Standing Against Christian Zionism

October 9, 2026

Recently, about 1,000 Christian pastors descended upon Jerusalem. Was it to stand in solidarity with the Palestinians Christians there, who are increasingly persecuted and isolated from the global church? Was it to bear witness to home demolitions and forced expulsions of families from their homes in East Jerusalem? Was it to pray alongside their Palestinian Christian siblings for an end to the genocide in Gaza?

No. It was none of these things. Instead, these 1,000 pastors came to Jerusalem with one aim - to build solidarity with Israel and come back armed with tools to amplify Israel back at home.

In the middle of a genocide being perpetrated by Israel, this is shameful. For Christian pastors to ignore the suffering of their fellow Christians - known by many as the "Living Stones" - not to mention the millions of non-Christian Palestinians who arguably suffer even more, is deeply antithetical to the way of Jesus Christ.

Jack Sara, the president of the Bethlehem Bible College, wrote a scathing reply to these pastors and their visit, asking them, among other things, "Aren't you ashamed to visit the birthplace of Christianity without meeting the Christians who still bear Christ's name here? Aren't you ashamed to teach the Good Samaritan while passing by today's wounded along the road? Aren't you ashamed that you came to the Holy Land and listened only to politicians - and not to the church that has carried the Gospel here for two millennia?"

How is it that these pastors were able to do these things? What enabled them to bless a genocidal state while ignoring the victims of genocide?

One answer to this question is bad theology, specifically, in the form of Christian Zionism. Christian Zionism is closely related to another destructive form of theology known as dispensationalism, which views history as divided into seven distinct dispensations, ending with the final dispensation of the end times and Christ's 1,000-year reign on earth. Christian Zionism takes this framework and shapes it specifically to promote a particularly destructive fantasy in which Jews return to the Holy Land, Israel is restored to its former biblical glory, and the third temple is constructed on the site of the Temple Mount. All of these things are necessary, according to Christian Zionism, to bring about the second coming of Christ. While this theology supports the state of Israel, it is fundamentally antisemitic, as Jews are the means by which Christians achieve salvation.

Why is this so destructive? Well, for one thing, it has led to decades of ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their homeland, where many of them have lived for generations. In order for Israel to be restored to its former biblical glory, they need to retake what Zionists call Judea and Samaria, otherwise known as the West Bank, not to mention areas of Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. This process is already underway

and has been in hyperdrive since October 7, 2023. In the West Bank, over 7,000 Palestinians have been displaced due to home demolitions in the last three years. Entire villages have been taken over by violent settlers or bulldozed by the Israeli military. Hundreds of olive trees, a crucial source of income for many Palestinian families and communities, have been burned or bulldozed.

Christian Zionism, the ideology that brought these 1,000 pastors to Israel, is a distortion of the Christian way. It is a deeply perverted twisting of the Christian Gospel and message, and bears no resemblance to the way of Jesus, the Savior these pastors claim to follow. Christian Zionism has led to countless wars in the region, including the one we are now fighting in Iran. Christian Zionism has led to the murder of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians, the development of drone warfare, and an unholy alliance between the United States and Israel. We say "unholy" because of what the impact of this alliance has been. Billions of dollars to support Israel's wars of aggression. Two-thousand pound bombs being dropped on a helpless population. Over 75,000 people dead, including over 20,000 children, with thousands more buried under the rubble. The largest cohort of child amputees in the world. The poisoning of the land and destruction of Gaza's meager agricultural industry, making one of the most food insecure places in the world even more prone to starvation and famine. The list could go on and on.

As Christians and as members of the United Church of Christ Movement for Palestinian Solidarity, we are deeply disturbed by the choice of these pastors to stand with a state that is actively engaging in settler colonialism, ethnic cleansing, apartheid, and genocide. Therefore, we call on all Christians to learn more about Christian Zionism so they can recognize it and reject it when they see it. We call on church leaders everywhere to speak prophetically to the powers that be, to make it clear that Christian Zionism and the related ideology of Christian Nationalism are distortions of the Christian faith.

Our Christian siblings in the Holy Land are hurting deeply, and this visit of 1,000 pastors to stand with Israel and ignore Palestinian Christians has been devastating for them. This is exactly the kind of action that makes them feel that not only does the global church not care about them, but that it is actively working against them. Palestinian Pastor Rev. Munther Isaac has described the failure of the church when it comes to Palestine as "crushing on every level." What will it take for us to really, truly hear their cries?

The church is called to stand with those who suffer, those who are vulnerable, those who are marginalized. The suffering of Palestinians, for over 75 years now, can no longer be ignored. It is a blight on the global church that we have allowed this to continue for so long. It is past time to stand up and speak out, regardless of the cost. It is past time for Christians everywhere, and especially for Christian leaders, to take up their cross, and follow Jesus into costly solidarity for our Palestinian siblings. **Our faith requires nothing less.**