

WHY AMERICAN CHRISTIANS SHOULD SUPPORT ISRAEL

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Hamas launched an unprecedented large-scale invasion of Israel's southern border with Gaza on October 7. It fired thousands of rockets into residential areas and stormed Israeli towns, to kill soldiers and civilians alike. The strikes led to more than 1,400 Israeli deaths, the most casualties in modern Israel's history.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Hamas "will pay a price the type of which it has never known" as Israel wages a war to "ensure [their] existence" against "savages who celebrate the murder of women, children, and the elderly." Israel is right to wage war on Hamas in response to the brutally unjust killings, and Christians everywhere should support them.

How Israel and Gaza Arrived at this Situation

In 2005, Israel decided on a policy of disengagement with Palestine, unilaterally withdrawing its troops and settlers from the Gaza Strip. But in 2007, Palestinian leadership lost control of Gaza as the militant faction Hamas took control by force. Since that time, the situation has deteriorated, and has escalated into outright war four times in the past fifteen years.

As disappointing as the disengagement policy has been, Israel has seen it as the lesser of two evils. Rather than maintaining a military presence in Gaza, they sought to rely on border troops to prevent major cross-border strikes and on their "Iron Dome" to prevent major missile strikes. This week's events show that Israel was mistaken. Hamas has not been deterred.

How Hamas Attempts to Justifies Its Actions

How does Hamas seek to justify its actions, including strikes that purposely targeted civilians? According to Hamas leadership, the attack was provoked by Israeli settlers who entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque to pray last week. This "desecration," they declare, is the justification for their rocket barrages and civilian killings.

Hamas' claim is demonstrably false. First, an attack of this magnitude had to have been months in the making and could not have been planned in the span of days. Second, the attack was launched on the fiftieth anniversary of the Yom Kippur War, the Arab world's surprise invasion of Israel; clearly, Hamas engaged in long-term planning so that their assault would coincide with the anniversary. Thus, Hamas didn't start the war because of a few Israeli settlers praying in a mosque.

So, what's really going on? Foreign policy experts largely agree that Hamas is engaged in a strategic maneuver to outdo its rivals, including not only Israel but the Fatah faction in charge of the West Bank; to disrupt a US-brokered normalization of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia; and to undo the Trump-brokered Abraham Accord agreements that seek peace between Israel and other Arab nations.



What are we to make of Hamas' attack on Israel, including its assaults on everyday citizens? In a nutshell, it is egregiously unjust. Hamas shed blood for unjust reasons and in an unjust manner.

The Immorality of Hamas' Rationale for Launching Strikes

For thousands of years, Christians have agreed upon certain biblical principles concerning the ethics of warfare. Indeed, Christian theologians, political leaders, and military commanders have unified to articulate a set of eight criteria by which we determine whether a given nation is morally justified in launching a war. Hamas fails all eight, including especially the criteria of "legitimate authority" and "just cause."

Legitimate Authority. Hamas is an illegitimate authority. The only legitimate authorities in warfare are the political leaders or civil bodies that are responsible for maintaining order and providing security, and Hamas is neither. It is a brutal terrorist organization that tramples the rights of Gazans and has not stood for elections since 2006.

Just Cause. Even if Hamas were a legitimate authority, they did not have a morally just reason to launch strikes. Neither the "prayer violations" nor Israel's peace talks are just cause for a war.

So, Hamas was wrong to launch strikes in the first place. Their actions are egregiously unjust and must be punished decisively. But they are also morally wrong in their warfighting tactics, to which we now turn our attention.

The Immorality of Hamas' Warfighting Tactics

Just as Christians have outlined criteria that must be met when deciding whether or not to launch a war, so they have identified biblical principles for how to fight once a war has started. Christian theologians, political leaders, and military commanders agree on seven criteria by which we evaluate warfighting tactics. Hamas fails all seven, including especially the criteria of "discrimination" and "avoidance of evil means."

Discrimination. The principle of discrimination states that warfighters must distinguish between combatants and noncombatants, refusing to target noncombatants' lives or property. Early reports reveal that the majority of Hamas' killings so far have been civilians. As the Wall Street Journal and other outlets have reported, there are chilling videos that show Hamas warriors firing on civilians, dragging people away as hostages, and even parading a woman through central Gaza. Thus, Hamas is waging war in a horrifyingly indiscriminate manner.

Avoidance of Evil Means. This principle means that warfighters must not engage in evil practices such as rape, pillage, desecration of holy sites, mutilation of the dead, killing of children, or destruction of crops. As the New York Times and other outlets have reported, Hamas repeatedly employs evil means.



Thus, Hamas is guilty not only of launching the war for unjust reasons but also employing warfighting tactics that are indiscriminate and evil.

The Necessity of Christian Support for Israel

As Hamas continues to wage an egregiously unjust war against the men, women, and children of Israel, Christians in America must unite in their support for Israel. Since its inception as a nation, Israel has been besieged, surrounded by nations that desire its elimination. This week's attacks by Hamas, which are reportedly supported by Iran, are a continuation of that reality.

American Christians should also support Israel because it is a true friend and ally. Moreover, it is the only functioning democracy in the Middle East, allowing freedom of religion, speech, and press, and a system of checks and balances. We stand with Israel because it represents God's design for the state in an imperfect world.

Thus, from a moral and humanitarian perspective, we as Christians must vocalize our support for Israel. We must speak with clarity about the appalling injustices committed by evil actors, urge Congress to stay the course until Hamas is dismantled and its leaders held accountable, and pray for God's justice to prevail.

