Periodical Literature 16 May-15 August 2018." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48 (1): 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2018.48.1.S2>
- WCC (World Council of Churches). 2015 (April 2). "Kairos Palestine's Document 'A Moment of Truth': Hopes, Aspirations, Impact." <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/kairos-palestines-document-a-moment-of-truth-hopes-aspirations-impact>
- WCC (World Council of Churches). 2024 (October 19). "Statement on the Escalating Violence in the Middle East." <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/statement-on-the-escalating-violence-in-the-middle-east>
- Wooden, Cindy. 2018. "True Believers Want Peace for Jerusalem, Pope Tells Imam." *National Catholic Reporter*, January 18. <https://www.ncronline.org/vatican/francis-comic-strip/francis-chronicles/true-believers-want-peace-jerusalem-pope-tells-imam>

Rev. Sally Azar is a Jerusalem-based pastor fluent in Arabic, German, and English. She studied theology in Beirut and Göttingen. She was ordained as a first female pastor in 2023 in the Holy Land.

Author email: sazar@elcjh.org
